

WASTE DISPOSAL - TIP SITES IN RURAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

4698. Hon Giz Watson to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for the Environment

Regarding the disposing of waste at rubbish tip sites run and controlled by rural Shire Councils, I ask -

- (1) Are there any restrictions that prohibit the dumping of hazardous waste at tip sites in rural Western Australia?
- (2) If yes to (1), how are the restrictions enforced?
- (3) Are rural tip sites secured to prevent illegal dumping?
- (4) If no to (3), will the Minister consider introducing state-wide regulations to prohibit illegal dumping at tip sites?
- (5) What proportion of rural Councils actively encourages recycling programs?
- (6) Of these participating Councils, how many have fenced, staffed facilities?
- (7) What is the impact of rural tip sites on the Swan-Avon catchment on the river systems?
- (8) Can the Minister give an assurance that rural waste disposal is not polluting the Swan-Avon river systems?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

1. Yes. The Environmental Protection Act 1986, the Environmental Protection (Rural Landfill) Regulations 2002, and the Environmental Protection (Controlled Waste) Regulations 2004 prohibit the disposal of hazardous waste at rural landfills, except those specific landfills that have licence conditions that allow acceptance of some classes of waste that are hazardous.
2. Landfills, hazardous waste carriers, vehicles and drivers are periodically inspected to ensure compliance with licence conditions, permits and regulations. Non compliances are managed in accordance with the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC) enforcement and prosecution policy. The Department is aware that compliance with the Environmental Protection (Rural Landfill) Regulations 2002 or licences is variable and is currently inspecting all rural landfill sites. Enforcement action will depend on the results of the inspections and will be made in line with the Department of Environment and Conservation's Enforcement and Prosecution Policy.
3. The regulations require landfill operators to have a fence around the boundary of the site. DEC is aware that some sites are not fenced and secured to prevent unauthorised access. This issue is being addressed in the current inspection program referred to in the answer to Question (2).
4. The legislation prohibits hazardous waste being disposed at rural landfills, except those specific sites that have licence conditions that allow acceptance of some classes of waste that are hazardous.
5. Of the 114 rural councils in Western Australia, 25% provided a kerb-side recycling service in 2005-2006 and a further 18% provided a drop-off recycling service for residents. Of the remaining 57% of rural councils, some provide collection points for items such as scrap metal, used oil, car batteries and other items for recycling at their landfill site.
6. DEC does not hold information on staffing arrangements for council landfills. See the answer to Question (3) in respect of fencing.
7. In accordance with the Contaminated Sites Act 2003, Councils are reporting landfills as known or suspected contaminated sites, and reported sites are classified by DEC based on the risk to human health and the environment. Rural landfills are generally small and widely distributed in the Swan-Avon catchment and are therefore considered to be a low risk to the environment. However this is being reviewed in the current inspection program referred to in the answer to Question (2).
8. See answer to Q7.