

ENVIRONMENT — POLLUTION INCIDENTS

**940. Mr C.J. Tallentire to the Minister for Environment:**

For the years 2011–2012, 2010–2011, 2009–2010, 2008–2009, I ask:

- (a) how many reports of pollution incidents were received by the Pollution Watch Hotline; and
- (b) how many of these were subsequently subject to site investigations?

**Mr A.P. Jacob replied:**

- (a) The Department of Environment Regulation (DER — formerly the Department of Environment and Conservation) records pollution reports in the Incident and Complaints Management System (ICMS). Calls to the Pollution Watch Hotline are not recorded separately in the system and cannot therefore be readily distinguished from all reports made to the department.

In the ICMS, ‘complaints’ are differentiated from ‘incidents’. A ‘complaint’ is the provision of information in any form to any staff member of the department, where it concerns a potential breach of the legislation or information that identifies poor environmental practices. An ‘incident’ is a confirmed causal event leading to a complaint. ‘Confirmed’ means that it has been determined through enquiries by departmental staff that the effects described by the complainant have occurred.

The number of pollution complaints and incidents for the timeframes requested are as follows:

	Total	2011–2012	2010–2011	2009–2010	2008–2009
Complaints	7162	1705	1891	1715	1851
Incidents	2334	518	524	599	693

- (b) ‘Site investigations’ includes ‘site visits’ and ‘site inspections’ as categorised by the ICMS. A site investigation is not necessary to confirm every report as other information such as monitoring results, photographs, videos, statutory reports from the industry concerned or telephone interviews can be used. Further, some individual incidents may result from multiple complaints, for example an odour emission impacting a large area. Approximately 25 per cent (averaged across the four years) of incidents and complaints involved a site investigation. The number of reports that resulted in site investigations is as follows:

	Total	2011–2012	2010–2011	2009–2010	2008–2009
Site investigations	1769	305	441	442	581