

Q FEVER BACTERIA — BARROW ISLAND

4350. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Commerce

With reference to question on notice No. 3848 in the Legislative Council answered on 28 June 2011, in reference to the presence of Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii* on Barrow Island and the role of WorkSafe WA, I ask —

- (1) Is the Minister for Commerce aware that the Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii* has been identified on Barrow Island?
- (2) Has WorkSafe WA, in partnership with Chevron Australia, implemented appropriate controls and provided appropriate education to the workforce to lower the risk of exposure to the Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*?
- (3) If no to (2), will WorkSafe WA, in partnership with Chevron Australia, implement appropriate controls and provide appropriate education to the workforce to lower the risk of exposure to the Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*?
- (4) If no to (2) and (3), will WorkSafe WA require Chevron Australia to implement appropriate controls and provide appropriate education to the workforce to lower the risk of exposure to the Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*?
- (5) Given that Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii* has been identified on Barrow Island and cases of infection have now been recorded, will WorkSafe WA conduct or require Chevron Australia to conduct pre-employment testing and offer immunisation to the ever expanding workforce?
- (6) If no to (5), why not?
- (7) Will WorkSafe WA interview past Barrow Island employees who have contracted Q fever (reference Dr Clayton Golledge, Microbiologist of Infectious Diseases) to ascertain the possible source of infection and any compensation liability?
- (8) If no to (7), why not?
- (9) Does WorkSafe WA recommend exposure reduction actions that should or must be implemented by employers to lower the exposure risk of their workforce to Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii* on Barrow Island or other locations?
- (10) If no to (9) —
 - (a) why not; and
 - (b) will WorkSafe WA recommend exposure reduction actions that should or must be implemented by employers to lower the exposure risk of their workforce to Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii* on Barrow Island or other locations?
- (11) If no to (10)(b), why not?
- (12) Does WorkSafe WA audit or inspect any companies and locations where known Q fever cases have been recorded to ensure that employees are not being unnecessarily or unknowingly exposed to the Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii* in high risk situations?
- (13) If no to (12), why not?
- (14) Does WorkSafe WA have policy objectives in respect of exposure and risks of infection from Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*, and will the Minister table them?
- (15) If yes to (14), when were these objectives last reviewed and does WorkSafe WA consider them sufficiently up-to-date?
- (16) If no to (15) —
 - (a) why not; and
 - (b) will the Minister instruct WorkSafe WA to create policy objectives in respect of exposure and risks of infection from Q fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2)–(3) No, as such a partnership would be inappropriate. WorkSafe's role is to administer and enforce the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 and the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996.

Compliance with occupational safety and health legislation by Chevron Australiamay require that it implement controls and provide information to workers.

- (4)–(8) No. Chevron Australia has implemented control measures and provided information. Further to this, WorkSafe does not have a role in regard to compensation.
- (9) WorkSafe recommends a range of control measures including:
- vaccination;
 - ventilation systems;
 - hygiene facilities;
 - safe work procedures;
 - information and training; and
 - personal protective equipment.
- (10)–(11) Not applicable.
- (12) Yes. WorkSafe carries out inspections and also investigates cases of Q fever under the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 to determine if the occupational safety and health legislation has been contravened and achieve compliance with it.
- (13) Not applicable.
- (14) Yes. As with other occupational safety and health issues, WorkSafe's general policy objective is that it enforces the occupational safety and health legislation when carrying out inspections where Q fever is identified as an issue or a potential issue. In addition, WorkSafe investigates cases that are notified under the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984. As this is a general policy objective, there is no document available for tabling.
- (15) Yes. WorkSafe considers them up to date.
- (16) (a) Not applicable.
- (a) Not applicable. The Minister responsible for the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 cannot interfere in WorkSafe's enforcement of the occupational safety and health legislation.