

Hon. Brian Charles Ellis, MLC  
Chairman, Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House,  
Perth WA 6000

Dear Mr Ellis

## Submission on Petition no 150 – Kwinana Air Quality Buffer Zone Extension – Munster

The petitioners are residents in Munster who will be directly affected by the proposed 750 metre extension of the Kwinana Air Quality Buffer Zone. I understand that they would not oppose a 500 metre buffer extending to the eastern edge of Lake Coogee.

I understand that most of the residents have lived for many years in the area that will fall within the buffer area. They are concerned that the buffer will be imposed on them without proper consultation and without scientific justification. They are also concerned that once established, the buffer will have the effect of lowering the value of their properties, prevent rezoning from urban-deferred to urban, and effectively provide the Water Corporation with a licence to pollute.

### 1. Odour

The stated rationale for the extension is to protect residents in the area from odour emissions from the Woodman Point waste water treatment plant. In a letter to the promoter of the petition dated 28 February 2012 the Minister for Planning states "The Review of the Kwinana Air-Quality Buffer Position Paper (October 2008) identified the potential need for a 750 metre buffer for the Woodman Point wastewater treatment plant, and the Water Corporation is committed to its Odour Improvement Plan in order to reduce the impacts of its operations on privately owned land within the buffer" (*italics added*).

The Minister's letter goes on to state that stage 1 upgrade works at the plant were completed in July 2009, and that "the Water Corporation has now completed its odour monitoring and modelling report in order to assess the success of the stage 1 odour control upgrade works".

The petitioners say that "no odour is experienced in the area affected by the proposed buffer" (petition, bullet point 3). Their concern is that the true reason for the buffer extension is not to protect the residents from odour (since this has already been achieved) but to give the operators of the treatment plant leeway to increase the odour emissions from the plant.

The report referred to by the Minister is the November 2011 report prepared for the Water Corporation by Consulting Environmental Engineers entitled Results of Odour Monitoring and Modelling Program (OMMP Report). This report confirms that "an odour model is useful only if it correlates reasonably well with the response of the community to odour".

### 2. Scientific justification

The OMMP Report forms the basis of the justification for a buffer and will presumably be tabled in the Committee. According to the residents a number of factors cited in the report as a potential source of odour have in fact been addressed. For example, the original sludge drying beds responsible for significant odour emissions were decommissioned many years ago and the compost residue in the drying beds has been assessed as if it emits the equivalent odour to raw sewerage, which is inaccurate. Moreover existing

odour control measures have been upgraded and new measures implemented for the waste water treatment plant and this has significantly reduced odour emissions.

An independent report (commissioned by the promoter of the petition on behalf of the residents) was prepared by PAEHolmes in November 2011. This report reviews the OMMP Report and contains its own analysis and modelling that reflects the state of odour assessment science. The report concludes (amongst other things) that no additional buffer is necessary. It should be possible to obtain a copy of the report from the promoter of the petition.

### 3. Licence Conditions

I am informed by the promoter of the petition that the licence most recently issued by the Environmental Protection Authority to the Water Corporation in relation to the operations at Woodman Point specifies an odour emission limit of 5OU but removes the requirement that "odours emanating from the premises when operational do not unreasonably interfere with the health, welfare, convenience, comfort or amenity of any person at an odour sensitive premises". ("Odour sensitive premises" includes houses).

This condition was included in the original works approval no 3793 issued on 28 April 2003 and it is not clear why it has been removed. It does however give credence to the residents' fear that an extended buffer zone would be regarded by the operator as "leeway to increase odour pollution within the buffer" (petition, bullet point 4).

The residents who have been in the area for many years have the right to breathe clean air. If the odour emissions limit of 5OU is observed they are confident that this right will not be breached and there is therefore no need for a buffer zone beyond 500m.

### 4. Zoning

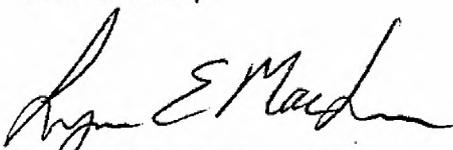
An application to change the zoning of the area from urban-deferred to urban was rejected on the basis of the proposed buffer. According to the residents, this has substantially devalued the land in this area. Their argument is that if the waste water treatment plant does not emit odour at unacceptable levels, then the application to amend the zoning to urban should be approved. If the emissions are unsafe, then the residents should be evacuated and compensation paid.

### Conclusion

I respectfully submit that the decision about the air quality buffer zone will significantly affect the long term residents of Munster, and should only be made after proper consultation with them, and on the basis of up to date and accurate the scientific evidence.

On a policy note, it is the WA Greens' position that both health impact and environmental impact assessments should be carried out prior to the approval of new emitting industrial proposals, and that industry should pay an environmental health bond where the potential for pollution exists. Such policies mitigate the problems that have been associated in the region I represent with industries such as Cockburn Cement and the Woodman Point waste water treatment plant.

Yours sincerely



Hon Lynn MacLaren MLC  
Member for South Metropolitan Region

24 April 2012

**PUBLIC**