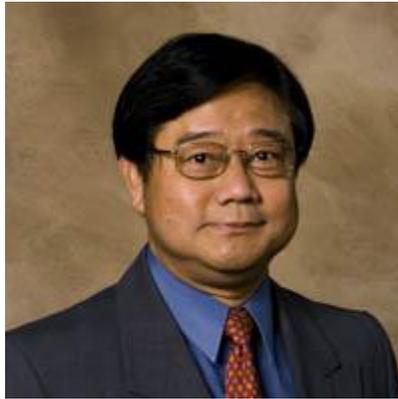




EXTRACT FROM
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HANSARD



*Mr LIM
Clayton*

ADJOURNMENT

Clayton electorate: landfill pollution

Tuesday, 19 Feb 2013

Clayton electorate: landfill pollution

Mr LIM (Clayton) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Health. It concerns the landfill sites in Clayton South, Clarinda and Dingley and the toxic odours and dust coming from these sites which is polluting the air in these suburbs. The action I seek is that the minister immediately undertake a study into the health of residents living in these suburbs to determine if the toxic odours and dust have caused any long-term health issues.

Following the end of Victoria's prolonged drought in December 2010 the operators of these sites were caught off guard as fast-rising contaminated water caused sickening odours to saturate the area 24/7. These odours travelled as far as Parkdale beach in the south and Princes Highway in the north and could be smelt at the entrance to the Monash Medical Centre in Clayton. To say that these odours destroyed the quality of life for the residents of Clayton South, Clarinda and Dingley would be an understatement. The reported odours were described as smelling like chemicals, rotten eggs, sulfurous gas, vomit, manure and sewage, and in terms like 'rancid', 'putrid', 'foul' and 'decaying'. The smells continued for weeks on end. Following hundreds of telephone calls, letters and emails to my office, I wrote to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change in February 2011 alerting him to the problem. I then raised this in an adjournment matter in June 2011 after he failed to take an active interest in the welfare of the residents that I represent.

To their credit the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and Kingston City Council organised a series of community forums in Springvale, Clayton South and Clarinda from March 2011 onwards. These forums were well attended by concerned residents, who raised many health-related issues directly caused by these odours. My understanding is that there were Department of Health officers present at most of these forums throughout 2011 and 2012. However, at the most recent forum on Tuesday, 7 February 2013, no Department of Health officer attended. The attending EPA officer advised those present that the EPA had requested a health study into the effects of these odours but had not received a response.

Community anger and grassroots pressure during 2011 saw a number of corrective actions being undertaken by the landfill operators to comply with the regulations. The EPA has vastly increased its surveillance and improved its reporting methods for residents. Kingston City Council has been supportive of residents' concerns and has taken an active role. The landfill operators have been investing in solutions, but there is still more to be done. The final piece to this horrible, tragic saga in the residents' lives is that the residents need to — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member's time has expired.