



Speech by

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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Hansard 20 April 2004

**SOUTHERN PACIFIC PETROLEUM**

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (9.05 p.m.): Last year the Labor government funded a health risk assessment for the community at Yarwun and Targinie as a result of alleged health impacts because of emissions from Southern Pacific Petroleum. I thank the government for that funding. The study was auspiced through the Department of State Development and the study was completed after a significant period of time due to the complexity of the issues that needed to be addressed. The health risk assessment documentation was ready for public communication and the election was called. The Department of State Development deferred that public discussion and the public discussion was held several weeks ago. A small number of people attended the health risk assessment explanation sessions.

Subsequent to one of those sessions, Mrs Noonan wrote to me and said—

I attended the Thursday afternoon meeting, for the Health Risk Assessment information, which you also attended.

The claims that the chemical Thiophene was responsible for the 'odours', but that it is totally safe, do not seem to be substantiated by the information provided on the internet by Chemwatch.

Perhaps Dr Drew should have used this information instead of outdated Russian research. I would be interested to hear whether you think this information ... is relevant and also contradictory to what we were told at the meeting.

Indeed, the information is contradictory. The report was stated to say that there were no long-term health impacts from the emissions. However, there was no explanation for the sore eyes, the inflamed mucus membranes and the respiratory problems that people downwind from SPP were suffering.

It was stated at the discussion that the chemical that was identified as responsible for the odours was thiophene but that residents should not be concerned because that chemical in itself was safe. However, Chemwatch states that thiophene is highly flammable, harmful if swallowed, may produce discomfort of the respiratory system, the vapours potentially cause drowsiness and dizziness, and it should be kept away from sources of ignition. It warns not to breathe the gas, fumes and vapour spray, wear protective clothing and use only in well-ventilated areas. It goes on to say that it is found in coal tar, coal gas and technical benzene.

But the telling thing is that thiophene concentrations below the odour threshold level produce light sensitivity of the human eyes, and it goes on to talk about the exposure of animals to thiophene. People in the Yarwun-Targinie area, particularly Targinie, have been exposed to levels that produce considerable odour and have been asked to accept that the health impacts are zero. But chemical information available to anyone on the Internet decries that statement. I believe that the people of Targinie are justified in their concerns, and I seek leave to table this document—

Time expired.