



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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COOLUM CREEK, CHEMICAL SPILL

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (5.02 pm): I call on the environment minister to answer questions about why the public were not notified of the chemical spill that caused a fish kill in Coolum Creek in January. The public were not notified in a timely way. It was only after the media asked for further answers as to the outcome of the testing that it was revealed months later that the fish deaths were not due to a natural occurrence but were due to a toxic spill. The incident has raised a lot of questions about the need for timely warning bulletins to the public and the process that the EPA uses to test for chemicals after such an incident.

I understand that the water test did not reveal anything, but the subsequent testing of the dead fish revealed the presence of the chemical chlorpyrifos, which is a chemical that is used in the agricultural and building industries and which is also used to control household pests such as cockroaches, spiders, ants and lawn beetles. I believe that the minister for environment needs to explain why there was such a long delay in releasing this information. The minister also needs to tell the House whether the testing procedures that were used initially are really best practice.

There is a lot of concern by members in the community that when incidents such as this happen, if they are not advised in a timely way they are not able to avoid eating fish that have been caught in the area or to avoid swimming in the area. Also, and very importantly, their failure to be advised in a timely way impairs their opportunity to report who may have been responsible for dumping the chemical or leaking the chemical.

We want to make sure that our waterways not only on the Sunshine Coast but also throughout Queensland have appropriate environmental monitoring, appropriate environmental checks and that the word is well and truly clear to those who want to abuse those waterways that if they do they will get caught. These processes are made far harder when the public is not engaged and told the truth in a timely manner.

I have written to the environment minister about these issues. I certainly look forward to her response to a number of questions that I have raised in the House but also have put in writing to her. Ultimately, I am concerned. It was an unacceptable incident. Those sorts of toxic spills in our creeks and riverways are of concern because we not only do not know what the long-term impact of such a chemical spill will be but also the failure to report such chemical spills in a timely way certainly diminishes the ability of the community to participate in protecting these communities. Firstly, they were told that it was a natural event. It was not a natural event. In fact, it was a chemical spill. I have a concern about that. There is also a need for a review of the use of that particular chemical, given that its use is banned in the United States.