

Environmental Health Association (Australia) Inc.

Issue 2

July 2009

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“Get On Board with Local Government” Brochure

Our Chairman Llew Withers met with WALGA personnel recently to express the concern of the EHAA about the quality of the photo purporting to be an environmental health officer. The representatives advised that the brochure had been very well received with the public but they were pleased to receive comment and would be happy to have the photo recast before a new print

run was undertaken.

The EHAA believes that you would need to draw a very long bow to find a similarity between a man (presumably a supervisor) standing in front of a lawnmower on an oval and anything resembling the work of an environmental health officer. We look forward to the new photo included in the brochure.

EHAA was happy to pay

for another photograph to be taken.

WALGA quoted an average salary of \$62,000 pa for an EHO not being a manager or coordinator. Superannuation of \$4,000 pa was deducted from this total. EHAA believes that the average salary for an EHO of \$58,000 at that time (2007) would seem remarkably higher than the norm.

Environmental Health Officer Roles & Responsibilities

The Department of Human Services (Victoria) has circulated a template of all the collated roles and responsibilities of environmental health officers across Australia. Apart from those pages where the Font is not recognised, the length and breadth of EH responsibilities has been

collated from each state and territory.

This attempt by Victoria is a follow-up on work by the Department of Health Western Australia's John Hardy who chaired an enHealth Committee on Workforce Issues to gather the initial information.

EHAA is watching with interest to see how this information is to be used and whether there will be an expectation that all tertiary courses in Environmental Health in Australia will be designed around these competencies. Watch this space.

Curtin University incorporates OSH into Environmental Health.

The number of first year enrolments into Curtin University's environmental health course has exceeded all expectations at 45. This is a substantial turnaround from the leaner years of this decade and Curtin staff must be bubbling with

excitement. While the students have until June 2010 to decide whether to take the Environmental Health or the Occupational Safety & Health stream, there is a likelihood that EH numbers will be on the increase.

EHAA welcomes comment by other educational institutions on enrolment in their courses. Please contact our Executive Officer on info@envirohealthaustralia.com.au to include information in this newsletter.



*EHAA is working for
its members!*

Chairman's Address

As the fifth year of our Association moves into its final term, we can reflect back on why the organisation was originally formed. Originally there was a concern that environmental health would not have adequate representation at state level and there was a demonstrated need to develop a mechanism to be able to adequately represent the environmental health profession through advocacy and a non prejudicial forum for interested persons to express their opinion about the present management of and strategic direction of the environmental health profession.

From humble beginnings, our Association now has in excess of 60 members from all over Western Australia, the eastern states and Africa. In fact our growth in membership is now coming from Victoria. We have no secrets to success. The most important person in the Association is you, the member. We have concentrated on

introducing member services when others were withdrawing theirs, looking for innovation and adopting a boutique approach rather than mass coverage.

Our members have enjoyed a Conference every year with workshops priced at an affordable level so that valuable training budgets can be used for a wider variety of services. We have introduced afternoon seminars with refreshments and hors d'oeuvres following, at no cost. These are open to members and non-members alike. Where required, we have conducted workshops of special interest at minimal cost to members.

We have contracted out a jobs-on-line employment service on our website to LGnet. Jobs can be logged onto the employment page direct with a commission paid to EHAA for each job posted. Please go to www.envirohealthaustralia.com.au (employment page) to post your job and you can also subscribe to receive jobs posted on this page weekly.

EHAA have appointed a maintenance contractor for the web, an executive officer and soon to be, media services. There will be other initiatives announced in due course as they become available.

Seminars and Conference alone will not give total service to members. There are an increasing number of members interstate and overseas so e-newsletters and e-Infomails are very popular. Our intention is to keep these communiqués released on a regular basis and to begin to concentrate on national issues as our primary focus.

We are mindful that our Conferences must be accessible to all members and thought is now being given to how best we may communicate conference papers and presentations. Last year, these were printed onto CDs and circulated to delegates after Conference.

Our aim is serve you better as we move into our 6th year.

Llew Withers
Chairman

Up Coming Events

22nd July	Seminar - New Food Regulations; What they mean to EHO's
23rd September	EHAA AGM
23-25th September	2009 National EHAA Conference - Environmental Health <i>Understanding the Elements</i> .
18th November	Seminar - Asbestos Identification



The Voice “Letters to the Editor”

As an observer of the policies of the Federal Government with respect to Indigenous Health, the Murray River Catchment and Emissions Trading, one issue that has not generated many headlines is the future of the Health System in Australia.

I note in the daily press that the 18 month time period that states were given to consider the possible federal takeover of the health system in Australia has now expired. But what does this mean? Does this mean that the federal government would want to take on all the

health and hospital system throughout Australia and Territories and place it under one administration?

How does environmental health fit in? The concept is that all environmental health administration will pass to federal government (policy) and local government (service delivery).

Whilst there are always two sides to every story we should stay tuned to see what is to happen next.

Anonymous, WA

Have your say

The EHAA welcomes relevant and topical letters from members and readers. If you have an opinion and would like to express it, write to the Editor EHAA Newsletter and leave your name & contact details with a copy of your article. (max 500 words).



“Back to basics for the National Environmental Health Conference in 2009”

EHAA National Conference

The Environmental Health Association (Australia) Inc will be holding its National Conference from Wednesday 23rd to Friday 25th September 2009 at the Esplanade River Suites, South Perth.

This years conference will explore the broad elements of Environmental Health, demonstrating the interconnectivity between those elements. The elements could be identified as

food safety, water safety, waste management, indigenous health, built

environment, environmental hazards, emergency management or disease control.

The theme is about is about returning the focus to the fundamental principals essential within Environmental Health.

Do you feel you have a topic of interest ? Email us with a brief to info@envirohealthaustralia.com.au



“Understanding the Elements” is the theme for this years national conference

Officer Title Renaming

The Executive will recommend to members at the Special General Meeting that the title “President” and “Vice President” better reflect the duties of the working titles of “Chairman & Vice Chairman” of the EHAA, respectively.



New hefty penalties to combat illegal dumping

Office of Minister for Environment, Donna Faragher

The EHAA welcomes the State Government's move to introduce tougher penalties for illegal dumping of waste in Western Australia which will have a significant impact on those who believe it is acceptable to dump their rubbish illegally

Environment Minister Donna Faragher encouraged waste reduction and increased recycling as alternatives.

A new offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1986 would see individuals face tough fines of up to \$62,500 or \$125,000 for a body corporate.

Mrs Faragher said the proposed new penalties would have a marked effect on the fight against

illegal dumping, which often happened in bushland on the outskirts of cities and towns.

"Currently fines for dumping are limited to a maximum of \$1,000 under the Litter Act where a case for the offence of pollution cannot be made."

"This new addition to the Act will strengthen regulatory measures to provide a clear deterrent against illegal dumping and to encourage waste minimisation or recycling as an alternative.

The Keep Australia Beautiful Council has also welcomed the move to toughen up on illegal dumping.

"It is time people who consider it is acceptable



to dump their waste in our precious national parks and bush land areas are held accountable," Keep Australia Beautiful Council chairman Mel Hay said.

Mrs Faragher encouraged anyone with information about illegal dumping to call the Keep Australia Beautiful Hotline on 1300 766 541.

Tougher penalties will see a reduction in illegal dumping....

Aquatic Facilities Working Group Representation

The Executive has nominated Piotr Zenni (Shire of Dalwallinu) as member and Russell Weston (Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes) as Deputy Member as the EHAA representatives on the Department of Health (WA) Aquatic Facilities Working Group replacing Jared Koutsoukos and Donald Howell respectively.

Caravan and Camping Grounds Ministerial Working Group

The Executive has nominated Wayne Harris (Shire of Gingin) as the EHAA representative on the Caravan Park and Camping Grounds Ministerial Working Group. Wayne is the first local government environmental health officer appointed to this Working Group.

EHAA provided direction to the Department of Local Government to appoint an EHO to represent local government environmental health and building control officers. David Hadden (Shire of Coorow) has been nominated as Deputy Member. The term of office is two years.

Apology from the EHAA

An earlier newsletter drew an analogy that Safe Food Australia was a subsidiary of the Australian Institute of Environmental Health. The EHAA would like to apologise to any person or organisation who felt offended by such a remark.



Have your say - draft State Ambient Air Policy

Minister for Environment; Youth, Donna Faragher

On the 15th of June the Environment Minister Donna Faragher, released a draft State Environmental (Ambient Air) Policy. The Policy along with an explanatory document has been developed by the Environmental Protection Authority which sets out how Western Australia will implement the National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure.

"The Ambient Air Quality NEPM sets uniform standards against which ambient air quality can be assessed nationally," Mrs

Faragher said.

"Leading from this the State Environmental (Ambient Air) Policy provides a management framework for WA's air quality.

"In the interest of human health and wellbeing, and to protect the environment in general, we must prevent all avoidable discharges to the atmosphere.

"Where discharges cannot be avoided, every effort must be made to minimise them and their impacts."

A consultation period on the draft State Environmental (Ambient Air) Policy will run for eight weeks closing August 7, 2009. Comments should be addressed to the Minister for Environment.

The State Environmental (Ambient Air) Policy is available on the Environmental Protection Authority's website at www.epa.wa.gov.au.

WA takes the lead in asbestos control

Office Deputy Premier; Minister for Health; Indigenous Affairs

The Deputy Premier, Kim Hames announced on the 11 June 2009 Western Australia's new guidelines for the management of asbestos-contaminated sites which are set to lead the country in regulating the hazardous substance.

Health Minister Kim Hames said the guidelines were the result of four years of extensive consultation and provided the most comprehensive and practical advice of its type available in Australia.

The guidelines provide a framework for the assessment and management of asbestos contaminated sites and are the first of their kind in Australia to provide such specific detail.

Dr Hames said the guidelines were intended pri-

marily to be used by environmental consultants, regulators and auditors and provide guidance on issues such as site investigation, soil and air sampling and risk assessment.

To support the release of the guidelines, fact sheets and brochures have been developed for the general public and local government environmental health officers.

These included an information brochure recommended for use by developers to provide information and reassurance to prospective or existing owners and occupiers to manage asbestos-contaminated sites.

The guidelines have been jointly published by the Department of Health and

the Department for Environment and Conservation with the DOH the primary implementing agency.

A link to the Department of Health guidelines and supporting materials can be found in the Current Events section of the EHAA website.

"WA recognized for its asbestos-contaminated site management framework."



*What's happening in
the industry...*

New Public Health Act Bill

Your Association has been invited to attend a briefing of the progress of the new Public Health Act (Western Australia) to be held at the East Perth Government Offices. While the EHAA was not consulted in the formulating the content of the Bill, the Association is pleased to be invited as a key stakeholder in the process.

The EHAA has reservations about a number of aspects of the drafting of the Bill and will be seeking an opportunity to meet with DOH personnel to discuss our concerns in more detail.

Special General Meeting of EHAA to be held

The Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) has written to your Association to request that some amendments of a procedural matter pertaining to our Articles of Incorporation are required. The Executive has resolved to conduct a Special General Meeting on a date to be fixed in August (needing resolution before our AGM in September). Our Executive Officer will communicate to all members to advise date and location. Those who are unable to attend may pass their proxy vote to Secretary Donald Howell or any other member attending.

Graduate Diploma in Environmental Health

Following on the success of the Masters in Environmental Health pioneered by Curtin & Griffith Universities and funded with a grant from the Federal Government, there is now a proliferation of Graduate Diploma in EH courses being developed. The difference between the courses appears in that the Masters contains a module of Professional Practice taken over 16 weeks of worksite placement.

Some states are not accepting appointments of the Graduate Diploma unless a professional practicum has been organised for the prescribed period. One of the strengths of environmental health is the need for on-the-job training before an EHO is able to graduate.

Overseas EHOs working in Australia

We are now seeing more overseas trained EHOs entering Australia to ease the continuing workforce shortage. Some states have benchmarked qualification entry standards against the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health registration. While not all entries are the same, this standard will allow overseas EHOs to work in Western Australia.

For overseas EHOs wishing to work in Australia entry requirements, go to www.envirohealthaustralia.com.au (employment) for more information.

Please note, registration or membership of a Professional Environmental Health body will not grant automatic employment status in Australia.

Call for Nominations of Executive Members for the EHAA

Members will soon be invited to prepare nominations for persons wishing to represent members of the EHAA as Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary & Treasurer and 5 Executive Committee representatives. The term of office is for 12 months from AGM to AGM and a job description can be obtained from the Executive Officer upon request.

The work functions of Secretary and Treasurer will be progressively undertaken by the Executive Officer and members filling those functions will be required to take an overseeing role only. Persons seeking nominations will be required to attend up to 6 Executive Meetings per annum and undertake a Corporate Governance & Strategic Workshop in the next term of office.

(Dr) RSW Lugg Award for Sustained Excellence in Public & Environmental Health

The EHAA is pleased to announce that criteria will be posted on the Current Events page of our website seeking nominations for persons wishing to be nominated for this prestigious Award. Dr Richard Lugg has made a significant contribution to Public Health and Environmental Health discipline over a sustained period in excess of 30 years.

persons who have also demonstrated sustained excellence in Public Health & Environmental Health. The Award will be presented by Dr Peter Flett Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Health (WA) at the National Conference in Perth. The Awardee will be presented with a specially struck medallion and Honorarium of \$1,000.

EHAA invites nominations from

James G Harcombe Award

The EHAA is calling for nominations of members who are worthy of nomination for the James G Harcombe Award. The criteria for the Award is posted on the website and it is open to all members of the Association. James was a serving Executive Member of the Association at the time of his passing and many members will have fond memories of his outstanding friendliness and character. Nominations can be forwarded to the

Executive Officer by email or post.

The successful recipient of this Award will receive a framed certificate and an Honorarium donated by EHAA and the Harcombe family. The award is announced and presented at the commencement of the National Conference.

Email the Executive Officer if you have not received your membership renewal, info@envirohealthaustralia.com.au

Renewing Membership Fees

The Executive Committee resolved to keep membership fees at the same rate for 2009/2010 year. Renewing subscriptions will be circulated in the next few weeks and it is expected that all members will be financial before the AGM on Thursday 24th September 2009. Members can pay their fees by credit card over the phone by calling the Executive Officer on 0411 364 090 or via email info@envirohealthaustralia.com.au.

Inviting Corporate Membership

Your Executive Committee have resolved to introduce corporate membership to all forms of membership. In order to expand our services, we extend an invitation to the private sector, local governments, educational institutions and state government agencies to become a corporate member of the EHAA. The broader the base of membership, the better able is your Association able to meet the changing nature of our profession.

Your Chairman Llew Withers has seen the benefit of industry specialists and local government officers working together to form partnerships of significant proportions. Llew was the foundation President of the

Recycling & Treatment Industry Association Inc. that has evolved to become the very formidable Waste Management Association of Australia.

Accordingly, the EHAA invites industry personnel to become members of the Association and to fully participate in hosting or participating in our workshops, seminars and Conference Agenda.

The Environmental Health Profession draws upon the disciplines of Environmental Health, Environmental Science and Protection, Building Control, Waste Management, Occupational Safety & Health, Public Health, and Food Safety & Hygiene.

7th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Conference

Report by Bill Atyeo

The 7th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Conference was held in Kalgoorlie (Western Australia) between the 12th and 14th May 2009, with a post conference Workshop for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates only on the 15th May 2009. It was wonderful to see the support this conference has sustained since its inception in May of 1998, when the 1st conference took place in Cairns (Queensland).

The EnHealth Council and the Commonwealth Government, as well as the various State Governments, have seen the benefits of holding this Conference, where professionals from all areas come together to attempt to address the many and various issues that confront the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Accordingly they have all supported with sponsorship the continuance of this conference, along with other associations, including the Environmental Health Association Australia, who sponsored the key note speakers.

The delegates came from all over Australia and the programme was a very demanding one, and gave the professional people the opportunity to put forward their successful programs that they run in the various states and the Northern Territory of Australia. Some matters discussed were:

1. The "one stop info-shop" for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environmental health practitioners on the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet. If anyone is involved in this capacity at all, I would highly recommend that they join this site and make it one of their favourites, as it has so much information for you, and it enables people to chat and obtain information from all over Australia. Whether you are just starting off your career, or are a seasoned professional in this field, the site is invaluable.

This site will help to assist you to "close the gap", as this is the site's producers enable you to access many other like professionals seeking assistance, passing on invaluable knowledge, reporting "wins and losses", and discussing issues of common concern. Please go to <http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au> and have a look, and register ... It is free to do so.

2. Impacts of Climate Change on Indigenous communities in Northern Australia.
3. Professor Ken Wyatt, Director Aboriginal Health in Western Australia, Keynote speaker discussed the decision making process and pointed out that all decisions made in WA are made in Perth, where in the NT decisions can be made in Alice Springs or Darwin.
We need to:
 - Measure success and failure, and to try and find the reasons for both.
 - Decide whether or not we deliver controlled programs and services, or we design better options that are ultimately controlled and decided on by the Community.
 - Deliver sustainable programs
 - We need to look at "partnerships" with community and service and/or program providers which will deliver relevant and sustainable outcomes for the indigenous communities right throughout Australia.

Professor Wyatt also revealed the role of the new position of Co-ordinator General for Indigenous Health. This person will ensure service and program delivery to Indigenous people and will have far reaching powers that will enable that person to cut through all "red tape" to ensure positive outcomes.

A really positive and informative keynote address to delegates. We will hear more on this in the near future, as we see more and more partnerships formed between community and service and program providers.

4. Emergency Risk Management in indigenous communities in the Eastern Goldfields.
5. The monitoring of water and sewerage in discrete Aboriginal Communities in NSW.
6. An information package for water management in Indigenous Communities. Works on the whole system and not just the infrastructure. Assists the community to work through and devise a management plan at the end.
7. Making food safety training culturally appropriate. Get information from the NT Department of Health
8. MARY G DROPPED IN.. Thanks Mark Bin Bakar.... Yes, finding role models and people that indigenous people can and will relate to is important in affecting change for the better.
9. Waste management on APY Lands.
10. Dealing with Asbestos in Bagot Indigenous Community Clinic in Darwin. Do they save the building, and what about the heritage. Interesting discussions over coffee were generated by this topic. Thanks Christopher and Barbara.

Cont...

11. Review of the Aboriginal environmental health training program (NSW).
12. We were given the insight by students at bachelor doing the course, of the environment they live in and the sacrifices they make to gain their environmental health education.
13. On Thursday our Keynote speaker was Dr Sue Gordon AM, retired Children Court Magistrate. This was powerful, and delivered the message why Aboriginal people must take charge of their own health. This message came through loud and clear to the delegates, as Dr Gordon speaks from her own experiences and her own personal situations through life.
14. Dog Health programs in Indigenous Communities. There is now developed an environmental Health Practitioners guide by AMRRIC which offers a wonderful resource to all communities, and dare I say all Local Governments.
15. Supporting animal management in Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Local Governments.
16. Mister Germ hand washing hygiene and nutrition program. A program in Queensland for all kids grades 1 to 3, and they receive 4 lessons a year. NSW has the same program for pre-primary children, in which the teaching staff are taught to deliver the program, and food safety is also included.
17. "No Germs on Me" is a hip-hop educational DVD. May I suggest that if you are interested that you visit <http://nogermsonme.nt.gov.au> for more information.
18. Housing and Health. A wonderful presentation where the theme was "NO SURVEY WITHOUT ACTION". Yes this is the way we need to credibility and trust and acceptance within communities. If we continue to do multiple surveys without follow-up action, we will continue to experience the same repetitive situations we all find ourselves in. Jeff Standen, Behnoosh Khalaj, Wayne Smith from the Aboriginal Health Unit in NSW Health are to be congratulated on this approach, and the positive results achieved through this approach. We should always remember this.
19. A National Indigenous infrastructure guide. We will hear more about this in late 2009 and promises to be a wonderful tool for professionals in this field.
20. Community engagement training for Environmental Health Officers in NSW.
21. Building environmental health through community partnerships. This supported what Prof Ken Wyatt stated in his keynote address, and it is imperative that we all head in this direction in order to deliver sustainable health services and programs to communities.

A wonderful program and the attendance at all sessions was exemplary. The quality and content of the sessions by the presenters was first class, generating much discussion at each coffee break and after the day. I compliment them all, and I sincerely thank the organising committee, and the attendance of all the delegates from all over Australia.

It is clear that a number of things have changed since the first conference in 1998, but as we all attest to, the situations within the communities has changed very little if we are to be completely honest with ourselves. In other words the people within the communities still experience the same adverse issues that were identified back in 1998. WHY???

Community Engagement and Partnerships. These were the strong messages that we identified in 1998, and they are still relevant today. There have been inroads in isolated cases, but it appears that the whole of Government (Commonwealth, State, and Local) has missed the message when it comes to funding the necessary changes in bureaucratic government departments and the engagement of culturally aware and experienced persons to affect positive change in many areas of this highly complex health field.

However, this conference was wonderful. If I have any suggestions for the future I would like to see greater representation by Indigenous Environmental Health professional, and even more, I would like to see greater representation from the most senior Ministers and Politicians, and heads of Departments. We the professionals working in this field know what we are talking about and what is needed, but I doubt whether too many senior statespersons in Australia would have too much of an idea. Perhaps the Governments should form their own Partnership Agreements with themselves and make indigenous health the issue.

SEE YOU ALL IN DARWIN IN 2011.. SOMETIME IN APRIL/MAY

MEMBERSHIP

EHAA was formed to enable members to express their opinions across a range of public health and environmental health concerns. The second central feature is that, as a federated, autonomous incorporated organisation, all decision making to be undertaken at State Level.

The *EHAA* objectives are very broad, decidedly so to allow our organisation to move in many directions, to reflect members' needs and the changing face of environmental health.

The federated system places emphasis on ensuring accountability for members' funds and communication to outside stakeholders. The *EHAA* manages its own budgets and reports through an annual general meeting to members. This ensures that their local concerns are reflected in decision-making and State organisations can be flexible and innovative as they conduct their day-to-day business.

The federated system ensures that formation of an Australian Council is constituted by representative State bodies.

EHAA conducts an Annual Conference and in each membership year will:

1. conduct (4) SIG sessions with complimentary members' attendance
2. return an operating profit for investment in the future of the organisation
3. publish quarterly electronic bulletins
4. launch an "Employment Directory" for professionals and graduates accessed via our website and newsletter
5. provide regular industry mail outs
6. actively represent members in a wide range of government and industry discussion papers

If you would like to become an *EHAA* member or would like more information about becoming a member please visit our membership page on www.envirohealthaustralia.com.au or email info@envirohealthaustralia.com.au



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Employment

For full details visit www.envirohealthaustralia.com.au or register to receive email updates

Environmental Health Strategy Coordinator

Lake Macquarie City Council, NSW

Building Inspector

DJM Building Consultants, Vic

Building Surveyor

Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Services Board, Vic

Executive Manager Development Assessment

SACS Consulting, VIC

Environmental Health Officer

Wellington Shire Council, VIC

Development Compliance Officer-Building Services

City of Cockburn, WA

To receive weekly email updates of positions vacant or to list your position vacant go to the Environmental Health Association (Australia) website employment page.



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