

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

### WRITTEN QUESTION

Mrs Finocchiaro to the Minister for Health:

#### Environmental Health

- 1. How many staff are in Environmental Health and what is their spread over the Northern Territory?**

The Department of Health Environmental Health branch has the following staff employed by base location

Darwin	30
Alice Springs	8
Katherine	2
Tennant Creek	1

- 2. How many environmental health complaints have been lodged and how many have been investigated? Please provide an example of a typical environmental health complaint.**

Environmental Health had the following complaints lodged within the 2018-19 financial year by status:

Closed	263
Open	11

All complaints are lodged and are investigated as deemed necessary, ranging from correspondence (phone call, email or letter), to site inspections, to a detailed investigation. A typical complaint ranges from personal hygiene practices of a registered premises, to a wastewater discharge incident.

**3. Since September 2017 you have had a system in place to follow up notifications and identify exposures of elevated blood lead levels. How many notifications have you had since that system was put in place? Have you identified any recent exposures of elevated blood lead levels? If so, where and what has been done to address them?**

- Since September 2017 elevated blood lead levels (EBLL)  $\geq 5$  micrograms per decilitre (mcg/dL) have been classified as reportable to the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in the Northern Territory.
- CDC receives results from the laboratory when an EBLL is detected.
- The majority of notifications are related to aviation gas (Avgas) exposure and many are repeat testing.
- Regular results are received from the McArthur River mine site as workers undergo routine occupational testing. These are dealt with by NT WorkSafe.
- Since reporting began until 30 June 2019, there were 313 EBLL results notified. 248 were Avgas related and 65 non-Avgas related.
- Monitoring of cases is ongoing and CDC is liaising regularly with involved parties such as Environmental Health, Paediatricians, relevant Aboriginal Health Corporations, Primary Health Care, Parks and Wildlife, Land and Resource Management, NT Police, Power and Water.
- The retesting of people with EBLL indicate levels are reducing overall, but there are still a few cases that have had persistent elevated levels.
- Locally-developed guidelines recommend that ongoing monitoring is warranted and if EBLL in a person increases in two consecutive results, further investigation of other lead exposure sources must be commenced.
- Environmental Health has assisted to identify an alternate source of lead exposure and to eliminate the potential source.