

# **STATES OF JERSEY**

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## **COMPOSTING FACILITIES**

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**Lodged au Greffe on 1st November 2005  
by Senator P.V.F. Le Claire**

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**STATES GREFFE**

## **PROPOSITION**

**THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –**

- (a) to agree that the composting facility at La Collette operated by the Environment and Public Services Committee should cease accepting new material with immediate effect;
- (b) to request the Health and Social Services Committee to investigate any health-related issues that have affected residents in the vicinity of the present composting facility and to report back to the States on the result of that investigation;
- (c) to instruct the Environment and Public Services Committee to contact the 12 Parishes in an attempt to identify parish sites for local treatment of material for composting until a permanent composting facility has been created;
- (d) to agree that, as an interim solution, all composting material from the Parish of St. Helier, and from any other parish where a temporary site cannot be identified, should be sent for incineration at Bellozanne.

**SENATOR P.V.F. LE CLAIRE**

## REPORT

After attending a meeting on 27th October 2005 to listen to the plans of the Environment and Public Services Committee I was staggered to learn of the serious health problems that have befallen many residents in Havre des Pas. At least 25 people in a meeting of approximately 60-70 people, when asked, raised their hands to indicate they had suffered breathing problems since the composting operation had been moved to La Collette. In visiting residents and examining letters from doctors it would appear quite clear to anyone, that people are suffering serious breathing-related illnesses now, where normal health was present before the La Collette site began its operation. The Environmental and Public Health aspects of the issue are quite unbelievable. When one begins to trawl through the available correspondence one is staggered by the numbers of Politicians involved at the most senior level who have had little or no effect in stopping what is an occurring and on-going health threat.

If this could be left to continue until the new site was built then perhaps this proposition would not be necessary but I am convinced that there is a serious health risk to it continuing and I have no confidence in the Health Protection team alleviating a threat it does not seem able to identify or sick people it cannot seem able to adequately respond to and defend their health. It is rare that I criticise the Health Committee but I have found it nigh on impossible to have the Health Protection team respond to me in my enquiries of late over the Pollution that St. Helier residents are having to endure over emissions from Bellozanne, and this issue has revealed more uncertainty in the roles of the Health Protection Department in relation to the Public's health in my mind. I had asked some weeks ago, when I witnessed with several other people, a great deal of smoke emanating from the Bellozanne incinerator chimney which consequently, was falling all over town, that a complaint be filed with the Public Health Authority which would be to be taken from me a Sitting States Senator to cease this pollution. I was sidelined and practically ignored. Had this been a private company, their feet no doubt would not have touched the ground, and in my opinion I am sure the States departments would have not dallied in exercising their all-powerful rights to frog-march the offenders into the Royal Court.

So why is it nigh-on impossible for there to be a responsible Government response?

It would appear Politicians including the President of Health, one other States Senator who lives in the District and 2 District Deputies and the Constable himself are all being sidelined in getting this pollution stopped. Why is this?

After many political interventions the final suggestion to one affected resident was get a lawyer and file a class action with the Royal Court.

Why are we not addressing the prosecution of the Polluter in the Environment and Public Services Committee over these and other issues? Is it because we do not wish to represent the people's health who have elected us? Or is it that we fear to challenge them because we do not want to rock the boat in challenging a Committee whose President holds sway with many strongly-placed political allies?

Well I would like to know and I am sure the electorate want to know too – which is it?

I have even had to ask the Chief Executive Officer at Health after weeks of silence for him to contact his people over the delays and have asked him to request his officers to return my calls. Similarly with the water pollution issues at St. Peter I have met with little co-operation. I am convinced that the Health Protection for Island residents at this time is lacking sufficient response to politicians' concerns as to warrant it almost obsolete. Where has this team and the Health Committee been when issues such as these occur?

The efforts to remedy the problem and the buck-passing of the issues in relation to the smells and illnesses that are being attributed to La Collette are some of the worst that I have seen in Public Office. The reading material is the stuff one would expect to find in a Hollywood exposé of Government incompetence. I would go so far as to say that the correspondence that I have read between the various politicians involved so far has left me quite worried about who is actually running this Island. There would appear to be a serious danger to the health of those living in, visiting holiday makers and workers in the area and I am concerned that unless the composting of material at La Collette ceases immediately, many people will be adversely affected and those that have already suffered will continue to suffer and their health will deteriorate.

I was also taken aback by one lady who stated that she had contacted the Health Protection Unit regarding her difficulty breathing and was instructed, according to her, by the Assistant Director of Public Health “**Not to go into her garden without wearing a mask, as it was not safe to do so.**”. Another gentleman showed me correspondence between himself and the same person within the health authorities which indicated that he would receive no financial assistance to meet his medical treatment from the Health and Social Services Committee. I recollect at the time of the waste strategy debate, this type of pledge to provide affected residents from pollution with free medical assistance was given by the president of Health – was I mistaken?

The health impacts on a cursory investigation drew me to this notice from the Environmental Protection Agency.

#### **“AGENCY POSITION ON COMPOSTING AND HEALTH EFFECTS**

The biological degradation of waste, whether in a dustbin, landfill, compost process or anaerobic digestion plant utilises the action of natural micro-organisms and will produce odours, volatile organic compounds and release bio-aerosols (air-borne micro-organisms, including pathogenic bacteria and fungal spores). These bacteria and fungi are released, mainly into the air throughout the composting process but are particularly prevalent during operations such as screening, shredding and turning. Levels of bacteria and fungi released are significant and in particular, one fungus, *Aspergillus fumigatus* a Class 2 pathogen, can be present in sufficient concentrations to give rise to adverse health effects in humans.

While such effects may be most manifest in the infirm and those with immune deficiency, a significant minority of the population can be affected by releases of these agents at any level significantly above background levels. Additionally if non-sensitive population is exposed they may become sensitised to low levels of bio-aerosols.

Human Health Impacts: *A. fumigatus* causes more infections worldwide than any other mould. Four per cent of all patients dying in tertiary care hospitals in Europe have invasive aspergillosis. The fungus causes allergic diseases in asthmatics and patients suffering from cystic fibrosis. Invasive aspergillosis can occur in individuals with cavities caused by tuberculosis or other cystic lung diseases.”

That the Committee was charged with providing a modern composting facility for recycling of garden and green waste, by 2007 in the waste strategy does not mean that the issue can be left over until then-nor should it be.

#### **Financial and manpower implications**

There will be no manpower costs to the States as this will cease to be a cost borne by the Environment and Public Services Committee and will be met by each Parish other than incineration of compost material from St. Helier. I therefore believe that there would be a reduction in costs. I also believe that the health problems we are experiencing in the community must be having an impact not only on the productivity of those affected but a drain upon the Health Services where there was not one before. As the likelihood of the States being sued is growing daily, this course of action in my view is preferable to the compensation of people we have allowed to become seriously ill.