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Minister wrong on Beachmere fish kills

Bligh government Minister Kate Jones was more interested in protecting her backside than the Beachmere environment, the State Opposition said today.

LNP environment spokesman Glen Elmes said Ms Jones had been seriously caught out on the government's failure to respond to repeated calls to act on Beachmere's deteriorating conditions. Mr Elmes said over three weeks ago local resident Paul Milburn rang the Department of Environment and Resource Management to report his concerns – call reference number CJ47381.

“Nearly four weeks later Mr Milburn has not received a response,” Mr Elmes said “Mr Milburn again phoned the Department to report Tuesday's fish kill and he was transferred to departmental officers in Rockhampton, five hundred kilometers away.”

Mr Elmes said for the past fortnight local residents had been watching ground water from an adjacent construction site being drained into the lake, introducing significant amounts of highly toxic hydrogen sulphide.

Independent testing by Dr Ben Diggles says, on his findings, the most likely cause of the fish kills was the draining of the groundwater from the construction site.*

“The environment department is supposed to act as an environmental watchdog,” Mr Elmes said. “But why, if as the Minister claims her officers responded to complaints, wasn't this detected? “As usual the Minister is in denial and is more interested in protecting her own backside than the environment.”

For further information contact: Glen Elmes 0400 800 114

***Independent environmental test by Dr Ben Diggles:**

I suggest that around 2 weeks (based on testimony of local residents) of draining ground water from the adjacent construction site into the southern area of the lake at a rate of 2 litres per second (7200 L/hr or 172,800 L/day) has introduced significant amounts of highly toxic H₂S into the small, relatively shallow, but previously highly productive lake. The presence of the H₂S (as indicated by its distinctive smell, which has been identified by local residents who have probably mistaken the rotten eggs smell for sewage), strongly suggests that the groundwater itself is anoxic, and probably toxic to aquatic life.