Chandler Out of His Depth on E. coli Claims

Shadow Environment Minister Peter Chandler’s allegation about the Department of Health not promptly uploading the Darwin water quality results to its website is wide of the mark.

Commenting on Mr Chandler’s latest claims, Health Minister Kon Vatskalis said beach water testing is conducted on Monday or Tuesday each week and the samples sent to the Australian Water Quality Centre in Adelaide for thorough analysis.

“Most weeks, the results come back from the laboratory late on a Friday and are immediately posted to the appropriate link on the DHF website,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“But Mr Chandler would know there has never been an undertaking to meet a close of business Friday deadline, as the test results are sometimes not received until the following Monday.

“When the results come in, they are immediately posted to the web site. Only a conspiracy theorist would suggest otherwise.”

Mr Vatskalis said the Department of Health and Families is totally committed to the community’s health and safety and had acted promptly to alert the public to elevated E. coli levels.

“If the bacteria results are high, as happened recently, the Department has swiftly advised the public of potential dangers, both through the media and by erecting safety signs,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“The Department is following industry best-practice for beach water monitoring. I am advised there would no advantage to doing regular daily testing, as Mr Chandler suggests.

“However, if circumstances change – for instance, with the unusually heavy rain over the past couple of days – then extra sampling is done to ensure beach water quality can be closely monitored.

“Mr Chandler may think he is an expert on this issue but clearly he has not attempted to find out how the testing regime is actually conducted. He should get his facts right before he goes out of his depth again and I am inviting Mr Chandler to a briefing about our water testing.”

The latest testing indicated that all Darwin harbour beaches are safe for swimming.

Go to www.health.nt.gov.au and click the link on the right hand side to access beach water quality information.

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