

QENOS ALTONA COMMUNITY ATTITUDE SURVEY 2000

KEY FINDINGS

This report outlines the findings of the fourth wave of tracking the attitudes of Altona residents toward their immediate environment, the operations of Qenos and the Complex and to chemicals and plastics in general. Earlier waves of this tracking study were conducted in May, 1993, September 1995 and March 1997.

In reporting the findings, the attitudes of Altona residents from the 2000 survey are compared with these earlier waves. Additionally, comparisons are drawn between the attitudes of Altona residents and those of Australians nationally, since some of the questions from the PACIA survey conducted in 1996, were included in this survey.

The survey was commissioned by Qenos in order to provide feedback with respect to the effectiveness of our community education programs and the community consultation process adopted by the Altona Chemical Complex.

No significant change in attitudes:

- ◆ **Satisfaction with living in Altona** continues to rise gradually (from 89% in 1993, 91% in 1995 to 95% in 2000); The survey continues to find that people are generally satisfied with living in Altona. Proximity to the sea is perceived as the main benefit. Other benefits of living in Altona include that it is close to everything, including the city, that it is peaceful and quiet, close to work, has light traffic and good amenities.
- ◆ While the **presence of industry** continues to be a source of discontent, there is some evidence of improvement, with less concern about:

	1993	1995	1997	2000
– Air Pollution	51%	41%	40%	27%
– Danger and explosions	13%	5%	3%	2%
– Proximity of industry to housing	10%	5%	2%	2%

- The majority of residents continue to **support the presence of local industry** in Altona, although this level has decreased since 1997, giving the lowest level of support found across the study:

<u>1993</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2000</u>
73%	76%	75%	64%

Perceptions of local environmental problems

- ◆ While **smell/odour** problems remain an issue, it is encouraging that there is an increasing perception of improvement over the last five years (1995 = 25%, 1997 = 35%, 2000 = 40%). There is also a perception that the odour, while less offensive, is happening more frequently (average of 38 days per year in 1997 compared to 45 in 2000).
- ◆ Fewer residents were concerned about the **appearance of industry** (1997 = 30 respondents, 2000 = 16 respondents), although these people showed a higher level of concern and were more likely to critique Qenos than 1997 respondents. Specific questions about Qenos found that residents rated it as average or similar to other plants (57%) or more critically, as obtrusive and unsightly (25%). Landscaping to conceal the plant was the most common solution mentioned.
- ◆ Among a small number of residents (5%), there was an **increase** in the perceived seriousness of the **operation of flares**. Qenos was commonly associated with flares of concern, although respondents clearly consider flares high above the plant to be more dangerous than ground flares. There is low awareness of which companies operate ground flares although Qenos is common among the companies mentioned.

The chemical industry

- ◆ Ratings on issues surrounding **the use of chemicals** tended to be similar to those recorded in 1997.
- ◆ Respondents were less certain that the **benefits outweigh the risks** of the industry.

Altona Chemical Complex:

Concern about the **operations of the Altona Chemical Complex** increased although the majority remain unconcerned.

<u>1993</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2000</u>
41%,	41%,	31%,	38%

- ◆ The results suggest a slight downward trend in the proportion of respondents who believe that the **environmental performance is improving** :

<u>1993</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2000</u>
57%	58%	55%	51%

- ◆ While awareness of **groundwater problems** remained at 1997 levels, half of the respondents who were aware of the groundwater contamination felt that the companies involved dealt with the problem responsibly (51%). This represents a change in opinion from 1997, where 72% had considered that companies had dealt with the problem responsibly and had rectified the problem. Qenos was the company most often associated with this issue although one third of respondents were not sure who was responsible for groundwater contamination.

Qenos and Community Consultation

- ◆ Awareness of **products manufactured by Qenos** had risen since 1997 (1993 = 47%, 1995 = 40%, 1997 = 47%, 2000 = 69%).
- ◆ Awareness of **community consultation** had increased (1993 = 54%, 1995 = 54%, 1997 = 52%, 2000 = 60%) and ratings of effectiveness of the consultation also increased slightly (1993 = 56%, 1995 = 53%, 1997 = 62%, 2000 = 64%). Zone B residents continue to be the most critical of the community consultation process, with 29% rating it as 'not effective'. In comparison, Zone C tends to be supportive of the consultation process with 64% rating it as effective. However, many respondents feel that they do not get enough information (51%).
- ◆ Awareness of the industry initiatives continues to be low, with one in five residents being familiar with the 'Responsible Care' initiative and awareness of the 'Community Right to Know' initiative. Familiarity with the initiative is highest in Zone D with 30% of residents familiar with Responsible Care. Questions on Community Right to Know initiative was introduced in this survey. Awareness of this initiative was low with 21% of residents claiming they had heard of it. Awareness was higher in Zone C and lower in Zone A.
- ◆ While none of the companies tended to have a particularly good reputation for **community involvement**, Qenos was more commonly mentioned than other companies, particularly for sponsorship of local events.

Survey data:

- ♦ *August 2000, 280 telephone interviews*
- ♦ *4 geographic zones: a) Central Avenue, Princes Freeway, Victoria Street; b) Princes Freeway, Geelong Road, Bladin Street; c) Nearest Qenos: Maidstone Street, Charles Road, McIntyre Street, Blyth Street; d) Esplanade, Purnell Street, Waters Drive*
- ♦ *Previous waves: 1993, 1995, 1997*