



US activist backs Yarloop campaign

CELEBRATED US environmental activist Erin Brockovich visited Perth last week.

Ms Brockovich became a household name worldwide when she took on a Californian power company for polluting the a water supply and had an Oscar-winning film made about her campaign.

She was in Perth as a keynote speaker at the Local Government Week Convention and, while visiting, took the opportunity to support former Yarloop residents who claim air pollution from Alcoa's Wagerup refinery made them sick and forced them to relocate.

But, Ms Brockovich disappointed many by refusing to visit the area, saying she had no inten-

tion of going anywhere near a facility she believed was leaking contaminants that could be lethal.

She said feedback from 160 residents with health problems spoke for itself, and urged the State Government to stand up and listen to the community's concerns.

"It was really hard for me to not pay attention to this case," Ms Brockovich said. "Every person's complaint is worth listening to and their symptoms reminded me of my original case.

"We must find a balance between industry and people because neither is going to go away.

"This is an opportunity for Alcoa to come forward and do the right thing."

Community Alliance for Positive Solutions group chairman Vince Puccio, a Yarloop resident, said he had waited for 11 years for someone to listen to his concerns.

"The population of our town has dropped by one third since 2001 and our close-knit community has been destroyed," he said.

Ms Brockovich said she was confident residents of the town would get compensation.

Brisbane-based Shine Lawyers were considering a class action against Alcoa and she would complete a full investigation with Shine before they decided how to proceed.



Erin Brockovich at a media conference last week with Vince Puccio and Cam Auxer