



# Lawyers launch legal action against Alcoa

By PHIL HICKEY

AUSTRALIAN litigation firm Shine Lawyers has launched legal proceedings in the United States on behalf of more than 200 residents allegedly harmed by Alcoa's Wagerup refinery.

Shine Lawyers executive director Simon Morrison said the claim had been filed in the Philadelphia Court in Pennsylvania last week against Alcoa Inc following a lengthy investigation into the allegations of affected residents.

It is understood Shine Lawyers have teamed up with American anti-pollution campaigner Erin Brockovich and other legal firms to pursue the investigation.

Ms Brockovich reviewed the case after being contacted by people who had suffered illness and injury that they attributed to emissions from Alcoa's Wagerup refinery.

Mr Morrison said for more than a decade, people living near the refinery at Yarloop had complained of respiratory problems, skin irritations, sore throats and eyes, extreme fatigue, mental dysfunction, blood noses, cancers, and organ failure.

"Alcoa has consistently denied that it has done anything wrong but we believe there are grounds to proceed further and our principals have now filed the complaint in the US court," Mr Morrison said.

But Alcoa of Australia managing director Alan Cransberg hit back last Friday, claiming such allegations had no merit.

"We will defend, in the appropriate forum, our performance and reputation as a company," Mr Cransberg said.

"We greatly value our local communities and we are proud of the work we do together.

"We do, and will continue to, operate in a safe and sustainable way."

A Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) report released last October concluded emissions from Alcoa's Wagerup refinery were a "major contributor to some odour events in the region".

At the time, DEC deputy director general Robert Atkins said the study confirmed that there were some areas in which Alcoa could make improvements.



Local residents have blamed the Alcoa refinery for a range of illnesses.