



STAR POWER? Erin Brockovich in real life and, right, Julia Roberts who played her in the movie of the same name.

## Why Erin Brockovich's out to help ill Aussies

US environmental campaigner Erin Brockovich has joined West Australian residents to examine the merits of a court case against mining giant Alcoa.

About 160 Yarloop residents have complained of respiratory problems, skin irritation, sore throats and eyes, extreme fatigue, mental dysfunction, stomach upset, blood noses, cancers and organ failure in the past 11 years. They claim emissions from Alcoa's Wagerup refinery are causing the effects.

Ms Brockovich, whose environmental campaign against a Californian mining company was made famous by Julia Roberts in the Hollywood movie Erin Brockovich, agreed to review the case after receiving an email from a Yarloop resident.

"We think we live in a big world but it's really smaller

than you think," Ms Brockovich said. "Somebody from the area that was sick, from what they believe to be Alcoa, emailed me.

"I was intrigued with her illnesses and concerned at what she was suffering through and recommended one of our toxicologists see her and he did. After he did some testing and researching he said 'this is something you should look into'."

Lawyer Simon Morrison, who is acting as Ms Brockovich's Australian lawyer, said it was too early to start talking about dollars or compensation but was confident the residents had a good case.

Alcoa later said its Wagerup refinery was the most studied industrial facility in WA and had been deemed safe for employees and neighbouring communities.

—AAP

