

# HEALTHY GREEN LIVING MEDIA ARCHIVE: 1998-2012



## LIVING TOXIC FREE

Sustainable living includes reducing the amount of toxic chemicals in your immediate environment.

### What we do

Our Safer Solutions website has comprehensive information, easy guides and Q&As on home use, renovations and in the garden; as well as for child care centres.

We believe in the right to know about pollution that affects our health and the environment. Total Environment Centre has been campaigning and providing credible information on toxic chemicals and safer alternatives and new laws to protect the community and the environment, for over two decades

# Latest News

## CREDIBLE GREEN LABELLING CRISIS



*Created on Wednesday, 05 December 2012 11:17*

In an effort to stem consumer concern from a flood of 'eco-labels' and self-created green claims by product manufacturers in recent years, the Buying Better project released its proposals to improve the reliability of 'green' credentials today.

The Buying Better project - undertaken by Green Capital, the business sustainability arm of the Total Environment Centre –investigated the green claims for 4 products: beef, cleaning products, small electronic goods and printing paper.

'The findings show that a plethora of confusing and self-serving claims inevitably undermines consumer confidence as the "greening" of many product lines has attempted to move into the consumer mainstream," said TEC executive director Jeff Angel.

"Consuming products is not just about the private purchase contract, it's about the effect of those decisions on society as a whole, and the health of the environment which sustains us all. So we have to get it right."

Mr Angel said the findings show that "Paper claims are almost chaotic; beef is just starting the sustainability journey, with early warnings of confusion; while small electronics needs government intervention. Laundry products meanwhile, now have so many different label claims, we'd be surprised if anyone takes any notice of them," he said.

The Buying Better project offers solutions as well as a critique of current practice.

"We've tried to make labelling across the board simpler by saying what's most important in Australian terms across the product cycle, from production, to use, to disposal. For example, with paper it is where and how the timber is obtained and the manufacturing process; for beef it is the sustainable management of the grazing lands, as well as wastage by consumers; and for cleaning products it is about overall use, whether you really need some products such as throw-away wipes, and also needed is more transparency on ingredients."

"Some of our findings may go against conventional ideas but we focussed on what will make the biggest difference in Australia," Mr Angel said.

"We propose guides for buying decisions and new policy for each product area."

"Industry, the ACCC and NGOs should get together to agree on information standards," Mr Angel said.

[Link to the 4 Reports](#)

# Latest News

## Out of the laboratory and on to our plate



*Created on Thursday, 27 March 2008 22:35*

The new report reveals that at least 104 food, food packaging and agricultural products containing nano-ingredients are now on sale internationally. These include diet replacement milkshakes, cooking oil, tea and fortified fruit juice; food additives sold for use in processed meats, soft drinks, bakery and dairy products; long-life and antibacterial food packaging; and antibacterial kitchenware.

In light of the evidence that many nano-ingredients used in these products pose new toxic risks for humans and the environment, Friends of the Earth is calling for a halt to the sale of nanofoods until they can be shown to be safe. Check out the report - <http://nano.foe.org.au/node/219>

# Latest News

## State laws fail communities on toxic leaks



*Created on Saturday, 11 August 2007 02:26*

“Despite objections from environmental and local government groups, the Carr Government transferred key state pollution controls to local government on the grounds of saving money. It has now been revealed that Mona Vale residents in an area surrounding the Unomedical sterilizing plant have unwittingly been exposed to the release of the carcinogen Ethylene Oxide, at levels up to 100 times over the limit considered safe by NSW Health, for over ten years. The plant only received local government assessment,” said Jeff Angel, Director of TEC.

“Planning law changes also meant that additional works at the plant were regarded as ‘ancillary’ and not requiring serious review. This situation demonstrates that changes to State level oversight of industrial emissions and planning approval can lead to serious gaps in regulatory control.”

“The development approval for the Unomedical plant has, in effect, allowed the toxic release of the equivalent of 50 kilograms of the carcinogen Ethylene Oxide each day without any filtration. Similar operations both in NSW and overseas have adopted world standard best practice in treatment of stack emissions to achieve what are considered safe ambient air levels.”

Ethylene Oxide emitting industry is not required to be licensed with the Department of Environment and Climate Change under the State’s pollution legislation, the Protection of the Environment Operations Act.

“This dangerous and unregulated release of a known carcinogen into the community raises wider concerns about the number of other communities potentially exposed to health hazards due to lack of regulatory control of polluting industries”, Mr Angel said.

# Latest News

## Alarm over release of toxic air pollutant in Northern Beaches



*Created on Wednesday, 08 August 2007 22:26*

“News of the facility’s closure by Pittwater Council following advice from the NSW Health advisory panel has justifiably alarmed local residents who are demanding to know what the risks from ethylene oxide exposure in their community are”, said NTN’s Dr Mariann Lloyd-Smith.

“Those at high risk of health impacts from exposure to the pollutant include infants and children, pregnant women and those with chemical sensitivities and respiratory problems”, said Dr Lloyd-Smith.

Local resident Kim Brebach believes the toxic pollutant has been emitted from the site for at least the past 5 years and possibly for as long as the past 20 years. Residents are demanding to know why there has not been appropriate regulatory oversight of the facility at the state level.

“This type of facility should be regulated by NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change and not left to Council to manage. There has been a systemic failure which has allowed this pollution to occur for many years, placing residents’ health at risk”, said TEC’s Director, Jeff Angel.

Similar pollution events have occurred in the USA where an enforcement action was brought against a provider of medical sterilisation services for its violation of the federal standards for ethylene oxide emissions from sterilisation facilities in six US states and the emission of toxic pollutants which posed serious health risks to the community.

According to NSW Health’s advice to local residents, ethylene oxide is a carcinogen that could cause lymphoma and leukemia after prolonged exposure. The US EPA states that ethylene oxide has the potential to cause serious reproductive harm, damage to the liver and kidneys, aggravate asthma and damage lung cells.

Given the length of possible exposure, residents are calling for NSW Health to conduct a detailed health study to determine if residents suffer from higher than normal rates of cancers and other related illnesses.

“This dangerous and unregulated release of a known carcinogen into the community raises wider concerns about the number of other communities potentially exposed to health hazards due to lack of regulatory control of polluting industries”, Mr Angel said.

For further information contact:

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# Latest News

## Dioxin contamination in Sydney Harbour



*Created on Saturday, 04 February 2006 00:32*

The ban on all commercial fishing operations in the Sydney Harbour came as no surprise to the Total Environment Centre. Sydney Harbour is amongst the three worst dioxin polluted harbours in the world. The government's announcement confirms TEC's concerns that the remediation of the Rhodes Peninsula site will be inadequate to protect human health and the environment. TEC also expressed concern that the NSW government did not conduct a wider monitoring program after finding high levels of dioxin or 'hotspots' throughout Homebush Bay during the 1990s.

Dioxin is a highly mobile and persistent pollutant. The World Health Organisation states that long-term exposure to dioxin is linked to the impairment of the immune system, the developing nervous system, the endocrine system and reproductive functions. Dioxin is recognised as a human cancer causing agent.

### **TEC demands best-practice clean-up for Rhodes Peninsula**

In 2003, TEC joined the chorus of concern about the remediation of the dioxin contamination during the 2003 Commission of Inquiry into its cleanup. TEC stated to the 2003 Commission of Inquiry that it was extremely concerned with the lack of coherence between the Union Carbide and Allied Feeds remediation plans. These concerns were expressed earlier in its submission to the 2002 Parliamentary Inquiry into the cleanup of Rhodes Peninsula and suggested that one remediation process that attained world best-practice should encompass the entire peninsula.

Remediation must meet international obligations

The government has allowed the two adjacent sites of the most contaminated land in Sydney to be remediated using two different processes. One of the processes uses direct thermal desorption which is effectively incineration. TEC is concerned the incineration process will breach Australia's responsibilities under the Stockholm Convention and produce more dioxin.

### **Federal government monitoring program also failed to protect community**

The National Toxics Network conducted a review of the federal government's Dioxin Action Program (2001-2004) and were dismayed to find the plan failed to monitor and assess 'hotspots' of dioxin contamination throughout the Sydney Harbour. The failure to conduct a comprehensive, scientific, well-resourced monitoring program of dioxin has resulted in dangerous levels building up in the food chain and potentially contaminating Sydney's population.

# Latest News

## Cotton Industry's Good Neighbour Policy Cold Comfort



*Created on Friday, 18 December 1998 11:00*

The industry's move toward self-regulation is extremely concerning, particularly in light of the fact that there is no external auditing process being proposed, said Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner with Total Environment Centre.

"The release of the cotton industry's 'good neighbour' Best Management Practices policy is cold comfort to those farmers whose properties and produce are already contaminated. Cattle farmers must be worried sick about another 'beef crisis' since the disclosure that there are 1,400 contaminated farms on an 'e-list' released by the National Residue Survey".

"TEC have requested a copy of the 'good neighbour' policy on at least three occasions, but has been refused access. What have they got to hide? We understand there is no external auditing process attached to it, which means it doesn't amount to much in terms of knowing what farmers are really doing on the ground. The most cynical view is that it's an elaborate PR exercise,".

"The rejected cattle may just be the tip of the iceberg. TEC has received several notifications from cattle farmers in the Namoi valley indicating their cattle have turned up with endosulfan residues. These farmers don't know what to do because they can't stop pesticides trespassing from their cotton neighbours. Inadequate state regulations offer them no protection either. They also report that at sale yards, if it's known your cattle come from areas near cotton you can't get top dollar," Ms Immig said.

"Endosulfan residues are being found in rivers and on pastures in areas close to cotton, it really was only a matter of time before cattle turned up with contamination making them unfit for export or sale to domestic markets, said Pip Stenekes of the NSW Nature Conservation Council.

"While the commitment shown by a few cotton growers to raising environmental standards is positive, our research has revealed that only one or two farms are accredited to ISO 14000. This shows there is still a vast potential to achieve higher environmental standards," Ms Stenekes said.

"The cotton industry as a whole still has a long way to go in terms of becoming more ecologically sustainable. The industry is responsible for serious environmental contamination and degradation of riverine environment and spray drift incidents involving humans. The government must ensure regulations adequately protect the environment and other industries from the impacts of cotton farming".

# Latest News

## Tussle over Tussock - there's life after Frenock



*Created on Wednesday, 23 December 1998 11:00*

"Despite claims that 'environmentalists' had Frenock removed from the market, investigation into its voluntary removal by the chemical giant ICI (of Helix fame), indicates it had more to do with the limited Australian market and closure of the Japanese chemical company who manufactured the active ingredient flupropanate," said Ms Immig Chemicals Campaigner with Total Environment Centre.

"Calls by the Taskforce and farmers to have Frenock re-instated are futile. ICI are extremely unlikely to re-register the chemical when it comes up for renewal by the National Registration Authority (NRA) for AgVet chemicals next June. It is likely that the NRA would require new toxicological data for the chemical to meet current health and environmental standards which may not be economically viable for the company to produce," Ms Immig said.

"Claims that Australia will be 'taken over' by serrated tussock because Frenock is not available are alarmist. It's true that it is a serious weed, but integrated weed management strategies have been developed by NSW Agriculture over several years, which offer practical control options for many of the situations the tussock thrives in. The methods include education programmes to stop further spread; competition with native grasses; pasture improvement; cultivation practices; physical control options as well as the selective application of glyphosate containing herbicides".

"Those confronted with the weed would be well advised to put their efforts and energy into dealing with the dissemination of information about the available control strategies rather than pointing the finger at environmentalists for the removal of a chemical which isn't coming back."

"The removal of Frenock does serve as a reminder to all land users that placing all your bets on chemical controls for pests is not sustainable management. Stricter environmental and health standards for all chemicals will only increase in the future. This should be embraced by the Federal Government who should support the alternative integrated controls," Ms Immig concluded.

# Latest News

## Environment groups and cattle farmers united



*Created on Monday, 01 February 1999 11:00*

The groups also called on major parties to detail how they will protect the environment, sustainable agriculture and rural communities by overhauling pesticide legislation.

"The cotton industry should be treated like all other high-impact polluting industries and be forced to be made accountable for the pollution it creates. Peter Austin, columnist for The Land commented (28.1.99) that 'Too often, the cotton industry seems to be calling the tune, trusting to its financial and political 'clout' to subdue opposition'".

"The government's apparent unconditional support for the polluting ways of the cotton industry condemns the rest of NSW to live in the toxic chemical cocktail they leave behind," Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner with Total Environment Centre.

"The current endosulfan beef crisis is not the one off event the cotton industry is claiming it to be- far from it - it's just the beginning. The 1998 floods moved endosulfan residues from polluted rivers and off cotton farms across vast areas of previously uncontaminated land. Spray drift occurs every time endosulfan is applied. We wholeheartedly support calls by the Cattle Council for an official inquiry into cross contamination with pesticides."

"Graziers should be warned that their industry will continue to pay for the chemical pollution caused by the intensive use of pesticides on cotton farms. Their health and the health of their children will also suffer. They should not be fooled by the cotton industries well-oiled PR machinery, because the undisputed fact is that neither 'Good Neighbour Policies' or so-called 'Best Management Practices', will stop pesticides from trespassing off cotton farms onto other people's property. It's very concerning to hear that cotton is now taking over the lower Lachlan Valley".

"It's a disgrace that so little has been done to address this serious pollution issue. It always takes a trade crisis to bring attention to it. The question no-one dares ask is, if so many cattle are being seriously contaminated (1,400 farms that we know of so far), what's happening to the rest of the environment? What about the birds, the fish, macro-invertebrates, trees and people also being exposed to endosulfan and countless other pesticide residues in the air, soil and water?"

"Endosulfan has been identified as a suspected endocrine disrupting chemical by the WWF and the Illinois Environment Protection Authority. Where will that leave us in a few years when the best part of inland NSW is covered with pesticide contamination and our cotton 'neighbours' are long gone?"

# Latest News

## Lead threats to children set to increase



*Created on Monday, 22 February 1999 11:00*

"The Lead Advisory Service, a community operated centre providing free information to the public, has been told to plan the winding up its operations by the end of the financial year, but reasons for the closure have not been provided, " said Ms Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner, Total Environment Centre.

"Lead is a community issue and the success of the Service illustrates the community's willingness to take charge of their destiny. Working at the 'coal face' isn't a strong point for the NSW EPA, so community-run services such as these are critical."

"If the NSW government thinks the lead issue is over, they're wrong. While significant progress has been made to reduce lead threats to children - the battle is far from over. The program needs to move into the next gear to ensure the good work that has been done has not been in vain."

"Total Environment Centre is already overwhelmed with calls from the public about chemicals and children. Without a specialist centre such as the Lead Advisory Service, the three hundred plus calls per month they currently receive will go unanswered. There's still a great deal of work to be done to ensure children are given the cleanest environment possible."

"If anything, the Service should be expanded to deal with other commonly requested information about chemicals and children. But at the very least the Service should be able to continue its important work without threats of closure," Ms Immig concluded.

# Latest News

## Gunnedah clouded in toxic chemicals



*Created on Friday, 26 February 1999 11:00*

"According to local residents, the chemical blew in with winds from the south east off the nearby Breeza Plains. After the winds died down the cloud of chemicals stayed over Gunnedah," said Ms Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner Total Environment Centre.

"People living in the area are all too familiar with the smell of different pesticides in the air and quickly recognised it and alerted authorities. The EPA and local health authorities are apparently investigating numerous complaints made by residents.

"This latest incident is another example of how cotton Best Management Practices and Good Neighbour Programs fail to protect the community and environment from regular bombardment with dangerous cotton chemicals,"

"The NSW government's blatant disregard for the health and safety of people living in cotton growing areas is appalling. Following hot on the heels from the endosulfan beef residue crisis, one wonders how many more incidents will occur before the cotton industry and the government admit that self-regulation of dangerous insecticides is absurd".

"Doctors and residents should be on the look out for symptoms of organophosphate poisoning which are most rapid following inhalation. According to Queensland Health Guidelines for Medical Management of Organophosphate Toxicity, the exposed become symptomatic within 12 hours which symptoms such as: blurred vision; increased salivation and sweating; headache; confusion; slurred speech; muscular cramps; bradycardia; nausea; vomiting and bronchconstriction," Ms Immig concluded.

# Latest News

## Cotton industry acting like thugs in Dubbo cotton decision



*Created on Thursday, 13 May 1999 10:00*

Total Environment Centre today accused the Cotton Industry for acting like thugs, threatening costly legal action and calling the planning process 'discriminatory' in the Dubbo cotton decision.

"As Gary Punch from Cotton Australia well knows, any industry that poses a significant environmental threat needs to undergo thorough assessment for its environmental impacts. It's absolute nonsense that it is a discriminatory process, it's basically good planning practice that should be applied to the rest of NSW," said Jeff Angel, Director Total Environment Centre.

"The fact remains that the proposed cotton development in Dubbo will use vast quantities of pesticides and defoliants, genetically modified crop varieties, and is located in an environmentally sensitive location next to a river and aquifer recharge area. There is also concern about its proximity to the town and other important tourist attractions".

"It is hardly surprising the Dubbo community has reservations about cotton development in its diverse and thriving centre. The industry's performance last season was appalling, and this was after the introduction of industry Best Management Practices".

"The Council must not let the overblown threats of costly legal implications for rejecting the development sway or influence the decision making process." Mr Angel concluded.

# Latest News

## Australian children being exposed to increasing levels of DDT in breastmilk



*Created on Monday, 05 July 1999 10:00*

"According to the latest 1996 Australian Market Basket Survey (AMBS) produced by the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA), levels of total DDT in breast milk have been steadily increasing by approximately 0.005 mg/kg each year since 1992, said Ms Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner, Total Environment Centre.

"No explanation is given by ANZFA as to why DDT levels in breast milk are increasing, but clearly Australian children are being exposed to a greater body burden of DDT from breast milk in 1999 than they were in 1992," Ms Immig said.

"TEC has thoroughly examined the AMBS and discovered the commonly used fruit and vegetable insecticide, Dicofol, is by far the most significant organochlorine poison occurring in the 'average Australian diet'. Dicofol is related to DDT in its chemical structure and can contain up to 1g/kg of DDT and/or DDT-related compounds as contaminants in pesticide formulations. Dicofol might as well be DDT, it's so similar."

"Researchers in Canada have discovered that measurable levels of DDT have been found in about 30% of samples of amniotic fluid of unborn babies. Rachel Carson in her visionary book Silent Spring first raised the alarm about the long-term health and environmental effects of DDT because of its ability to bio-accumulate in body fat and up the food chain. DDT is a recognised carcinogen and causes reproductive effects".

"The Material Safety Data Sheet for Dicofol states that 'repeated or long term exposure could result in liver and nervous system effects and possible adrenal, kidney and heart injury'. Scientists don't know yet what will happen to children who are exposed to DDT and related chemicals their whole life, but it is seriously worrying given the reputation of DDT."

"Australian authorities must take all precautions to ensure exposure to DDT is minimised. If this means banning chemicals like Dicofol, and any other insecticides containing DDT, then that is what should occur immediately," Ms Immig concluded.

# Latest News

## School bus sprayed with pesticide in Narrowmine



*Created on Thursday, 21 October 1999 10:00*

A school bus full of children and its driver, Shirley Jeffery, were forced to drive through a cloud of pesticide spray drift coming from a nearby ground rig operation, only a few hundred metres from the main road, Total Environment Centre announced today.

"According to Shirley, the school bus driver, it isn't the first time the school bus had been sprayed, but this latest incident clearly illustrates that self-regulatory guidelines do not work to protect the public from exposure to toxic pesticides," said Ms Joanna Immig, Chemicals Campaigner, Total Environment Centre.

"It appears the pesticide applicator wasn't taking any notice of local requirements to notify neighbours within one kilometre of the proposed application, or to place mobile road signs to indicate spraying was in progress."

"Children are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of pesticide exposure and the government must ensure that all measures are taken to ban situations where this is likely to occur. School buses, and the routes they travel along, are obvious situations where better protection is needed to stop these incidents from occurring" said Ms Immig.

"In other countries, such as the USA, 'no spray zones' have been developed around schools and child care centres to create a buffer between spraying operations and children to protect them from pesticide exposure".

"We need to adopt strict legal requirements in NSW legislation to protect children such as the duty to notify neighbours of proposed pesticide applications, signage, and record keeping so that pesticide applicators will think twice about being slack when it comes to applying toxic chemicals near children," Ms Immig concluded.

# Latest News

## Giant leap forward for pesticide management in NSW



*Created on Friday, 29 October 1999 10:00*

The government's release of the Pesticides Bill 1999 represents a giant leap forward for the regulation and management of pesticides in NSW and comes not a moment too soon in the wake of a number of pesticide disasters in the past two weeks, Total Environment Centre said today.

"It's been a long time in the making but the new Pesticides Bill has arrived as promised," said Mr Jeff Angel, Director Total Environment Centre.

"The overhaul of the 21 year old Act was desperately needed to address issues of pesticide pollution in the country and city. We urgently need better controls on pesticides to ensure the environment, farmers, children and other members of the community are no longer victims of chemical trespass and to ensure a genuine clean green agriculture image can be created".

"In the past two weeks there have already been a number of major incidents involving pesticides, and this is just the beginning of the intensive spraying season. A school bus in Narromine was forced to drive through a cloud of pesticide in one instance, while a school of 800 children was exposed to pesticide drift from roadside spraying of herbicides, " said Ms Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner with Total Environment Centre.

"Cattle producers and abattoirs are also extremely upset about the prospect of further damage to their industry this season from endosulfan residues off cotton crops. They should be supporting the legislation to obtain better protection".

"TEC will be looking at the Bill in detail and advising community groups and parliamentarians of any improvements. We will be working to ensure that critical parts of the Bill are enacted as soon as possible."

"Important issues for the community and environment include notification, annual public reporting of pesticide use and risk reduction programs and better recourse under the law if they are harmed by pesticides," Mr Angel concluded.

# Latest News

## Are we poisoning our children's future?



*Created on Monday, 27 March 2000 10:00*

The book is the first of its kind in Australia and provides an essential resource for teachers, administrators, maintenance staff, parents, carers and children to actively set about reducing the chemical load in schools and childcare centres, as well the home and office.

"Reducing the chemical load in children's environments is critical. The incidence of sick school syndrome is on the increase. More and more children are being diagnosed with diseases and disorders such as asthma, ADD and multiple chemical sensitivity which are caused or exacerbated by chemical exposures," said the book's author Ms Jo Immig.

"Due to their small size, rapid rate of growth and level of activity, children are amongst the most vulnerable to the impacts of chemical exposures. Some chemicals, such as lead, pesticides, and solvents, have been found to have profound effects on their growth, behaviour and intelligence, particularly in early childhood".

"Toxic Playground includes practical checklists for identifying and minimising chemical pollutants indoors. A Chemical Hazards Audit provides the basis for developing priorities for chemical risk reduction strategies. Case studies of children with chemical sensitivities are included to illustrate the challenges these children, their parents and carers and teachers face in providing healthy environments.

"Reducing the chemical load is also a challenge for all state government and private schools and childcare centres to ensure children are provided with the healthiest environment possible to grow and learn," Ms Immig concluded.

Toxic Playground: A guide to reducing the chemical load in schools and childcare centres

Author Jo Immig

Published by Total Environment Centre

104 pages including illustrations

Full colour jacket, printed on recycled paper

Price \$23 (plus \$2 postage)

ISBN 0-947360-16-6

Toxic Playground: A guide to reducing the chemical load in school and childcare centres is the first of its kind in Australia. This book provides an essential resource for teachers, administrators, maintenance staff, parents, carers and children to actively set about reducing the chemical load in schools and childcare centres.

Reducing the chemical load in children's environments is essential. More and more children are being diagnosed with diseases and disorders such as asthma, ADD and multiple chemical sensitivity that are connected to chemical exposures. The incidence of sick school syndrome is also on the increase.

Due to their size, rate of growth and activity, children are amongst the most vulnerable to the impacts of chemicals. Certain chemicals, such as lead, pesticides, and solvents, have been found to have profound effects on their growth, behaviour and intelligence, particularly in early childhood.

Children spend a great deal of their early years in childcare and at school. It is in these environments they are exposed to a wide range of potentially damaging chemicals, and where efforts must be focussed to reduce the chemical load.

Toxic Playground features practical checklists for identifying and minimising chemical pollutants indoors. A Chemical Hazards Audit provides the basis for developing priorities for chemical risk reduction. Case studies of children with chemical sensitivities are included to illustrate the difficulties these children, their parents, carers and teachers face in providing healthy environments.

Toxic Playground includes chapters on:

Responding the Alarm Bells: chemicals and children

Before the mid-20th century, exposure to toxic chemicals was gross and visible. Modern chemical exposure is insidious and invisible and the unseen enemy is the chemical load. There are a wide range of health and behavioural symptoms that may indicate a child is affected by exposure to chemicals.

Understanding the toxicology of chemicals

When is a chemical a poison? What is acute and chronic toxicity? What is the LD50 ? Making choices about what chemical to use, or not use, can be a daunting process in the face of complex scientific and medical information.

Contemporary toxicology is challenging the dose-response foundations of classical toxicology with the emergence of diseases such as multiple chemical sensitivity, chronic fatigue syndrome, attention deficits and endocrine disruption.

Maintaining good indoor air quality

On average, Australians now spend about 80% of their time indoors at home, school or work and less than 3% of time outdoors. Indoor air pollution is ranked among the top five environmental risks to public health by the US Environment Protection Agency. Failure to deal with indoor air pollution can affect the health of children and staff and can be costly in terms of lost 'productivity'.

Learning about the most dangerous chemicals

Is this chemical safe for children? This is the one of the most frequently asked questions about chemicals. There are thousands of chemicals found in schools and childcare centres - lead, volatile organic compounds, formaldehyde and nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide are known hazards to children and are priority chemicals for reduction around children.

Identifying chemical pollutants and safer alternatives

Common sources of chemical pollution in schools and childcare centres include location of facilities, materials used in the construction of buildings and interiors, toys and playground equipment, office machines, science, technical and applied studies, personal care products, building maintenance, pest control, cleaning materials and chemicals in food and water.

Developing policies to protect children

The United States has taken the lead with a National Agenda to Protect Children from Environmental Health Threats to Children which establishes protective public health standards based on children's susceptibility and takes account of the total chemical load. An outline of steps is provided for schools and childcare centres to develop their own Chemical Risk Reduction Strategies based on the precautionary principle and intergenerational equity.

Self-auditing for chemical hazards

A self-guided Chemical Hazards Audit provides a simple process for assessing priority areas of chemical risk in the school and childcare centre. Case studies of children with sensitivities to chemicals have been included to illustrate the challenges in providing safe environments for all children. Where possible, suggestions are given for safer chemicals or processes to be used in children's environments.

About the Author

Jo Immig has written numerous technical and popular articles on the hazards of and alternatives to toxic chemicals. Jo currently works as toxic chemicals campaigner for Total Environment Centre, where she coordinates community campaigns, undertakes research projects on issues such as the chemical load, indoor air quality and chemicals in children's environments.

Total Environment Centre

Total Environment Centre was established in 1972 as an environmental advocacy and research centre. The Centre provides public information on environmental concerns, advises on toxic chemicals and safer alternatives.

# Latest News

## Greens condemn Federal Cuts to National Pollutant Inventory



*Created on Friday, 02 February 2001 11:00*

The reduction in Federal support for the National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) by over 80% which was quietly announced in last year's Federal budget has disgusted environment groups.

It will strangle public access to industrial pollution information, two peak environment groups, The NSW Nature Conservation Council and the NSW Total Environment Centre, said today. The National Pollutant Inventory has only been running a few years, and has only partially achieved what it set out to do. As originally conceived it was an attempt to address the community's need for a "right to know" system about the nature and levels of pollutants being emitted by industries in their areas.

As of the first of July this year, the Australian NPI will only list some 90 different chemicals as compared to the 600 chemicals compulsorily listed on the equivalent American Toxic Release Inventory. Nevertheless the existing information has been a welcome change from the more usual industrial secrecy.

Now, seemingly after pressure from industry, it seems that the infant system will be allowed to fade away after an 80% cut in Federal funding to NSW from \$400 000 to \$75 000 per annum, in line with cuts to other states involvement in the program. Even in the NPI's limited early format, it seems to have been too embarrassing for industry to reveal what they were releasing into the environment.

"This is a Federal program, and without a readily accessible and reasonably up-to-date source of information like the NPI, communities will no longer be able to readily identify which industries are having the biggest impacts in their areas. There will be a regressive return to the lengthy and expensive bureaucratic processes of Freedom of Information requests, and scrutinising state licences if they exist at all, to try and find out which industries are polluting the environment with what and how much," said TEC chemicals campaigner Mark Oakwood.

"The lack of commitment by the Federal Government to the NPI also runs the risk of alienating industries and the states to the point where they will no longer contribute data to the NPI, and it can no longer function. This "death by neglect" approach is a cynical way to axe a project with a great deal of potential," commented Kathy Ridge, Executive Officer of the NSW Nature Conservation Council.

# Latest News

## Greens warn Growers of Gene food dangers



*Created on Tuesday, 03 April 2001 10:00*

Speakers from a range of environmental and consumer organisations have been invited to address concerned growers in Culcairn shire on the risks of genetically engineered crops.

Multinational agribusiness company Monsanto wants to establish herbicide tolerant canola trial crops in the shire, between Wagga and Albury. Local conventional growers are concerned on the impact this may have on their crops and trade prospects.

In order to assess the potential problems, concerned growers and community members have invited speakers from both sides of the argument to present their cases.

"Given that the region exported 26 000 tonnes of GE free canola oil to Europe last year, there is a very real concern that contamination of their crops with GE strains of canola will cost them their European export status. This will force them to trade with countries like the US, Canada, and Brazil where there is already a glut of GE produce, probably at lower rates" said Mark Oakwood, genetic engineering campaigner with the NSW Total Environment Centre. Oakwood is one of the environment speakers invited to address the meeting to be held in Henty tonight.

In 58 "secret" trials in Tasmania over the last three years, contamination of conventional crops with GE strains occurred at at least eleven sites. Secrecy has meant that growers in Tasmania do not know if their crops are likely to be contaminated or not, and they have to pay to get seeds and produce tested in order to ensure their crops are GE free.

"Where are the guarantees that this will not happen again in Culcairn shire? It is ludicrous that an American multinational like Monsanto is being permitted by the Australian Federal government to treat growers and their produce with contempt. Surely the rights of Australian producers and consumers comes before the interests of giant multinationals," concluded Oakwood.

# Latest News

## Pesticide controls and testing inadequate for all farmers



*Created on Wednesday, 18 April 2001 10:00*

The feature in today's Sydney Morning Herald comes as no surprise to environmental campaigners. However, contamination of workers and our food supply by pesticides is not only limited to farmers from non English-speaking backgrounds.

"To assume that food in NSW is free of harmful pesticide residues based on only 300 samples is laughable," claimed Mark Oakwood, Chemicals Campaigner at the Total Environment Centre.

"NSW consumers are expected to believe that our food is free of harmful levels of pesticide residues based on an even smaller so-called 'representative' sample."

"To make the situation even worse, there are many loopholes that escape the feeble survey attempts of government. The big supermarket chains do their own testing, but do not release the results, and small growers can sell their produce direct to local grocers, without any testing whatsoever."

"The NSW government is clearly more concerned with maintaining the illusion of "clean and green" produce, without really doing anything to reduce chemical use on farms which threatens human and environmental health. Unacceptable levels of pesticide residues in the past have always been discovered by overseas importers of our produce. It seems they care more about the quality of our food than we do."

"Ironically, the Australian and New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) released its food residue testing results today as well. While they claim that there is no cause for concern, ANZFA failed to test human breast milk for pesticides as they have in every previous set of tests. Considering that DDT levels have been increasing in human breast milk in every set of results to date, it must be easier for ANZFA to claim no problems if they do not go looking for them," continued Oakwood.

"ANZFA also only tests a tiny fraction of all the food reaching our tables, and suffers from the same loopholes as the NSW system. If the reports of pesticide abuse by small farmers are true, then there is a significant and real chance of contaminated food reaching the tables, without any real effort by state or federal authorities to deal with the problem."

"Possible health effects from constant low-level pesticide exposure range from reproductive and developmental effects, nervous system damage, immune system impairment, through to a wide range of cancers."

"The only truly "clean and green" produce is that grown by certified organic growers, which is annually inspected and tested for pesticide traces. ANY pesticide traces found results in the loss of their certified organic status."

# Latest News

## Diet survey questioned



*Created on Thursday, 21 June 2001 10:00*

"If you don't go looking for a problem, you won't find one," said TEC Chemicals Campaigner, Mark Oakwood. "This survey is more like an exercise in looking the other way. While seeming to check for chemical residues in our food supplies, it hasn't gone nearly far enough. An independent and public investigation of the survey is urgently required"

"The survey conceals as much as it reveals. Human breast milk was omitted from the survey for the first time. A repetition of results from previous surveys for human milk showing an accumulation of banned chemicals, such as DDT, lindane and heptachlor (all detected in the last survey) would be highly embarrassing for the government and the agricultural sector. It is generally accepted that breast milk is the best food for infants, and we shouldn't have to tolerate contamination of this most critical source of nutrition."

"Another glaring shortcoming includes the failure to test for one single herbicide or wood preservative. These groups of chemicals include significant contaminants, such as the chlorophenoxy herbicides, some of which in the past have been contaminated with the highly toxic and persistent 2,3,7,8-TCDD form of dioxin, a known human carcinogen and hormone mimicking chemical. Other herbicides left off the survey include:

- Â· the ground water contaminating triazine group;
- Â· the highly toxic herbicide paraquat;
- Â· the most widely used herbicide in Australia, glyphosate and;
- Â· pentachlorophenol, a highly persistent and toxic timber preservative."

"It is all very well to assert that the levels are acceptable when considered individually, but the survey has not considered the impact of consuming many different chemicals each day in our food; all of which may be below acceptable levels, but collectively may cause negative health effects."

"By withholding the entire picture, the ATDS looks more like a marketing exercise aimed at reassuring potential export markets, rather than a genuine attempt to identify and deal with pesticide residue problems in our food supply."

"TEC calls for an independent review of the ATDS, with environment and consumer representation, to ensure that the next survey is a more accurate indication of the level of contamination of our food supply by agricultural chemicals. Australian consumers demand the right to know how clean (or otherwise) their food really is."

# Latest News

## Untested pesticide looms over Australian backyards



*Created on Tuesday, 20 November 2001 11:00*

'Due to its highly active nature the effects of Fipronil upon Australian fauna must be determined before its release into our backyards. Unless extensive testing is conducted there will be no way to determine how it may impact on the Australian ecosystem' said Ben Cole, Chemicals Campaigner of the Total Environment Centre.

Termidor would be used as a termiticide for the treatment of existing buildings, posts and poles. Termidor is currently registered by Aventis CropScience as an experimental product. For it to be released onto the market it must be reviewed by the National Registration Authority.

'I strongly recommend the NRA conduct a thorough review of the effects of Termidor on both Australian fauna and human health. Without this information they will not be able to assure the pest control industry that Termidor is safe for human handling and will not adversely effect the environment. A high level of caution must be exercised. If it is not safe it should not be used. Non-chemical barrier methods to stop termites should be more extensively used'.

'With the insurance industry clamping down on the pest control industry it is vital that pest control operators are not exposed to further risks'.

# Latest News

## Inquiry urged to ensure safety of local residents and environment during destruction of toxic waste



*Created on Tuesday, 05 February 2002 11:00*

Orica Australia Pty. has proposed to destroy 10,000 tonnes of dangerous hexachlorobenzene waste on a site located in Botany Industrial Estate.

Serious environmental and health concerns must be addressed by the imminent Commission of Inquiry into the destruction of 10,000 tonnes of toxic waste in Botany, Total Environment Centre said today. Orica Australia Pty. has proposed to destroy 10,000 tonnes of dangerous hexachlorobenzene waste on a site located in Botany Industrial Estate.

"A key public concern is the process chosen by Orica has not been proven to be safe and effective in the destruction of the toxic waste stored at Botany. When undergoing trials the favoured Geomelt process only successfully passed one of the three trials it underwent," said Ben Cole, Chemicals Campaigner for TEC.

"Since the trials, major modifications have been made to the process leaving a number of unanswered questions about the destruction technology. Due to its close proximity to residential areas the destruction facility must be proven to be reliable and safe."

"Another glaring omission is the need for a publicly released human health risk assessment. Local residents have repeatedly asked for a human health assessment but their request has been continuously denied. Without a transparent risk assessment process residents in the South Sydney region will not be convinced that they are safe."

"The Orica development proposal has demonstrated that toxic waste issues are a major public concern. The government should ensure that the polluter pays principle is used to provide assistance to community participation and support independent auditing from the outset of any hazardous waste related proposal."

Hazardous waste generation is continuing to rise in NSW. The last comprehensive study of hazardous waste was conducted in 1994. The study showed over 200,000 kiloliters of waste was generated in NSW.

"Without a long-term environmentally sustainable plan for hazardous waste, issues such as Orica will continue to arise. The government must set a strong foundation for cleaner production and environmental sustainability".

# Latest News

## Cotton industry self-regulation fails to protect community & environment from toxic chemicals



*Created on Monday, 06 April 1998 10:00*

The mediated agreement concerning the application of toxic chemicals in the controversial Gunnedah cotton growing area has failed, according to a review by Total Environment Centre (TEC). The prime cause is the cotton industry's serious bias against a co-operative approach to managing hazardous chemicals. The Audit also found the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) careless in their duty to protect the community and environment from exposure to pesticide pollution in Gunnedah.

"Controversy will explode again in Gunnedah because the mediated agreement has failed to provide the community with a framework for pesticide management in which it can be confident their health and the environment are protected from on-going exposure to pesticides", Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner with Total Environment Centre said today.

"The cotton industry bullied the government into mediation to resolve the escalating conflict in Gunnedah, but when given the chance to prove they could act with integrity, they failed. The EPA indulges in avoidance behaviour so it doesn't have to take tough action on pesticides. This leaves the community and environment in an extremely vulnerable situation."

"Industry sought to change the results of mediated spraying guidelines, failed to provide key information requested from it, and, has seriously breached undertakings in regard to essential auditing and performance indicators that allows testing of adherence to self-regulatory guidelines", said Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner, Total Environment Centre.

"The EPA have released preliminary results of a rainwater tank sampling program (the final report has been promised for months) in Gunnedah which indicates widespread low-level contamination with cotton chemicals in the Gunnedah district. The study found proof that long-held fears about spray drift occurring over a significant area are correct. In fact, they have found that chemicals travel for at least 3.7km from their point of application", Jo Immig said.

"The rainwater tank results sound serious alarm bells about the widespread contamination of the environment with pesticides, yet the EPA, regulators of pesticides in NSW, have done virtually nothing to address the issue. They don't even appear to be actively trying to amend the outdated Pesticides Act, which is seriously hampering their ability to regulate."

"Minister for the Environment Pam Allan, announced last year that if industry seriously breached the mediated outcomes, the EPA would impose a Section 49 Order under the NSW Pesticides Act to regulate the application of cotton chemicals in Gunnedah".

"Total Environment Centre now calls on the Minister to honour this commitment in light of the Audit's serious findings. Highly polluting industries such as the cotton industry cannot be left to regulate themselves. The community and the environment need to be protected from pesticide pollution - not sacrificed for the sake of profits", Ms Immig concluded.

# Latest News

## Industry resorts to take-over tactics to silence the opposition



*Created on Wednesday, 08 April 1998 10:00*

The attempt by Gunnedah cotton growers, aerial applicators and prominent Gunnedah business people and councillors, to take-over the widely supported Gunnedah Environment Group (GEG), by stacking their Annual General Meeting with "anti-environment members" can only be seen as desperate in the extreme, according to Total Environment Centre (TEC).

"This tactic is another example of the lengths the cotton and chemical industries will go to in order to silence legitimate opposition. It also shows that GEG are having an affect if industry sees them as that much of a threat", Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner with Total Environment Centre said today.

"The mediation process has failed to engender a "spirit of co-operation" which this blatant act of bullying indicates. It is clear that the majority of cotton farmers and aerial applicators have no intention of working within the mediated outcomes. Any bridge of trust that was established has been completely destroyed. How could anyone feel safe taking their concerns to a local committee for dispute resolution after this?"

"Any industry using hazardous chemicals with the potential to cause serious damage to the environment and human health should not be left to regulate themselves. The cotton and aerial spray industries are no exception. They were given a chance to show they could act responsibly within a self-regulatory framework, and they failed", Ms Immig said.

"The EPA and Environment Minister, Pam Allan need no further evidence of the serious bias industry has against a co-operative approach to managing pesticides. The EPA needs to come out of hiding and show some leadership with its charge to protect the environment and people from exposure to pesticide pollution."

"The logical course of action now is to trigger the Section 49 Order under the Pesticides Act for Gunnedah, and to amend the Act to provide a more effective regulatory framework for management of pesticides in NSW", concluded Ms Immig.

# Latest News

## Country delegation warns of pesticide disaster



*Created on Thursday, 07 May 1998 10:00*

"We will remind the Government that it made a commitment to act on pesticide pollution as an election promise, and to date it has done little to honour that commitment. We want the antiquated Pesticides Act amended this Parliamentary session to ensure all of the issues that communities in the country and city have raised about pesticides are addressed," said Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner, Total Environment Centre.

"Hot spots where pesticide disasters have intensified such as Gunnedah, Byron Shire, Coffs Harbour & Mudgee, serve to illustrate the extent of the pesticide problem across NSW. Unfortunately the Government's softly softly approach of 'putting out spot fires' with local mediation processes just doesn't cut it.

Pesticides are poisons, designed to kill, and we shouldn't be at the mercy of industry and some flimsy, non-enforceable agreements, to protect us and the environment from chemical trespass,' said Margaret Mercer, Chair, Gunnedah Environment Group.

"Pesticide pollution has been put in the too hard basket by politicians for too long. The fact is, the NSW Farmer's Association and the corporates don't represent the whole farming community - far from it, there are thousands of country, farm and town folk who want to see something done about pesticide regulation," Bev Smiles, Co-ordinator, Mudgee District Environment Foundation said.

"We shouldn't have to be on constant 'red alert' during intensive spraying seasons to protect our children from aerial pesticide sprays while they wait for the school bus or sit in schools, it's a basic right which should be enforced. At the moment, a banana or cotton plant has more rights than a child who should be protected from pesticide pollution. If our kids were commodities bound for the European market, protection would have been implemented long ago," said Kathy Vail, concerned parent from Middle Pocket .

"It's high time the government took action to seriously address pesticide pollution issues. There are matters of health as well as rural and agricultural policies and the green clean image of our food," concluded Don Want, North Coast Toxin Action Group.

# Latest News

## Cotton industry's secret anti-environment campaign plan released



*Created on Friday, 26 June 1998 10:00*

The cotton industry's secret plan to manage environmental conflicts, which also contains candid admissions about severe environmental and community problems, was released today by Total Environment Centre.

"The plan gives a clear picture of big brother putting 6 country regions under the microscope in order to manipulate local opinion. The plan sets out a script and this has been used in recent debates in Gunnedah, NSW and Dalby in QLD. Self regulation is a core part of the script, but it's meant to defuse controversy, not solve environmental problems," said Jeff Angel, Director TEC.

"Total Environment Centre, along with other rural-based environment groups, have been lobbying government to introduce regulatory controls to protect people and the environment from pesticide pollution generated by the cotton industry due to their heavy use of pesticides. It's now blatantly obvious the cotton industry can't stop pesticides trespassing onto other people's properties or the environment," Mr Angel said.

"The document systematically details the level of community concern in each of the cotton growing towns and suggests action plans to contain the damage. Gunnedah is described as a 'hot-bed of intrigue'; Moree 'an area requiring urgent attention'; Mungindi '...some anti-cotton elements in the town'; Dalby 'Sympathy could dissipate with rapid expansion [of the cotton industry] in the area. Pre-emptive communications are important' and, Emerald '...the town is in a maintenance phase'.

"The aerial applicator industry, the document states, '...is not always as environmentally conscious as it would like to claim' and '...they [aerial applicators] acknowledge the sprays are not always accurately applied'. The document admits that 'Gunnedah is a very difficult area to spray'".

"As an antidote to negative information about the cotton industry that moves through a strong informal network including schools, retail and various groups in towns the document suggests that, wherever possible, the industry should 'participate in these groups and control the discussion agenda'. The cotton industry's controlling agenda is of no surprise to environment groups who have had to constantly battle just for equal representation in mediation and consultation processes'.

"The real intentions of the cotton industry have now been revealed - make money and protect access to resources at all costs with little regard for the negative impacts of their industry on the community or environment. The government has pandered to the cotton lobby for far too long; the community can longer be put at the mercy of such a calculating industry," concluded Mr Angel.

### EXCERPTS FROM THE DOCUMENT:

Investigation and monitoring of community attitudes toward the cotton industry: initial summary, Stollznaw Research Pty Ltd, 1995

Page 1: "The community (apart from activists and non-related agricultural industry groups affected by problems in the cotton industry) is still open-minded and can be reached. They are open to persuasion".

Page 13: "Cotton growers should be presented as family farmers who for the most part have long-term interests in the area. They should be encouraged to participate in town activities but not be arrogant about their economic status".

Page 13: "Growers are experienced farmers. They do not use sprays because they like using sprays. They are trained. They are responsible. The only problem here is that the behaviour of some cotton farmers makes such a proposition difficult to sustain in the community at large".

Page 17: "...It is not conducive to establishing good relations to refer to withholding advertising from newspapers or support from various groups if they dare to criticise cotton. If this is done it should be done subtly".

Page 17: "In the Gunnedah area the way the land is being developed affects other farmers and small acreages, which perhaps should not be in the area anyhow. Neighbour problems are of critical importance and a source of great disharmony in Gunnedah".

Page 18: "Farm workers are a strong source of information in towns as to how cotton farmers behave and how cotton farms are managed, and the safety issues on cotton farms. They therefore should not be looked upon as casual labour but should be developed as apostles for the industry".

Page 19: "The term conservationist or environmentalist should always be applied to cotton farmers".

Page 21: "Farmers should be seen as 'conservationists', the environmentalists as 'extremists'. Practical versus professional conservationists".

"Environmentalists do not come from the land. They do not have solutions, only complaints. In many instances they are not part of the community, they are outsiders".

"Environmentalists do not practice what they preach. They are hypocritical, self-centred, publicity seekers not involved in agriculture. They are dangerous and invite political subversion".

Page 23: "There is acceptance of the fact that Gunnedah is a very difficult area to spray. In prevailing atmospheric conditions it is not always possible to spray under ideal circumstances".

\*Full report available on request

# Latest News

## Government ignores overwhelming community concern about pesticide pollution at it's peril



*Created on Thursday, 02 July 1998 10:00*

A recently conducted survey, by Newspoll Market Research, gauging community concern about pesticide pollution indicates without a doubt, that the vast majority of the community in rural and city areas are concerned about the impacts of pesticides and want improved controls on the use of pesticides, Total Environment Centre (TEC) announced today.

'Eighty six percent of those polled said they were concerned and 93% want improved controls on the use of pesticides. A majority of rural people are very concerned, 9% more than urban people. 71% of rural people are strongly in favour of improved controls. These results vindicate the position TEC and concerned community groups have repeatedly expressed to the Government about the escalating problems and persistent poisoning of the environment and people with pesticides,' said Jeff Angel, Director, Total Environment Centre.

'The Government has been snaking around the problem for far too long; the Carr government came to power with a promise that pesticide pollution would be addressed and virtually nothing constructive has been done to fulfil this promise'.

'The community has already been consulted, mediated, and basically abandoned by government on the issue; meanwhile children are still being sprayed while they wait for school buses; pesticides continue to pollute our already fragile rivers and sensitive ecosystems; and, cotton towns like Gunnedah are facing yet another season of intensive pesticide exposure, contaminated drinking water and high anxiety because the Government has failed to implement any effective regulatory action,' Mr Angel said.

'The poll results clearly show it would be to the Government's advantage to act on the concern the overwhelming majority of the community has about pesticides, rather than sitting on its hands while people and the environment are poisoned'.

'Total Environment Centre has facilitated communication between rural groups and the government on this issue over several seasons of high pesticide anxiety and have been extremely disappointed by the lack of response to adequately address the issues'.

'With the next intensive pesticide season commencing in the run-up to the election, there will be an all time high level of anxiety and backlash against the government for condemning the environment and people to further pesticide exposures'.

# Latest News

## National Strategy for Agricultural & Veterinary Chemicals - a wish list with no substance



*Created on Monday, 20 July 1998 10:00*

"Australia is coming under increasing international and domestic criticism for not providing any evidence to support the claim that programs for minimising the impacts of agricultural and veterinary (agvet) chemicals are effective," said Ms Jo Immig, Toxics Campaigner with Total Environment Centre.

"The Strategy certainly doesn't fill us with confidence that the Government has made a serious commitment to addressing pesticide risk reduction. It's close to a 'greenwash' and will harm Australia economically when the weakness of implementation becomes quickly apparent," said Ms Immig.

"The claim that Australia produces 'clean-green' produce is supported by minimal data. You have to ask yourself whether the Strategy has been prepared to wave in the faces of our concerned trading partners, or whether it is a genuine commitment to the whole community to finally do something about escalating agvet chemical impacts in Australia".

"The Strategy appears to address many of the key issues associated with the management of agvet chemicals but doesn't provide any implementation procedures for ensuring its Vision is realised. There's been no identification of performance indicators and no allocation of resources to make it all happen."

"The Government's claim that the Strategy does not seek to be prescriptive is concerning. When you're dealing with reducing the serious impacts of agvet chemicals on health, environment and trade, how can you NOT be prescriptive. The goal posts need to be clearly identified so we all know what we're working towards; it's an issue of equity for all stakeholders."

"Important issues that the strategy fails to address include setting pesticide risk reduction targets; collection of base-line data on the environmental and health impacts of agvet chemicals; community right-to-know regarding pesticide formulations and extent of use throughout the country,"

"There are thousands of community members who are very concerned about the impact of agvet chemicals in Australia. We were all expecting something with a little more substance; not just another Strategy document that will be relegated to the shelves and never realised".

# Latest News

## DEADLY SPILL HIGHLIGHTS NEED TO BAN TOXIC PESTICIDES



*Created on Wednesday, 13 February 2002 11:00*

TEC chemicals campaigner Ben Cole said "The fact that this extremely poisonous insecticide was near to local residents and a key water supply shows that regulations governing the use and transport of such toxins are failing badly."

"The only answer is to ban these chemicals from such areas or even better ban them all together," said Mr. Cole.

"This spill is yet another case of the government refusing to recognise that agricultural chemicals are highly toxic. The EPA should not just respond to disasters as they happen, they should control the situation through tough and unambiguous regulations," said Mr. Cole.

"The public are kept in the dark over how highly dangerous and toxic to both the environment and human health these agricultural pesticides are. This was highlighted when workers were exposed to danger and inappropriately instructed in how to deal with the cleanup."

Mr. Cole said that this pesticide, used by the cotton industry is only one of hundreds of potentially toxic chemicals and calls on the National Registration Authority to respond to community concern and commence a full overview of all highly toxic pesticides.

"TEC has long been calling for the ban of all agricultural chemicals that are acutely toxic, carcinogens, that cause reproductive and developmental damage in humans and irreversibly contaminate both land and water ecosystems," said Mr. Cole

"This spill is another example of toxic pesticides causing huge environmental damage such as last years Manly Dam disaster. These spills highlight the problems of using these highly toxic pesticides in any form," said Mr. Cole.

TEC is actively campaigning to have these chemicals banned. They are calling for highly toxic pesticides to be removed from the agricultural process and replaced with organic and integrated pest management techniques. These methods have been proven to be highly successful overseas.

# Latest News

## Call to ban toxic organophosphates



*Created on Wednesday, 13 March 2002 11:00*

Further scientific evidence provides the final nail in the coffin for the use of toxic organophosphate pesticides, Total Environment Centre said today.

"It is time for the NRA to ban toxic organophosphate pesticides such as diazinon and chloropyrifos. This new study provides further proof that organophosphates are dangerous chemicals which should not be available to the public," said Ben Cole, chemicals campaigner.

The report published in the medical journal Lancet (2nd of March, 2002) showed that farmers were susceptible to chronic ill-health effects when exposed to organophosphates. Organophosphates are highly toxic pesticides that disrupt the central nervous system of animals.

"Two years ago the National Registration Authority, the federal body which governs the registration of agricultural chemicals, conducted a review on the use of diazinon, a widely used organophosphate. The review called for its ban in all domestic situations and around animals that produce milk for human consumption. The NRA must act immediately to introduce these recommendations and cancel the registration of diazinon," said Mr. Cole.

"Due to their highly toxic nature organophosphates also threaten the ecological health of our waterways. Sydney Water has made a concerted effort to reduce the amount of organophosphates entering our waterways, but until it is removed from the shelves it will continue to cause harm to the public and the environment".

TEC advocates for the use of integrated pest management strategies that can completely remove the need for toxic pesticides. Where pesticides are required least toxic pesticides should be used.

# Latest News

## Community must be protected from pesticide drift



*Created on Tuesday, 02 April 2002 10:00*

"A number of studies have shown pesticide droplets can travel up to 10 km after application. If a pregnant woman, child or chemically sensitive person is living within a 10 km spray zone they should be allowed to make an informed decision to reduce their risk of exposure," said Ben Cole, Chemicals campaigner.

"A number of medical studies have supported a link between pesticide spray drift and adverse health effects. For example a recent US study (Epidemiology 12:148-156) found fetal death was more likely among pregnant mothers who were living within a 14 kilometre area in which commercial pesticide spraying had taken place," said Mr. Cole.

"The regulations are not being written to burden the farmer, but rather they are being written to protect the health of the entire community and the green reputation of the agricultural community."

"TEC is committed to working with the Pesticide Implementation Committee to develop an equitable notification system. The notification scheme is being developed to ensure the farmer and the community can communicate openly with each other. We would hope the NSW Farmers Association has the same view but recent statements would indicate otherwise."

# Latest News

## ENVIRONMENT GROUP CALLS FOR URGENT RESPONSE TO FERTILISER SCARE



*Created on Thursday, 09 May 2002 10:00*

A peak environment group has called for an urgent response to the dumping of industrial waste on farms and gardens across Australia.

Ben Cole from the Total Environment Centre said the practice clearly shows that industry is failing to responsibly manage its waste.

"The onus of responsibility is clearly on industry and the regulatory agencies to prove that this practice is not putting human and environmental health at risk," said Ben Cole, Chemicals campaigner of the Total Environment Centre.

"Regulatory agencies and industry should urgently identify all fertilisers that contain excessive levels of heavy metals and other contaminants."

"Crops which have been heavily fertilised with unscreened industrial wastes and are known to uptake heavy metals, particularly leafy, tuber and root vegetables should be extensively tested for heavy metal contamination."

"Regulatory agencies should conduct urgent ecological assessments to determine how the impact of heavy metals is affecting the ecosystems surrounding agricultural land."

Total Environment Centre calls on the regulatory agencies and industry to develop an immediate plan to assure the community that this practice is not causing long-term health effects and environmental harm.

For more information: Ben Cole, Total Environment Centre, 9299 5680  
Ten point plan is attached

### TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE'S TEN POINT PLAN: A RESPONSE TO INDUSTRIAL WASTE USED ON AGRICULTURAL LAND

Identification of 'high risk' crops that have been using unscreened industrial wastes as fertiliser and are known to uptake heavy metals. These include leafy, tuber and root vegetables.

Immediate testing of heavy metals and other contaminant levels within 'high risk' crops. Any crops that are found to exceed the Maximum Permitted Concentration (MPC) of any heavy metal or other contaminant must be immediately removed from the market.

Ecological risk assessments of all 'high risk' sites to ensure surrounding soil and waterways are not contaminated.

Development of a State wide program that expands the existing inadequate monitoring programs to ensure the level of heavy metals and other contaminants have not been exceeded on all agricultural produce that has been fertilised with industrial waste.

Development of a State wide program that determines the ecological risk associated with the use of industrial waste as fertiliser.

Introduction of National Guidelines for fertiliser composition and labelling. The composition requirements should follow international best practice, such as those developed by the United States Fertiliser Institute which has listed 12 heavy metals and one radionuclide.

Full disclosure of all heavy metals and other by-products particularly organochlorines on fertiliser labelling.

Regulatory agencies to conduct regular, independent assessment of all industrial waste that is currently being used as fertiliser.

Cease importation of all fertiliser that has been identified as being produced with industrial waste.

Adoption of cleaner production by industry that embraces zero pollution leaving a site and genuine reuse of wastes.

# Latest News

## ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS DEMAND INTRODUCTION OF FERTILISER REGULATIONS



*Created on Wednesday, 15 May 2002 10:00*

The EPA has been urged to enact its powers to regulate the use of industrial waste on NSW crops by the Environmental Defender's Office and Total Environment Centre.

"The public have clearly been outraged by this practice and yet the regulatory agencies response has been non-existent. Lawyers from the Environmental Defenders Office have advised the EPA has a clear statutory responsibility to act," said Ben Cole, Chemicals campaigner for Total Environment Centre.

"The NSW Environment Protection Authority and NSW Agriculture must recognise that the community are demanding an urgent regulatory response, not the development of a long-term research project," continued Mr. Cole.

In a letter sent to the NSW EPA the Environmental Defender's Office have asked the NSW EPA to;

Utilise, if necessary, its direction powers over government agencies (S12) to require action.  
Introduce interim regulatory guidelines to protect the NSW environment from any further contamination from unregulated fertilisers.

Ensure NSW Agriculture has adequate proof that current standards are safe.

"The potential trade and environmental consequences of adding heavy metals throughout NSW agricultural lands are unknown. The regulatory agencies must act immediately to remove any risk of long-term damage occurring to agricultural land and the surrounding ecosystems."

# Latest News

## LOCAL SCHOOLS TO BENEFIT FROM SAFER PESTICIDE PROGRAM



*Created on Monday, 08 July 2002 10:00*

"Safer Solutions: Integrated Pest Management in Schools and Childcare Centres" (A TEC manual) will demonstrate that prevention, monitoring, and controlling pests can dramatically reduce the use of pesticides, and therefore reduce the risk of children's exposure.

In response to concerns about the health and environmental effects of pesticides in schools Total Environment Centre will present a series of workshops to assist schools in managing pests effectively and reducing reliance on toxic pesticides.

"Safer Solutions: Integrated Pest Management in Schools and Childcare Centres" (A TEC manual) will demonstrate that prevention, monitoring, and controlling pests can dramatically reduce the use of pesticides, and therefore reduce the risk of children's exposure.

"There is a global push to remove toxic pesticides from schools and childcare centres. In the US and Europe easy to understand manuals, such as the one TEC has produced have been used to help train managers, teachers and parents to reduce and remove the use of pesticides within schools and childcare centres.

These workshops are the first in NSW to assist schools to reach these important environmental goals," said Ben Cole spokesperson for Total Environment Centre.

The workshops will be presented by leading experts who have pioneered non-chemical pest management throughout NSW schools and childcare centres. The three workshops will cover the Illawarra, Hunter and Sydney regions.

The workshops will be held in;

Wollongong: Wednesday, July 24th (4 - 5:30 pm) at the Ribbonwood Centre. 107, Princess Hwy, Dapto.

Newcastle: Thursday, July 25th (4 - 5:30pm) at the Wetlands Centre, off the roundabout Sandgate Road, Shortland.

Sydney: Tuesday, July 30th (4 - 5:30 pm) at the Professional Teachers' Council NSW located on the corner of Norton and Marion St. Leichhardt.

"Removing toxic pesticides from schools has a number of benefits, the first and most important is the protection of children's health. Another important benefit is the cost-savings associated with introducing integrated pest management (IPM). The US EPA reported that schools that had implemented IPM showed lower long-term costs than conventional pest management."

"Other benefits include the educational and curriculum opportunities that arise from using non-chemical pest management. The content will also be really useful for schools as they complete their Environmental Management Plans."

The workshops are free and are open to teachers, parents, school assistants, principals, environmental educators and interested environmental groups. The workshops will be held in an informal and friendly manner, allowing participants to ask plenty of questions.

## Latest News

# ENVIRONMENTAL, MEDICAL AND GROWER GROUPS CALL ON MINISTER TO PROTECT CROPS FROM HAZARDOUS WASTE



*Created on Tuesday, 16 July 2002 10:00*

"Our joint letter is a response to the wide community concern at the practice of using hazardous waste as fertiliser. The Federal Minister must respond to the community's criticism and ban the importation of all hazardous waste," said Ben Cole, Chemicals campaigner at the Total Environment Centre.

Total Environment Centre, Greenpeace, Australian Conservation Foundation, Nature Conservation Council, Biological Farmers of Australia and the Doctors Reform Society are all signatories to the letter. The letter has also been forwarded to Environment Australia who will be assessing the application.

"The inherent risks of accidental spills, groundwater contamination and contamination of agricultural produce are all valid reasons for refusing the application. The application must be refused to set a clear precedent that hazardous waste cannot be imported and then distributed throughout Australia."

"A major concern is the hazardous waste contains undisclosed amounts of the herbicide glyphosate. The Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering recently recommended that recording all pesticide use was an essential element in their effective management. The practice of spreading unknown amounts of herbicides when applying fertiliser would make this recommendation unmanageable."

"The European community is making it clear that producers will be held responsible for their environmental performance. Australian agriculture cannot afford to lose its clean, green image at this crucial time. It is clear that using imported hazardous waste to feed Australian crops is environmentally and economically unsustainable."

## Latest News

# HOUSEHOLD PESTICIDE APPLICATIONS LINKED TO CHILDHOOD LEUKEMIA



*Created on Sunday, 04 August 2002 10:00*

The study conducted by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley found that the use of professional pest control services 1 year before birth to 3 years after was associated with a significantly increased risk of childhood leukemia. The findings were reported in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol 110, Number 9.

"When household spraying takes place the unborn child is exposed to a range of pesticides during its development. This study provides further evidence that exposure to pesticides during pregnancy is an extremely risky practice."

"Although the research was conducted in the US we know Australian children are being exposed to pesticides from a study conducted in Townsville that found newly born children's meconium (first bowel discharge) to contain measurable amounts of pesticides."

"The evidence against using pesticides is continuing to build. If parents can avoid exposing their unborn and young children to pesticides then they should."

Pesticide use can be dramatically reduced through the implementation of integrated pest management strategies. IPM is a common sense, risk-based approach to pest control that can eliminate the need for pesticides.

# Latest News

## TOXIC ACCIDENTS SOAR DURING SPRING



*Created on Thursday, 19 September 2002 10:00*

"A 5-year study just reported in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine has shown that pesticides were involved in up to 38% of all accidents associated with the release of hazardous chemicals. The study also found a correlation between the springtime months and the amount of health incidents caused by acute exposure to hazardous substances," said Ben Cole, Chemicals Campaigner for Total Environment Centre.

The authors attributed the increased number of accidents to the transportation and use of fertilisers and pesticides during the planting season. The authors also stated that it was not only agricultural workers that were at greater risk during the springtime months but also the general community including children.

"This study highlights the importance of the public's right to know about all pesticide applications that are occurring within their vicinity. Prior notification of pesticide applications allows the community to make informed decisions to reduce their exposure to agricultural chemicals."

"Unfortunately this study cannot be replicated or compared to the Australian agricultural situation as we do not have any formal recording system for adverse health effects caused by agricultural chemicals," continued Mr. Cole.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry - Australian (AFFA) has recently asked the state environment ministers to allow the federal body that assesses and registers agricultural chemicals (the National Registration Authority, NRA) to provide funding to establish an adverse health registry.

"Until Australia has developed a comprehensive recording system for adverse health effects associated with the use of agricultural chemicals the community, the regulators and the chemical manufacturers will remain in the dark as to how these chemicals are affecting our health."

Total Environment Centre is calling on the state ministers to allow the NRA to provide funding to immediately set up the adverse health registry.

# Latest News

## SAFER SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT CHILDREN



*Created on Tuesday, 05 November 2002 11:00*

Safer Solutions is being launched by the Hon. John Watkins, Minister for Education and Training at North Ryde Public school on Thursday 7th of November, 2002.

"Safer Solutions brings urban pest management into the 21st century. It explains the benefits of a pesticide free environment, shows how to implement a chemical-free pest control program, and gives detailed information on how to manage common pests using integrated pest management (IPM)," said Ms Jo Immig author of the book.

"The Safer Solutions project was supported by a grant from the NSW Environmental Trust. It is a free resource and will be distributed to every school and childcare centre in NSW. It is available as a printed book and on the web".

"We must reduce pesticides in children's environments as they are at much greater risk of health effects from exposure to pesticides because their bodies are still developing Their activities mean they are also more likely to come into contact with pesticide contaminated surfaces".

"TEC focussed on developing safer solutions for schools and childcare centres because that's where children spend a great deal of their time. Unfortunately high-risk pesticides, which are not generally assessed for their effects on children, are still being used in many Australian schools and childcare centres".

"While other countries, such as the USA, have adopted legislation to outlaw dangerous pesticides in schools, Australian governments have been slow off the mark".

"Safer Solutions gives schools and childcare centers an effective and safer option. IPM is best practice pest control and is in keeping with the environmentally sustainable management of schools and environmental education programs," said Ms Immig.

Jerry Coleby-Williams from the ABC's Gardening Australia Show will be attending the launch of Safer Solutions on Thursday 7th of November, 9:30 am at North Ryde Public School. North Ryde Public School has a successful IPM program.

# Latest News

## ALARM RAISED ON COMMON RURAL HERBICIDE



*Created on Tuesday, 12 November 2002 11:00*

"The 'nail in the coffin' is the finding that frog populations that were found in waterways where atrazine was present were more likely to show reproductive abnormalities than non-contaminated waterways. It's an endocrine disruptor," said Ben Cole, Chemicals Campaigner for Total Environment Centre.

Atrazine is one of the most heavily used herbicides in Australia. Water monitoring studies conducted by the Department of Land and Water Conservation have regularly detected its presence in waterways surrounding agricultural areas.

"The field and laboratory study, reported in the most recent edition of Nature (Vol. 419: 895 - 896), also showed that the sexual development of another species of frog was seriously disturbed by extremely low concentrations of atrazine," continued Mr. Cole.

"Frogs are a crucial part of aquatic ecosystems. We can't risk their decline."

Atrazine is used primarily in corn crops, but is also used for general weed control, sugarcane and pine plantations. Its use has already been banned in France and Italy.

The National Registration Authority, the federal body that licenses the use of pesticides and herbicides in Australia is currently reviewing the use of atrazine in Australia.

"We are pressing for it to be banned", Mr. Cole said.

# Latest News

## Community Commemorates BHOPAL Disaster



*Created on Friday, 06 December 2002 11:00*

"This week commemorates the 18th anniversary of the Bhopal disaster. The day when thousands lost their lives, and tens of thousands were critically injured from the explosion of a Union Carbide pesticide factory," said Ben Cole, Chemicals Campaigner at Total Environment Centre.

"It is a week where people across the globe should acknowledge the dangers associated with manufacturing and using pesticides. It is also a time when governments and industry must recognise that the community has a right to know about all activities involving pesticides in their vicinity."

Action across the globe has included petitions calling on the UN to demand for 'right to know' legislation for the community. The New Zealand parliament has before it a 'right to know' bill. The bill was developed in response to the aerial spraying of up to 140,000 people in an attempt to eradicate the Painted Apple Moth.

In NSW the government is currently progressing the development of a notification regulation. The regulation will cover both urban and rural applications of pesticides.

"The notification regulation is a corner stone in the protection of the community from pesticide exposure. The community's rights must be put before the considerations of industry," continued Mr. Cole.

TEC will be continuing its campaign to ensure the notification regulation provides the community with the information it requires to make informed decisions about the risks of pesticides.

# Latest News

## Toxic Timber Dumping a Health Risk: Government Must Act



*Created on Wednesday, 30 July 2003 10:00*

"Getting CCA treated timber out of playgrounds is only the first step," said Jane Castle, Total Environment Centre campaigner. "Toxic timber is currently being dumped into unlined landfills where arsenic can leach into the ecosystem and damage human health. Unless this hazardous material is disposed of responsibly, it will come back to haunt us."

"The current classification of CCA timber as an 'inert waste' must be changed and producers must take responsibility for the legacy they have created," said Ms Castle.

New studies have found that arsenic leaches out of treated timber and is a health risk. A US study found that the amount of arsenic wiped off a small area of wood about the size of a four year-old's hand-print far exceeded what environmental authorities consider safe. The World Health Organisation has confirmed that arsenic causes lung, bladder, skin and other cancers.

CCA treated timber has been targeted as a 'waste of concern' by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA). Producers face Extended Producer Responsibility regulations if they fail manage their products more responsibly. The timber has been banned in Switzerland, Vietnam and Indonesia, and has been severely restricted in Japan, Sweden and Germany.

"The industry is problematic throughout the entire life-cycle of the product, not only during use and disposal. Three out of five timber preservation sites audited this year by the NSW EPA proved to be contaminated with arsenic, chromium and copper," said Ms Castle "Most sites were not properly maintaining drains, dams or treatment areas, which can lead to soil and groundwater contamination."

For further information

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# Latest News

## 330 Olympic Swimming Pools of Toxic Waste



*Created on Tuesday, 16 September 2003 10:00*

"Hazardous waste disposal increased by 30% from 2000," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "In 2001, over 380,000 tonnes of toxic waste were disposed of in NSW, enough to fill over 330 Olympic sized swimming pools. Clearly, it's time for industry to clean up its act and for the EPA to move cleaner production from boutique programs to mainstream."

Hazardous and industrial waste includes lead, mercury, cyanide, heavy metals, cadmium, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), asbestos, contaminated soils, oils, waste chemicals, plastic residues, pharmaceutical waste and unclassified hazardous waste.

"Most liquid hazardous waste ends up at the Lidcombe Liquid Waste Plant where 100,000 tonnes per annum is concentrated to 20,000 tonnes of problematic process residue. This is not waste minimisation, but waste concentration."

"The answer is not more processing but enforceable targets that mandate overall reductions in hazardous and industrial waste generation. Cleaner production processes conserve raw materials and energy, and engender a culture of industrial efficiency and productivity which reduces the costs of waste treatment and disposal."

"One of the most successful cleaner production strategies has been undertaken in the US state of Massachusetts which successfully reduced toxic chemical use by 19% whilst recording strong economic growth. It's time that we caught up with international best practice and redeemed our image as a clean, green country."

"TEC calls on the NSW EPA to establish a clear set of initiatives that identifies and targets the removal of highly toxic chemicals and mandate overall reductions in hazardous and industrial waste generation."

Traditionally hazardous waste has been dumped into large, plastic lined landfills. No records have been kept of the type or amount of waste that entered these landfills.

The largest hazardous waste landfill opened in Castlereagh in 1968. The site covers 360 hectares and received over 1 million tonnes of liquid waste. Sustained community pressure by the Resident Action Group for the Environment (RAGE) led to the closure of this site in August 1988. Ongoing leachate testing continues to reveal high level of contaminants leaving the site.

The Key Findings Include:

- Â· Hazardous and industrial waste disposal rose by 30% from 2000 to 2002.
- Â· 380,000 tonnes of hazardous and industrial waste was disposed in NSW in 2001- enough waste to fill over 330 Olympic sized swimming pools.
- Â· Over 150 tonnes of highly toxic mercury were disposed in 2001.
- Â· Over 68,000 tonnes of lead were disposed in 2001.
- Â· The paint and pigment industry produced 14,500 tonnes of hazardous waste in 2001.

# Latest News

## Kids Enslaved to Poisoned Playgrounds by Timber Lobby



*Created on Tuesday, 27 April 2004 10:00*

The committee, meeting in Sydney over the next two days and charged with determining the safe use of the toxic timber, is stacked with industry representatives that have vested interests, TEC said.

"CCA treated timber should be prohibited for domestic use, as it is in the United States. Australia's failure to follow international best practice and protect children will signal severe abuse of Standards Australia's decision making processes," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director.

The Standards Australia committee, meeting today, will consider public comments in the development of Interim Standard AS 5605 which is a guide to the safe use of preservative-treated timber.

"Having a committee dominated by industry determining the safe use of its own toxic product contradicts the most basic form of decision making for the public good. Where are the parental, public health and environmental representatives on this committee? We call on Standards Australia to reconstitute this committee to make it representative of the whole community, not just the timber lobby."

"If Standards Australia fails to act, the State Government should move to prohibit the use of CCA timber for domestic use and tighten regulations to ensure its safe disposal."

The US Environment Protection Authority has banned CCA treated timber from residential uses where there is human contact from 30 December 2003. CCA timber has been banned in Switzerland, Vietnam and Indonesia, and is severely restricted in Japan, Sweden and Germany.

"When toxic timber has been banned around the world based on robust scientific information, it would be retrograde for the Standards Committee to knowingly commit kids to further poisoning."

New studies have found that arsenic leaches out of treated timber and is a health risk. A US study found that the amount of arsenic wiped off a small area of wood, about the size of a four year-old's hand, far exceeds what authorities consider safe. The World Health Organisation has confirmed that arsenic causes lung, bladder, skin and other cancers.

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# Latest News

## Toxic pesticide rain proven



*Created on Tuesday, 03 February 1998 11:00*

The summary of results of the Gunnedah Pesticide in Raintank Survey 1997, carried out by the NSW Environment Protection Authority and the New England Public Health Unit, confirms long-held fears that there is widespread contamination of the Namoi Valley with mixtures of dangerous pesticides, Ms Jo Immig of the Total Environment Centre said today.

"The findings of the Survey indicate that pesticides can move up to 3.6km from their source of application and contaminate sensitive environments such as rivers, killing aquatic organisms and polluting people's water supplies, chemically trespassing on their properties and affecting their livelihoods," Jo Immig said.

"Considering the number of farms, in particular cotton farms, that intensively use pesticides on a regular basis, you'd have to conclude that an extensive geographical area is likely to be contaminated, not only in the Namoi Valley, but in other pesticide spraying regions as well. These findings are extremely concerning and raise many questions about the future of agricultural pesticides".

"Industry has been claiming for years that pesticides don't move off-target, that spray drift doesn't exist, yet the Survey clearly indicates, without a doubt, that pesticides are moving and causing significant damage. What further evidence does the Government require before it implements tighter regulatory controls over the use of these toxic chemicals?"

"The Government stance that the people of the Namoi Valley should feel "assured" that their health is not at risk from exposure to pesticide contamination found in 61% of the tanks surveyed, is naive in the extreme."

"People who live in those conditions will tell you that they not only drink and bathe in the contamination, they also breathe in the same pesticides and grow their food in polluted soil. This means that the "magic maximum residue limit" used by the EPA to determine if the population is at risk or not, is a meaningless measure," Ms Immig said.

"The pesticide load is what is important in determining risk, and rainwater tanks are just one source of that load. Scientific data accumulating all over the world raises serious concerns about long-term low-level exposures to pesticides and Government can no longer keep its head in the sand over the issue".

"Endosulfan, one of the commonly occurring pollutants found in the tanks and environment is regarded as a serious threat to the beef industry. Now that we know it moves around through spray drift and run-off it is only a matter of time before Australia has another major beef residue crisis".

"The Government will have to finally bite the bullet and act to protect the environment and people from further exposures to pesticides and must implement regulations to control aerial spraying immediately."

"Industry should pull its head in and concentrate on the task at hand and fully co-operate to ensure that pesticide trespass is eliminated from its operations," Ms Immig concluded.

# Latest News

## Dalby cotton spraying a clear danger



*Created on Monday, 02 March 1998 11:00*

"The concerns raised by Eco-Watch Dalby are the same valid concerns expressed repeatedly by communities across Australia where cotton is grown - aerial spray drift, contaminated water supplies, health problems and social impacts. It's high time regulators stopped treating these issues as 'local anomalies' and tackle the problems with the industry fair and square with genuine community participation," said Jo Immig, Chemicals Campaigner with TEC.

"Towns are literally being held to ransom by the power of the cotton dollar. The true environmental and social 'costs' of the cotton industry are not being met by the industry but by the local people and environment," Jo Immig said.

"There is recent NSW EPA scientific evidence that toxic chemicals aerially applied to chemical fields drift up to 3.5km, and potentially further, from their point of application. The drift contaminated drinking water and sensitive water bodies where it lingers and disrupts the ecosystem. The drift enters people's houses and lands on their washing and over their kids while they wait for the school bus."

"The cotton industry cries they are unfairly singled out but the cotton industry uses extensive quantities of toxic chemicals and monopolises natural resources such as water. Of the 2.5 million litres of active Endosulfan used annually in Australia, the cotton industry uses a whopping 70%," Ms Immig said.

"Regulators have been treating the industry with kid gloves; they must now face the undeniable fact that there are extensive environmental and social impacts from cotton growing. It's a farce, no other industry with this level of impact is left to regulate itself," Ms Immig concluded.