

28.01.2014

I write in support of the Perth Hills fruit growers who have their livelihood jeopardised by the imminent ban on Fenthion.

I refer all my statements within the first term of reference.

“The roles and responsibilities of relevant departments and agencies of Commonwealth, State & Territory Governments in relation to the regulation of pesticides and veterinary chemicals”

I am a plain speaking man so let's get it out there – between WA Health Dept & APVMA they are a joke! My history with them will illustrate why I would make such a statement.

Background:

- I am 70 years of age and have been involved in the turf production and maintenance business.
- Up until 18 months ago for several decades I employed 88 people and was the largest private employer in Kalamunda Shire in which the majority of the “hills orchards” are located, and over 40 years of interaction I have the greatest respect for them. As part of my business I have supplied, applied herbicides and insecticides to my five farms and to ovals on behalf of most Councils for decades, running 6 spray rigs over 30+ years.
- I had to pay for the training and certification of every operator I ever employed. In a busy period I once resorted to hiring ex employees of my competitors – none of them had the appropriate training or certification despite working in the industry for 2 – 10 years and they had no knowledge of chemicals and their toxic rating.

I needn't have “bothered playing it straight”:

- In all my times in the industry not once were my tanks checked to gain proof of what was actually being sprayed.
- I am aware my competitors sprayed out unspecified cheaper unregistered herbicides and gained a quoting advantage.
- Several of these applications were brought to the notice of the media by the public and were highlighted in the media because of the adverse affect the applications had on the turf and on the surrounding flora – nothing happened

- Covering a period of several years I approached many in a position to do something about it including State Ministers for Health, Environment & Agriculture – nothing.
- You can get rich very quickly if you apply to 20.00ha/day of an unregistered herbicide which will do a better job than a registered herbicide when the unregistered (often banned) herbicide costs \$20.00/ha and the registered \$610.00/Ha.
- I included these issues as part of major evidence I gave to the CCC 2005 investigation into Corruption within the Bayswater Council whilst the particular company has publicly interrogated for 1½ days – nothing.
- It is a matter of fact that my business has been crippled. I now employ 22 people and work 6 days a week from 4.45am to 6.00pm having suffered 3 arson attacks and one home invasion in the 9 years between March 2002 – April 2011 when I approached and gave evidence to:

- a) CIB Fremantle
- b) ACC
- c) CCC

You must agree, that is not what the average business experiences.

- If you should per chance wish to take this further and interview me I am ready willing and able and armed with evidence – but I doubt that you will.

So I will close with this:

1. Most importantly you need to employ government officers in touch with the industry. As long as you employ bureaucrats who at the whim of politicians wish to ingratiate themselves and cut budgets of the plebes on the ground who interface with the “pit face of an industry” they will be outmanoeuvred and eaten by sharkish operators.
2. You have to give the public employees training and power to recognise and deal with shonky operators.
3. You have to stop employing those who don't interface with the pitface of industry and who have the background and acumen of “Eskimos for managing Camels”.

Finally on a moral and political basis your behaviour and action towards the fruit growers as regards Fenthion is viewed by most of us who watch their predicament

as comparable with the previous Federal Government's response when it came to light that a few overseas slaughter houses were perpetrating cruel practices – knee jerk!

As regards to validation of my credentials to address this subject I suggest you might ask of:

1. Mr Stuart Henry – former Member for Hasluck
2. Mr Ken Wyatt – present Member for Hasluck

It is my opinion a full blown enquiry into the roles of all involved in the registration, supply and application of herbicides and insecticides is required. I believe what I have relayed sufficient to demonstrate why.

Regards

Dick Lovegrove