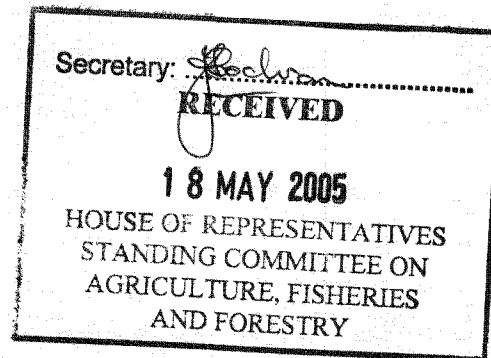


Australian Pesticides &  
Veterinary Medicines Authority

17 May 2005

Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing  
Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Suite R1 121  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



## INQUIRY INTO RURAL SKILLS TRAINING AND RESEARCH

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is the Australian government regulatory authority responsible for the assessment and registration of pesticides and veterinary medicines and for their regulation up to and including the point of retail sale. The APVMA administers the National Registration Scheme for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (NRS) in partnership with the States and Territories and with the active involvement of other Australian government agencies. The States and Territories have responsibility for control of use.

In relation to the Committee's Inquiry into Rural Skills Training and Research, the APVMA therefore has an interest in relation to the skills of people involved in the use of pesticides and veterinary medicines. The APVMA believes it is essential that users of agvet chemicals are trained to apply them correctly and safely (in accordance with the label approved by the Authority). When chemicals are not applied in accordance with the label directions there can be significant risk that injury will be caused to humans and/or animals, that damage will be caused to crops and/or the environment and/or that Australia's trade will be placed at risk.


While much has been achieved over the last decade in the various states, and through training organisations such as ChemCert, the APVMA believes more needs to be done to achieve greater national consistency. Consistent national standards for the training of agvet chemical users do not appear to exist currently and there are different approaches across the States and Territories. For example our understanding is that some States currently have no mandatory training requirements, some do, and some have requirements in place for higher risk chemicals. The Primary Industries Product Safety and Integrity Committee is also looking at this matter, in particular in relation to achieving an agreement framework for user training and accreditation for higher risk chemical products.

We are also aware that there are differing approaches to adoption of the standards set by the National Training Framework when training is mandated. For example, in NSW the base standard has been set at AQF Level 2 whilst in Victoria the standard of training specified for obtaining and Agricultural Chemical User's Permit (ACUP) is a mixture of a Level 3 and Level 2 Units. There are also different views amongst the States and training providers on issues such as whether there is a need for periodic reaccreditation of training. These different approaches, albeit with good reason, can confuse the users of agvet chemicals and complicate training delivery.



There is a range of complex factors influencing the various approaches to user training and accreditation throughout Australia. The APVMA is liaising with different stakeholders on these matters and supports moves to achieve greater consistency. Effective and consistent national training requirements are very important in ensuring that farm chemicals are used safely and effectively.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Smith". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Dr Joe Smith  
Chief Executive Officer