

18 Beverley Road
ALDGATE SA 5154

3rd August, 1999

The Secretary
House of Representatives Steering Committee on Environment and Heritage
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Catchment Management

Over the past five years a growing number of residents in the Adelaide Hills (Mount Lofty Ranges) Catchment area have become increasingly concerned about the damage to human health, the environment and the contamination of our water catchment arising from excessive and inappropriate use of Pesticides (herbicides, weedicides, fungicides and insecticides). Pesticides are being used in the control of weeds and pests in the local and regional environment which encompasses both Torrens and Onkaparinga Catchment areas. The documented half lives of active and non active Pesticide components, and the established long term adverse affects they have on resources and health warrant thoughtful assessment and evaluation of their applications in all Catchment areas.

As a consequence of this concern, the Adelaide Hills Community Action Group was formed in 1998. It was formed to lobby and work with Commonwealth, State and Local Governments to contribute towards the implementation of a Legislative and Administrative framework promoting best practice in the management of weeds and pests. The framework does include the careful and controlled use of Pesticides where their use is necessary and appropriate. Any usage in large scale applications must incorporate the accurate recording of Pesticides used. This will aid the establishment of trace back facilities and for historical inter alia base studies monitoring potential long term Pesticide impact on health and natural resources (Catchment).

Over the past 2 years our Group has been active with many Government agencies including:

- Health Commission S.A. (Environmental Health Branch)
- Local Government, principally the Adelaide Hills Council
- Adelaide Hills Animal and Plant Control Board
- Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA) and the associated Animal and Plant Control Commission
- Transport SA
- Trans Adelaide
- The Environment Protection Authority of SA (EPA)
- The Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage
- Transfield in their capacity as maintenance contractors to the Commonwealth owned rail corridor
- The National Registration Authority (NRA) Canberra
- The State Ombudsman, regarding Government bodies persistently failing to provide requested information and data relating to Government initiated plans, programs and policies involving Pesticide application activities, by their own Officers, under Government contracts or direction.

Our initiatives include organising and providing expert opinion to Government, meetings with senior Government Officers, arranging public meetings, comments on draft State Government legislation and provision of relevant research articles from international and national scientific journals and Government publications. As a result of our efforts, the State Minister for Primary Industries, Natural Resources and Regional Development has agreed and confirmed via radio to commission an independent expert consultant acceptable to our group to undertake and research into damage and impact (Mount Lofty and Manoah Wards) potentially attributed to irresponsible large volume Pesticide usage in the Adelaide Hills Council area.

There is extensive evidence in Australia and overseas of Pesticide damage to human health and the environment as a consequence of them finding their ways into underground water resources and water courses in catchment areas by polluting soil, run off, vegetation, atmosphere as well as being inhaled and absorbed through the skin by humans. A national study in the USA carried out by The US Geological Survey (USGS) in 1998 found that over

95% of river and stream samples, as well as over 50% of well samples contained at least one (1) Pesticide. Many samples contained multiple Pesticides. Both urban and agricultural areas had Pesticide contaminated streams and rivers. New studies show that relatively low concentrations of Pesticides found in water can affect human and animal health (references for these are available).

Documented adverse Pesticide impacts on humans and other species are numerous and ever increasing including: -

- being carcinogenic
- interfering with the endocrine system, liver function and renal failure
- genitalia abnormalities in numerous species
- chromosomal damage
- adverse interference to numerous aquatic species (fish, frogs etc.)
- significant reduction in human sperm count and its quality
- many others (references available).

In the context of your advertisement in The Adelaide Advertiser (19/6/99) inviting written submissions to the inquiry, the management committee of our Group has requested that I write to you advising of our interest in your inquiry, with particular reference to Terms of Reference 3 and 6, namely,

- "best practice methods of preventing, halting and reversing environmental degradation in catchments and achieving environmental sustainability", and
- "mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on catchment management programs, including the use of these reports for state of the environment reporting, and opportunities for review and improvement".

Rather than present a complete submission at this stage, we considered it appropriate to establish contact with you with a view to determining how best we may further contribute to your inquiry.

The Group has nominated me as contact officer and I can be contacted on (08) 8339 1043.

Yours faithfully

David Mallan
For and on behalf of the Adelaide Hills Community Action Group