

WATER CATCHMENTS & PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES

I am a rural GP, who has lived in this area in Tasmania for 15 years.

I have a responsibility for individuals and population health, which is why I am arguing the case for the holistic approach to water catchments; nothing else will provide for the protection of people who use that catchment; whether it be those drinking the water or those using the water for their business/industry.

Current legislation with regard to drinking water does not ensure the protection of people from potential harm. Absence of proof of current harm now does not mean safety. It just means we don't know, can't prove, or we are evolving the technology to look.

Therefore until the rules change, there must be an immediate halt to aerial spraying of chemicals in water catchments.

New legislation should include these points:-

1. The precautionary principle (do not act without reasonable proof of harmlessness) should apply.
2. The principle of reverse onus (the producer bears the responsibility for safety) should apply.
3. There should be no discharge of toxic chemicals into water catchments.
4. Clean (i.e. closed) production processes must be enforced.

I am also seeking answers to these questions:-

- . Who regulates the use of chemicals in water catchments, inc. decisions on which combinations can be used?
- . Who regulates the users/industries involved with water catchments? ie is there an overall view of the use/function of water catchments according to appropriate risk assessment?
- . Do the above regulatory bodies communicate directly with each other? ie is there a holistic approach to water catchment management?
- . Who tests water samples in waterways, groundwater, and water intakes ?
- . Is the use of chemicals around ditches, culverts, stormwater drains etc regulated?
- . Who is responsible for policing the above issues?
- . If the Precautionary Principle is not observed, who will be held responsible if in the future damage to human health from chemically contaminated water is proven?

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