

NATIONAL TOXICS NETWORK AGM October 2008

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Time seems to be speeding up and 2007 has just flashed by. Mariann and John have been overseas for large chunks of the year fighting the good fight at international chemical meetings, where much of the action now takes place.

NTN has been inundated with media inquiries, submissions, consultation processes and requests for information from the community. There is a real momentum developing over concern for climate change as more and more people are waking up to the issues and are making the connection between health and environmental pollution.

In the meantime, BigChema and Big Pharma are working overtime behind the scenes with regulators trying to secure large new applications for their chemicals and technologies (nano & GE) and doing all they can to undermine the goals of the EU REACH reforms and the four principles of chemical policy reform - right to know; no data no market; precaution and substitution.

The flaws in the Australian regulatory system have become even more apparent with the string of 'toxic products' from China – heavy metals in toys, phthalates in sex toys, formaldehyde in blankets, toxic work suits, 'non-stick' pans, melamine in milk-based products etc. These are just the tip of the iceberg and illustrate how regulators have next to no control over the toxic contents of imported products.

Several studies by Choice have raised concerns about the safety of the food supply – pesticide residues were found in chemically grown strawberries and phthalates in food from the plastic lining of the lids of glass jars. Bisphenol A in the food supply from polycarbonate plastics has also been exposed with a new study showing a link between BPA exposure and diabetes and heart disease.

NTN contributed to a collaborative study on the *Environmental Threats to the Health of Children in Australia: the need for a national research agenda* which recommended an urgent assessment of the environmental contribution to the burden of disease for Australian children.

All this at a time when the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Plastics and Chemical Regulation is arguing the case for deregulation and 'streamlining regulatory red tape'. It's time to flush out exactly where the Australian government and regulators stand on the protection of its people and the environment from more toxic chemical pollution. The change of government was initially exciting, but in relation to chemical regulation they appear to be on the same trajectory as the Howard government.

NTN website

A big achievement this year has been the completion of the new NTN website www.ntn.org.au. The website was made using the open source software Joomla, which allows us to update the website to keep it dynamic and up-to-date. We have been on a steep learning curve with the software. One of the features we wanted to build in was to make it easier for people to find their own information so we've provided easy links off the front page to databases for cosmetics, chemicals in the home and technical chemical information.

The newsflash facility is turning out to be a good way to record the media coverage and release of scientific papers on toxic issues. We are still editing information and re-shaping it for our new campaign structure.

Areas of work in 2008 in relation to our strategic framework:

❖ Toxic waste and cleaner production

- ~ E-waste (Mariann visited recycling facility in Singapore)
- ~ Nanotechnology – collaborative work with FOE
- ~ Chemicals- BFRs, heavy metals (lead, cadmium and mercury, PFOS, PFOA, PFCs, phthalates/triclosan/flouride)
- ~ Pacific POPs project
- ~ Pesticides in water collaboration with FOE
- ~ Gunn's Pulp Mill
- ~ Orica HCB waste export
- ~ Lead carbonate in WA
- ~ NPI review
- ~ Plastic bags

❖ Sustainable food

- ~ Genetic engineering (Jo on NSW Ministerial Gene Technology Advisory Council)
- ~ Series of articles in ABC Organic Gardener magazine on pesticide regulation in Australia and promotion of CSAs
- ~ Endosulfan, atrazine, simazine, carbofuran
- ~ Ongoing debate with the APVMA on chemical review program
- ~ Food Gardens in Schools with the Seed Savers Network

❖ International chemical management

- ~ Holding Australia to account on global chemical conventions (HCB Shipment)
- ~ John, Mariann, Imogen and Bro all attending key international meetings
- ~ Defeat of 2 IEC candle standards to put more BFRs in consumer products

❖ **Community engagement**

- ~ NChem working group
- ~ APVMA CCC
- ~ NICNAS CEF and TFG
- ~ NECF and Mittagong Forum
- ~ OCS and MCS

❖ **Children's environmental health**

- ~ Gas heaters in schools
- ~ ARACY collaborative project on *Environmental Threats to the Health of Children in Australia: the need for a national research agenda*

Submissions, letters and reports

NTN has continued to contribute high quality submissions and reports and kept up the pressure with letters:

- ❖ POPRC submissions on new candidate POPs
- ❖ Letters to Tony Burke on endosulfan and atrazine
- ❖ Letters to Nicola Roxon on fluoride
- ❖ 3 submissions on the proposed amendments to International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) Standards for candle resistance

Conferences

- ❖ HAZMAT 2007 – Mariann, Bro and Jane

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Committees

- ❖ Hazardous Waste Policy Reference Group
- ❖ POPS Stakeholder Reference Group
- ❖ National Industrial Chemical Notification & Assessment Scheme Technical Advisory Group
- ❖ National Industrial Chemical Notification & Assessment Scheme Community Engagement Forum
- ❖ National Industrial Chemical Notification & Assessment Scheme Chemical Review Steering Committee
- ❖ Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Pesticides Community Consultative Committee

International Roles:

Australian IPEN Focal Group
International POPs Elimination Network

Office Bearers 2007

President: Jo Immig
Vice President: Mariann Lloyd-Smith
Public Officer: Julia Pitts
Secretary (Interim): Jane Bremmer
Treasurer: Richard Jones

Committee Members:

John Wickens
Imogen Ingram
Elizabeth O'Brien
Dorothy Bowes
Don Want
Lee Bell
Ellen White
Bro Sheffield Brotherton
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