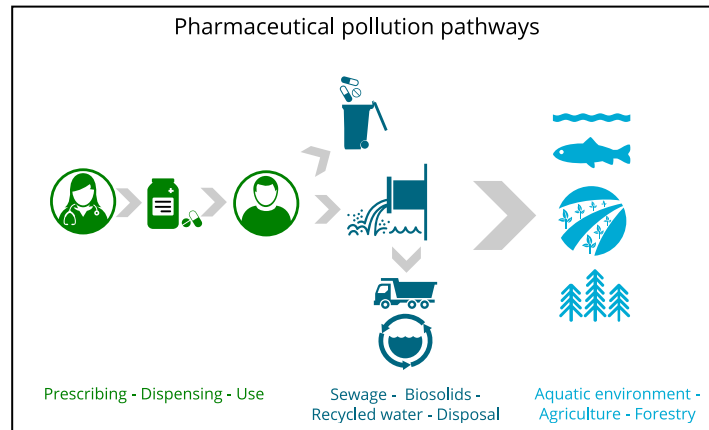


**MEDIA RELEASE - 31 May 2015**

## Pharmaceutical pollution reaching alarming levels globally

The National Toxics Network (NTN) has released a new report and fact sheet warning that pharmaceutical pollution has reached alarming levels globally, with over 200 different pharmaceuticals detected in aquatic and terrestrial environments, including areas as remote as the Antarctic.



These pharmaceutical pollutants, including antibiotics, painkillers, cardiovascular drugs, blood lipid regulators, estrogens and antidepressants, principally originate from treated and untreated sewage. Antibiotic pollutants are of particular concern to human health, due to their potential to exacerbate the problem of antibiotic resistance. There is also growing evidence of the adverse impacts on human health of endocrine disruptors. Many pharmaceuticals are designed to act on the endocrine system. Low levels of many pharmaceuticals have also been shown to have a detrimental impact on aquatic ecosystems.

Additionally, studies around the world, including Australia, have shown biosolids to be contaminated with pharmaceutical pollutants. None of the guidelines for the use of biosolids in Australia and New Zealand requires testing for pharmaceutical pollutants or establishes 'safe' levels, if they even exist.

The report "**Pharmaceutical pollution in the environment: issues for Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Regions**" highlights published data which demonstrate the presence of multiple pharmaceuticals in biosolids, treated wastewater, river systems and marine sediments in Australia and New Zealand, and the risks they pose in the environment.

NTN calls for the following immediate actions:

1. Implement binding guideline relating to pharmaceutical contaminants in biosolids and recycled water
2. Stop the use of biosolids as fertiliser pending further investigation of pharmaceutical contaminants
3. Invest in the development and use of advanced wastewater treatment technologies that remove and degrade pharmaceutical pollutants

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