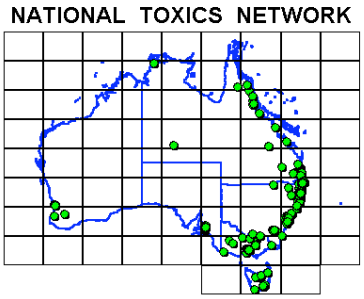

NATIONAL TOXICS NETWORK INC.

Australian IPEN Focal Group
International POPs Elimination Network
PO Box 173 Bangalow 2479 NSW Australia
ABN 61 118 160 280
Ph: 02 66871900
www.oztoxics.org

APVMA Sprat Drift Proposal Commnets
Mr David Loschke
Pesticides Division
PO BOX E240
Kingston ACT 2604

David.loschke@apvma.gov.au

RE: OPERATING PRINCIPLES AND PROPOSED REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS IN RELATION TO SPRAY DRIFT RISK

The National Toxics Network Inc. (NTN) is an NGO network working to promote environmental health, pollution reduction and environmental justice. NTN provides an international, national and regional voice on environmental health issues, with a particular focus on vulnerable communities and children's environmental health.

We applaud the APVMA's progress on the issue of pesticide spray drift, however we do have some key concerns with the proposed Requirements which are outlined below. We appreciate some of the issues raised extend into other aspects of risk assessment, however it is difficult to realistically separate these issues, particularly from the community's perspective.

In general, the NTN believes that for far too long the voice of impacted communities and environments have not been equally heard on the issue of spray drift. This is partly because control-of-use is a state and territory jurisdiction. Steps must be taken however to readdress this

imbalance so that fair outcomes are gained for the whole community and for the environment and not just the agricultural industry.

In summary, our concerns include:

- The risk management approach the APVMA takes to spray drift does not adequately apply the **Precautionary Principle**, which the NTN advocates must under-pin all APVMA risk assessments.

  For instance, the document states: "The APVMA recognises that measurable off-target spray drift can occur at times even when the product is being applied with care" (pg5). If there are instances where this is occurring the pesticide should be suspended from that use pending further assessment, as is the case with pharmaceuticals.

  The current system allows a potentially dangerous pesticide to continue to be used while assessments are underway. If pesticides require'micro-management' to prevent harm from occurring, those pesticides should be removed from the market entirely. NTN supports the use of "Restricted Chemical Product Status" to higher levels of competency training if products cannot be quickly removed from the market.

- While good desktop risk assessments can be made, to effectively regulate and manage pesticides, NTN believes it is essential that a **systematic national pesticide surveillance system** be implemented to collect real data on the impacts of pesticides on health and the environment associated with spray drift exposure. This should be linked to other monitoring systems (eg cancer surveillance systems, body burden monitoring) to ensure the impacts of pesticides are being properly identified. The APVMA's AERP reporting process is not an adequate process for identifying the indiscriminate and long-term effects of pesticide spray drift on human health and the environment.

- While not included in the scope of the current document, procedures for the **assessment of indoor pesticide product use and urban 'spray drift'** must also be specified in relation to hazards such as residues on off target areas and surfaces such as gardens, children's toys, bedding, carpets etc. In particular, when devices are used that continuously emit pesticides in enclosed spaces and outdoors.

- Assessments such as drift deposit profiles are only carried out on **active ingredients** and not all formulated ingredients in a product. What assessments, if any, are done to determine the spray drift hazard of other volatile ingredients as well as how other ingredients may influence the drift of active ingredients?

- While safety margins are incorporated into exposure thresholds NTN is concerned that the **safety margins applied do not adequately protect the most vulnerable members of the community** – infants, children, pregnant and breast-feeding mothers. How do exposure assessments take into account emerging toxicology issues such as the extremely low exposures to some pesticides and other chemicals that can cause

epigenetic effects, endocrine disruption etc? For example, in relation to the current controversy over Atrazine and impacts on frog populations?

- How **robust are exposure assessments** in relation to variables such as changing weather and climatic patterns or increasing chemical loads in vulnerable populations such as the young or asthmatics? For instance, using 'typical rainfall patterns' may be out-of-date in many areas across Australia now and into the future. Children today have greater chemical loads and can be exposed to chemicals from multiple sources. Australia has one of the highest rates of childhood asthma in the world – how is this factored into exposure assessments?

- The use of **declared spray drift risk areas**, **mandatory buffers and no spray zones** should be applied more frequently as a precautionary measure to protect health and the environment and not just international trade, especially in relation to Restricted Chemical Products. Sensitive environments such as schools and child-care facilities and domestic agricultural environments where there is no tolerance for pesticide residues such as in certified organic farming. NTN supports the mandatory inclusion of written consent of adjoining landholders for declared spray drift risk areas.

- Despite a greater risk of spray drift from aerial application, **spray drift from ground-based equipment** is still problematic. Licensing, training and relevant restrictions should also be applied to ground applicators.

- In light of increasing controversy over **spray drift issues related to forestry**, it would useful to conduct a special investigation of this problem, which should include thorough public consultation with affected communities.

We hope these points will assist in your deliberations.

Yours Sincerely

Jo Immig
NTN National Coordinator