

MEDIA RELEASE

Attn: Chief of Staff

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Chemical giant Orica attempts to export toxic waste to Finland

Australian chemical manufacturer Orica is once again attempting to export its large stockpile of highly toxic waste from Botany, Sydney for incineration overseas. This time the proposed destination is an incinerator in Finland.

“Orica previously tried to export its stockpile of hexachlorobenzene (HCB) waste to Germany, Denmark and more recently France. All three attempts were met with stiff resistance from communities, environmental organisations and politicians in those countries. In each case the government rejected the proposed import citing Australia’s responsibility to manage its own waste as a technically and financially competent signatory to the Stockholm and Basel Conventions,” said Lee Bell, senior researcher with the National Toxics Network and member of the UN Stockholm Convention BAT/BEP Expert Group.

As signatories to the Conventions Australia has international legal obligations to deal with its own hazardous waste and Orica has been criticised for attempting to undermine these obligations by repeatedly proposing to ship its stockpile of HCB waste overseas.

“Orica has been stockpiling hundreds of tonnes of toxic HCB waste in a sealed storage shed in Botany, NSW. This waste accumulated from their chemical production facilities in the 1960s and 1970s at the same location” Mr Bell said.

“Instead of developing a local solution to safely destroy the waste, Orica is fixated on incinerating its toxic waste in Europe. They don’t seem to have learned the lessons of previous export attempts where communities and governments have overwhelmingly joined forces to reject these shipments” said Mr Bell.

“The Australian government and Orica have made no progress on a domestic response to intractable toxic waste treatment since the last failed export attempt to France in 2014. Australia urgently needs an environmentally sound and dedicated toxic waste treatment facility for the tsunami of toxic waste accumulating in this country. NTN has made repeated representations to the federal government to begin this process to no avail”.

“Environmentally friendly technology was available in Australia to deal with the HCB waste and was successfully trialed, but the Australian government and Orica failed to support this technology and company so they moved offshore. We now have a growing backlog of intractable toxic waste with no Federal support for establishing the right treatment facilities” Mr Bell said.

“The French, Danish and German governments were incredulous that the Australian government would not make provisions to treat its own waste and appear happy to dump it on other communities. It’s likely the Finnish government will also take a dim view of this proposal.”

NTN will prepare an official objection to the proposal and is notifying civil society organisations in Finland of the latest attempt by Orica to ship toxic HCB waste to their country.