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Let science & facts guide public health & safety on chemical use, not unfounded rhetoric

CropLife Australia's Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Cossey, today said that he was disappointed that well-known environmental activists are seeking to inappropriately influence government investigations through pre-judging the outcomes of legitimate and responsible regulatory processes.

Mr Cossey stated "It is critically important that all regulators are left to perform their functions independently and without political pressure from individuals or groups with vested interests. It is inappropriate for anyone to use exaggeration and unfounded accusations of 'toxic legacies' or 'birth defect clusters' in an attempt to falsely alarm and scare the public, and pressure regulators.

"CropLife is reassured that the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has already reviewed the potential links between birth defects and pesticide exposure and concluded that no additional risk management actions are required by Australian agricultural chemical users. Further, CropLife notes that the New South Wales Department of Health has indicated that there is no evidence of a cluster of birth defects in the Northern Rivers communities of NSW.

"Australia is fortunate to have extensive, effective and responsive regulatory systems in place that minimise the risk of adverse effects occurring. It is important that farmers, producers of chemicals and the broader community permit regulators such as the APVMA and the New South Wales Department of Health to perform any necessary investigation carefully and free from political pressure.

"CropLife Australia and its member companies are committed to providing sustainable crop protection solutions to enable farmers to continue to provide safe, abundant, nutritious, healthy and affordable food for local and export markets. Our members are committed to demonstrating that our products are safe and valuable inputs to modern, sustainable farming systems.

"Before any product can be used in Australia, companies must first spend hundreds of millions of dollars in research and development".

"Consequently, our members are vigilant and proactive in responding to issues about our products. It is in our interest to do so, as it protects the investments made in innovating new products" said Mr Cossey. "It is consistent with member obligations under CropLife's Code of Conduct".

"All the data generated is then independently reviewed by Australia's pesticides regulator, the APVMA, to ensure there are no unacceptable risks to worker safety, human health, natural ecosystems or trade.

"CropLife and its members are not complacent and should additional unacceptable risks be identified, CropLife members will willingly work with regulators to take necessary actions in accordance with our commitment to the life cycle stewardship of products", said Mr Cossey.

CropLife welcomes regulatory decisions that are science based and supported by real evidence, rather than rhetoric and anecdote. The ongoing sustainability of Australia's farming sector is reliant on predictable and logical regulation that facilitates ongoing investment and innovation in agriculture. CropLife and its members will maintain their commitment to the responsible stewardship of their products throughout their life cycle.

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About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia is the peak industry organisation representing the agricultural chemical and biotechnology (plant science) sector in Australia. CropLife represents the innovators, developers, manufacturers, formulators and registrants of crop protection and agro-biotechnology products. The plant science industry provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies that are key to the nation's agricultural productivity, sustainability and food security. The plant science industry is worth more than \$1.5 billion a year to the Australian economy and directly employs thousands of people across the country.

CropLife member companies spend more than \$13 million a year on stewardship activities to ensure the safe use of their products on the environment and human health. CropLife ensures the responsible use of these products through its industry code of conduct and has set a benchmark for industry stewardship through programs such as **drumMUSTER**, ChemClear® and Agsafe Accreditation and Training.