

ABC REPORTING ON GLYPHOSATE MISLEADING AND IRRESPONSIBLE

17 February 2016 (Canberra) – Yesterday's ABC Online article by Josie Taylor and subsequent reporting on local councils' continued use of herbicides that contain the active ingredient glyphosate, has several serious factual inaccuracies and is misleading in regard to the context of the International Agency for Research on Cancer's (IARC) Report. It also omits pertinent information such as the fact that all glyphosate products have been extensively and independently assessed by regulators in the USA, Canada, Australia and Europe and found to be safe.

More recent findings have concluded that glyphosate is unlikely to pose even a carcinogenic hazard let alone an actual risk. Such inaccuracies could have been avoided if the original article was properly fact checked or at least a credible alternative view sought.

The article fails to mention the recent European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) [peer review](#) that concluded glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans and the evidence does not support classification with regard to its carcinogenic potential.

Ms Taylor's article and subsequent radio and television reports seemed more concerned with misleading sensationalised fear mongering than providing correct and useful information to the Australian public. The serious lack of a credible foundation in the article was demonstrated yesterday afternoon in the television interview with Professor Bernard Stewart when he highlighted the complete lack of any basis for both the tone and content of Josie Taylor's original and subsequent reports.

The original article is in clear breach of the ABC's Code of Practice and CropLife Australia will be taking the appropriate action.

An article that simply regurgitates false activist propaganda against overwhelming independent global scientific analysis is irresponsible and effectively misleads consumers. The fact that the association of those interviewed in the piece with extreme activist organisations was not reported in the article also raises serious questions over the professionalism of the reporting.

The IARC is one of four programs within the World Health Organization (WHO) that have reviewed the safety of glyphosate. Two of the four WHO programs – the Core Assessment Group and the International Programme on Chemical Safety – both concluded glyphosate is not carcinogenic. The WHO Guidelines for Drinking-Water Quality program concluded glyphosate does not represent a hazard to human health.

The reason for this is that the IARC report is not a risk assessment; it very narrowly determines the potential for a specific compound to cause cancer under some circumstances, even if those circumstances are unlikely to occur. The pre-ambule to the final complete scientific monograph report goes to some length to specifically highlight this point after the original misrepresentation and misreporting of their interim report.

For example, working the night shift or being a hairdresser are classified as probably cancer-causing, the same as glyphosate, because one job disrupts the body's circadian rhythms and the other involves exposure to dyes. Coffee and aloe vera are "possible" carcinogens according to the IARC list.

IARC acknowledges that its work can be easily misunderstood by those without scientific qualifications and tried to correct the record following the classification of glyphosate. That is why the IARC made a particular effort to state in the [Monograph pre-ambule](#): *"The Monographs are an exercise in evaluating cancer hazards, despite the historical presence of the word 'risks' in the title. The distinction between hazard and risk is important."*

All agricultural chemical products undertake a chemical risk assessment that includes an exposure assessment to ensure their safety for human health and the environment. This process assesses in detail the likely exposure of humans, users and members of the public, and environmental organisms and takes into account how the chemical product is to be used, the type and formulation of the product, and the crops or animals to be treated. Any new research findings may also trigger a review by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, as it should in an independent, scientific and evidence-based regulatory system.

Globally, and in Australia, the registration process of all pesticides involves years of data collection and comprehensive assessment before approvals are granted and a product can be sold on the Australian market.

It's crucial that news reporting on technical, scientific information is accurate, factual and not driven by activists' misplaced political agendas.

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