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## Fact or Fear: the losing battle for science and evidence-based reporting

**31 August 2024 (Canberra)** – CropLife is disappointed to see the ABC abandon its own long-standing journalistic principles of integrity, responsibility and accuracy with recent online reporting of agricultural chemical regulation in promotion of an upcoming episode of Landline. It would appear that Landline has also abandoned those same principles if ABC online reports are a true representation of the story. The conclusions drawn not only stand in stark contrast to the conclusion of every scientific regulatory authority on the planet, it raises further questions about the credibility of scientific reporting standards that the ABC sets for itself and that the Australian community deserve.

This flagship program has long played an important role in connecting its audiences with the farmers and rural industries dedicated to ensuring fresh, safe and affordable food for Australians. It is unfortunate to see the platform instead link cherry-picked, isolated case studies to scientific opinion to support its sensationalised narrative.

The ABC's role as the national broadcaster is to provide independent, robustly verified information based on factual accuracy. The concerning trend away from this to position itself as a de facto regulator only serves to undermine public confidence in important systems that exist for a reason.

Crop protection products, specifically non-selective herbicides, are a thoroughly regulated and rigorously assessed vital tool used by farmers around the world for 50 years that have revolutionised sustainable farming.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is solely responsible for the regulation of agricultural chemicals in Australia according to stringent scientific criteria.

The journalists have sought to infer that Australia's system of independent science-based regulation was not up to standard by pointing to scientific papers that cast doubt on the APVMA's assessment. This claim does not hold weight, given the common knowledge of these papers and the fact that they have been used as part of the scientific assessment by the APVMA and other science-based regulators worldwide. The reality is that they fail to reflect the scientific weight of evidence around paraquat and Parkinson's disease.

The ABC also made serious accusations about the independence of the APVMA based on a 2023 report that was unequivocal in its view it saw no instances in which chemicals were registered inappropriately. This position was further reinforced by an additional review commissioned by the Government, demonstrating a serious lack of journalistic integrity in reporting the facts.

The APVMA is world-renowned for its robust, independent, science-based assessments of agricultural and veterinary chemicals, employing expert regulatory scientists and toxicologists equipped to navigate the complex data of realistic exposure to hazards. This independent authority assesses decades of global literature in reaching public health conclusions, in far more thorough detail than any one individual study highlighted by the ABC.

This body of evidence includes global cohort studies like the US Agricultural Healthy Study that has followed decades of lived experience of over 57,000 farmers and licensed pesticide applicators. It remains the most robust and reliable evidence that shows no association between paraquat use and Parkinson's.

In addition to the APVMA, regulators in the United States, New Zealand and Japan all agree that, despite a long-running misleading sensationalised narrative, there is no connection between the use of paraquat and Parkinson's disease.

Greater awareness and support for those suffering with debilitating diseases is important work, but drawing conclusions that stand in stark contrast to every scientific regulatory authority on the planet will not direct resources to where they are needed the most.

It is now imperative that the ABC review this reporting against its own editorial standards in order to prevent further spread of misinformation.

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