

INQUIRY INTO KOORAGANG ISLAND ORICA CHEMICAL LEAK

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

I am a member of the Stockton community and I attended the first meeting held by Orica on Dalby Oval to address the residents of Stockton. I would like to discuss a few issues around 1.a(i), 1.a(ii), 1.a(iii) listed in the terms of reference for the Inquiry.

At the meeting the Orica plant manager said that such a thing had never happened before and it was completely unexpected. Especially unexpected was that a plume of vapour released into the atmosphere could cross the river to fall on shipping, residences, gardens, parks, playgrounds, ovals, vehicles, roofs, shrubs, flowers, trees, and the inhabitants of its nearest neighbour to the east, Stockton.

In other words, by their own admission, they were totally unprepared for the toxic incident that occurred on Mon August 8, 2011. Even though the plant handles dangerous chemicals and is constantly releasing clouds of emissions into the sky, especially at night. Sometimes when there is no wind fumes from Kooragang drift to Stockton and hang in the air to greet us when we wake in the morning. It is a horrible smell, people here call it "the big stink" .

Its difficult to see how potential health and other aspects of the leak such as environmental hazards can be adequately addressed when no research into the general health of the workers or the population has been produced. Most of the workers involved in the start up process are contract

workers, they move on when a job is completed. They don't have local doctors.

Amongst the people of Stockton there is a high incidence of ashma; could there be a connection between air quality and pollution from Kooragang? Who knows? How many people from Stockton have been treated recently at local hospitals with eye problems?

As a gardener and bee keeper the questions I ask myself are: have my bees been contaminated by Chromium VI and has it entered my food chain via the honey? Is Orica in touch with industrial chemists and do they intend to inform us of the consequences to the local community and our environment of the possible effects from long term chemical contamination. Where are the fish and the birds in all this? Is there is adequate local research to refer to?

The Orica plant has been forty years at Kooragang and this leak is only one of many. How much community engagement is necessary before Orica cleans up its act and is no longer allowed to operate creating pollution, spewing forth extraordinary amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, consuming precious fresh water resources, contaminating our waterways and making a huge amount of industrial noise?