

Saturday, 24 July 2010

Alex Jones

Address deleted

City of Nedlands

Stirling Hwy.

Nedlands 6009

Dear Mayor, Councillors and CEO,

Re: "Pesticide guide needs toughening", Post Newspaper, 24/07/2010, page 15.

Nedlands Council has been a leader in the introduction of non chemical treatment of weeds along kerbs and footpaths and for this it is to be congratulated.

There are many community based organizations such as the Alliance for a Clean Environment, the National Toxics Network, Save Our Trees , Multiple Chemical Sensitivities and more recently the Save Our Swan group, who are concerned about environmental toxins and their impact on humans and the natural environment. Not only in Western Australia but also nationally and internationally the issue of environmental toxins and their effects on public health and the natural environment has become a matter of growing concern. Importantly, the US President's Cancer Panel Report highlights the urgency of reducing the environmental toxins that are linked to cancers and other life-threatening diseases.

Groups such as those mentioned are supported by countless individuals who want to see an end to the widespread use of harmful chemicals. Local, state and federal governments need to take responsibility for their role in contributing to polluting activities and it is no longer acceptable to simply place responsibility for the ongoing use of these products on the individual pesticide applicator or the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority ( APVMA).

**Nedlands Council website states:**

'Parks are sprayed for various nuisance weeds, such as, jojo, bindii and calthorp. A white, non toxic, biodegradable vegetable dye is mixed with herbicide to mark areas that have been sprayed.....Community education on the difference between a product (trademark) and the active ingredients (chemicals ) is an issue to be addressed.'

1. Firstly, it is correct that some people in our suburbs perceive weeds to be a "nuisance". Many of the chemicals commonly used by councils and state authorities, on the other hand, have known or suspected links to cancers, neurological and autoimmune diseases. There needs to be "community education" more so about the serious risks to human health posed by these chemicals. The public must be given the opportunity to decide if these weeds are such a nuisance as to justify this "overkill", as it is often described, of using toxic chemicals, and it is rather the **issue of unsolicited**

**exposure that must be addressed and not merely the “difference between a product (trademark) and the active ingredients (chemicals)...”**

2. The Nedlands website also states that **“A white, non toxic biodegradable dye is mixed with herbicide...”** This statement omits the important information about the **toxicity of the herbicide**. By this omission, Nedlands Council is leading the public to think that the practice is safe – an implication prohibited by the APVMA (Code No.47, 1994). If Council is not prepared to also state that the herbicide is non toxic then the herbicide should not be used in public places where unsolicited exposure inevitably occurs.

3. There needs to be **“community education”** not only about the **“product”** and the **“active ingredients”** but more importantly, about all the **internationally recognized health risks** and the **manufacturers’ disclaimers and warnings** associated with using these products.

4. There also needs to be **community education about the benefits of many weeds to the natural environment** so that more consideration will be given to simply cutting or slashing weeds rather than killing them.

5. It makes sense to **refer such an important matter to the Sustainable Nedlands Committee** rather than proceed with an inadequate pesticide policy.

On behalf of the many people who have concerns about these products, I urge Nedlands Council to review its Risk Assessment on the use of chemical herbicides and pesticides on public land and to explore all possible alternatives; signage and administrative control is simply not enough to protect the public. The ongoing use of such products in light of their internationally recognized risks to public health and the natural environment should be raising concerns about duty of care by our authorities at all levels.

**Yours Faithfully**

**Alex Jones**

**Nedlands resident and promoter: [www.saveourtrees.net](http://www.saveourtrees.net)**