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Cc: "joe harawira" <joe.harawira@nash.org.nz>
Sent: Sunday, 28 May 2006 4:55 p.m.
Subject: Fw: [aowg] Dioxin poisons fishing families

FYI Cheers. John Moller.

----- Original Message -----

From: Debra Kraus
To: aowg
Sent: Tuesday, May 02, 2006 2:14 AM
Subject: [aowg] Dioxin poisons fishing families

Sent to Agent Orange Working Group List - AOWG.
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 Avoid sending attachments but if necessary keep them small (1.5 mb maximum).

Dioxin poisons fishing families

Zoe Kenny, *Sydney*

A number of commercial fishing operators from Sydney Harbour have levels of dioxin in their blood 10 times higher than the national average as a result of eating their catch. The tests were conducted by ABC TV's 7.30 Report after the fishing operators tried in vain to get the NSW Labor government to take action.

On April 19, the 7.30 Report announced the results of tests carried out on three members of one family - Tony Ianni, Elaine Pensabene and their six-year-old son Luca Ianni. Tony has dioxin levels four times the Australian average and Luca has levels higher than his mother. GP Mark Donohue, who was also interviewed, said that dioxin is possibly the most poisonous chemical we've managed to produce.

The tests also showed very high levels of a particularly toxic form of dioxin - tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin (TCDD). TCDD is formed during the process of production of Agent Orange, the notoriously dangerous and destructive chemical which the US army used as a defoliant during the Vietnam War. Agent Orange is linked to a range of serious health issues such as birth defects, cancer and disturbances of the central and peripheral nervous system.

The results have serious implications for the health of the fishing families, as well as other Sydney residents, many of whom consumed the seafood they also sold.

On January 24, the NSW government imposed a three-month ban on commercial fishing in Sydney Harbour after tests conducted on prawns caught there showed high levels of dioxin. The suspension affected the livelihoods of 22 commercial fishing operators especially as the government did not guarantee them compensation.

Then, on February 9, the government announced an end to commercial fishing after tests showed the level of cancer-causing dioxin in fish was almost 100 times World Health Organisation recommended maximum levels.

The National Toxics Network website <www.oztoxics.org> says the contamination of the Harbour and Parramatta River has been common knowledge since at least 1987 when the state

government notified the chemical company Union Carbide of its responsibility to clean up its site at Homebush Bay. The clean up was not done.

In 1997, Greenpeace began conducting environmental tests on the Homebush site, where the 2000 Olympics were to be held, to assist the government to live up to its "Green Games" promise. As part of its investigations, Greenpeace discovered 69 drums of abandoned dioxin waste. It also conducted tests on fish from the harbour which showed elevated levels of dioxins and an extremely high level of TCDD.

According to Greenpeace, the levels of dioxin put Homebush Bay into the world's top five sites for the most contaminated fish. Soon after the release of the Greenpeace tests, the government committed \$21 million to cleaning up Homebush Bay.

The media's interest in the fishing families' plight has prompted some government action. A \$200 million clean-up program has been promised, and the government says it will spend \$5.8 million buying back fishing licences and compensating some 40 fishing people.

From *Green Left Weekly*, May 3, 2006.
Visit the [Green Left Weekly home page](#).

<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2006/666/666p9.htm>

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