

## 12th Nov 2007: PANANZ Welcomes the release of the Report

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Pesticide Action Network Aotearoa New Zealand (PAN ANZ) welcomes the release of the report into the findings of the Peoples Inquiry in to the Effects of Aerial Spraying Pesticide over Urban Areas of Auckland.

"We whole heartedly support the recommendations advanced by the report's authors and urge the Government to move speedily to implement them," said coordinator of PAN ANZ Dr Meriel Watts.

The report was authored by independent Commissioners for the Inquiry: Dr Joanna Govern and Dell Wihongi of New Zealand, Professor Romeo Quijano of the University of the Philippines, and Professor Tom Kerns from Seattle. The Peoples Inquiry, a unique community-led inquiry into the effects of a spray campaign which was one of the most prolonged and invasive ever delivered to an urban population anywhere in the world, was established because of the government's refusal to address the community concerns.

The Inquiry took place in the Waitakere City Council Chambers in March 2006. The Commissioners found that people had suffered significant health effects and significant social effects such as loss of jobs, businesses, schooling, homes and marriages, as a result of the aerial spraying campaign. Health effects reported to the Inquiry included neurological effects such as seizures, headaches and memory loss, respiratory effects, skin rashes, digestive problems like diarrhoea and vomiting, effects on blood pressure, fatigue, allergies and many others.

They also found that there had been considerable abuse of human rights and a fundamental failure of the government 'to meet the basic responsibility of a government to protect its citizens from physical harm'.

"It is completely unacceptable to spray an urban population more that 50 times with a brew of a biological insecticide and chemicals, and prevent the community from knowing what chemicals they are being sprayed with. This is a fundamental abuse of human rights," said Dr Watts. "There must now be a formal apology by the government to the community and compensation for the effects they experienced. The report described the experiences suffered by some people at the hands of MAF and its contracted doctors as 'brutalising'."

"This situation must never happen again. The best way to ensure this, is to fully involve community members in any future biosecurity programmes at the very beginning of the process. The Biosecurity Act must be changed to ensure that affected communities are part of the decision-making process, not inflicted with token consultation that is mere window dressing, and that potential health effects are addressed by the Ministry of Health, not the ministry of Agriculture which has far more concern for promoting trade interests than protecting peoples health."

The aerial spraying campaign was to eliminate the exotic pest, the painted apple moth, which was thought to possibly be a threat to plantation forests, many of which are owned by overseas interests. "The forestry industry did not pay for the aerial spraying. The tax payers of new Zealand paid, and the community of West Auckland suffered."

"It is imperative, not just for the people of New Zealand, but for communities all over the world, that the New Zealand Government now acknowledges the problems cause by the aerial spraying, because the New Zealand experience is wrongly being used to justify similar campaigns in North America. Flawed government-funded assessments of the painted apple moth campaign are being used to wrongly say that the spray is safe."

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