

✕ PFAS - WorkSafe Victoria & blood testing for ESSO neighbours



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Re: ESSO news story- [Workplace regulator pays for mass testing of workers exposed to PFAS](#)

I am directing this email to WorkSafe Victoria, EPA and the Victorian government in regards to the willingness of these agencies and government to regulate (or not) ESSO Australia Pty Ltd in regards to the exposure of PFAS chemicals to their workers (past & present) and that of their neighbours.

I have supplied a list of questions that warrant an answer please.

I would like to congratulate WorkSafe for taking the initiate to blood test ESSO workers for PFAS levels but 100 people is just not enough given the workforce and the timeframe that the chemicals were used at ESSO's facilities.

Additionally, there is more WorkSafe can do under Section [23](#). *Duties of employers to other persons of the OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT 2004*.

'Others,' in this case, are the neighbours.

Put a face to that word as **NO ONE IS CURRENTLY MONITORING & PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF PFAS AFFECTED LANDOWNERS** and for that the government should be ashamed of themselves.

Questions -

Is WorkSafe Victoria in a position to provide extra funding to blood test -

- o the growing list of ESSO's existing, ex-workers & those already retired?
- o PFAS affected neighbours who have been ingesting dust, water (surface & groundwater) & their own produce from ESSO's contamination for many years?

Government inaction vs WorkSafe action

For transparency and the potential for intimidation, ESSO should not control or own the testing results.

I believe this is why WorkSafe have stepped in to do what government have the power to do but appear not willing to act on.

Under Commonwealth regulation, some PFAS chemical use is still permitted but the Material Safety Data Sheets is where ESSO have been negligent in not following the prescribed instructions. My 3M AFFF MSDS is from a 1999 Minnesota example (attached). **See highlighted section on pages 3-7**

Workers and neighbours of ESSO were denied the right to know their baseline blood serum levels nearly two decades ago when the PFAS cover-up started.

It is time for the government to stand with the people rather than against them who have been contaminated with PFAS chemicals through no fault of their own but via ESSO's negligence.

Questions -

Can the Victoria State government -

- o direct ESSO to fund an appropriate blood testing regime?
- o ensure ESSO does not control or own the blood test results if they were to fund a screening program?
- o ensure blood testing results form part of broader research studies and a monitoring regime as noted in section [22](#). of the OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT 2004

Is it as simple as a signature from the WorkSafe Minister?

The diagnostic value of blood testing for PFAS levels in humans

With this most recent story written by Emma Fields for the ABC, Esso says it won't pay for the worker testing because,

"Australian and Victorian government agencies do not recommend blood testing for PFAS due to their non-diagnostic value. In accordance with this advice, Esso is not offering blood tests,"

This would mean both ESSO and the Victorian government are complicit in **SUPPRESSING KNOWLEDGE**.

The **value of blood testing** for PFAS exposed workers and neighbours of ESSO are significant to assess/identify the existing health ailments that have already been publically stated because, in the absence of other testing, we have NOTHING ELSE.

It cannot be disputed knowing if your current PFAS blood levels are elevated would be a tool ensuring a person further reduces their exposure to PFAS contamination as well as becoming more proactive if changes in their health status develop into the future requiring further management.

Both Federal and State government cannot protest the lack of research evidence and human studies to justify their *'limited or no evidence'* stance while avoiding the perfect opportunity for research.

These health studies would provide the data for new research which government currently do not have.

My chats with ESSO engaged toxicologist Roger Drew and ESSO doctor, Marcus Hirschfield, at ESSO community meetings have been extensive on human experiments and not once could they provide any valid reason why it could not occur with consultation.

I bring your attention to the following ESSO community news, <https://cdn.exxonmobil.com/~media/australia/files/community-news/esso-community-news/longford-newsletter-october-2018.pdf>

Healthy outlook for petroleum industry

As detailed in the 14 previous Health Watch reports, the chance of developing most types of cancer is no different for men and women in this industry compared with other Australians. Where cancers and deaths do occur, the overall death rates for men and women in the petroleum industry workforce are 20 percent lower than the national rates.

Esso Medicine and Occupational Health Manager, Dr Marcus Hirschfield, said the results of the report reinforced the company's, and the greater industry, efforts in looking after its workers. "I am proud to say that health and safety are not just buzzwords at ExxonMobil and we take our roles as employee caretakers as seriously as we do our role in producing worldclass energy solutions," he said.

Esso acts on PFAS concerns

*While they [expert panel] noted that further research is required regarding links between exposure to PFAS and certain health effects, the panel's advice is that the evidence does not support any specific health or disease screening or other health interventions for highly exposed groups in Australia, **except for research purposes.***

Dr Marcus Hirschfield also made the following comments to me -

- Do we do blood testing without a proper scientific reason which puts the medical team in a predicament?
- Surely the government has a threshold which determines when to step in either politically or more importantly, for the right reasons but they haven't.
- There is a huge list of stakeholders to listen & please and satisfy all their requirements.

Questions -

- Will the Victorian government provide medical rebates to cover costs of blood testing for PFAS impacted workers and neighbours if ESSO is not made to be compliant with Part 3 of the OH&S Act?
- Does the Victorian government believe there is merit in blood testing as an opportunity for research purposes?
- What priority does the Victorian government place on a person's basic human right to know if they have elevated PFAS blood levels for impacted communities and businesses?

Conflict of interests

Questions -

- Which doctor's clinics in the Wellington Shire are taking retainers from ESSO to conduct medicals, etc? Patients have a right to know that their relationship with their GP is private. Already have evidence of 2 cases where info was shared with ESSO doctor without the permission of the patient.
- Which doctor's clinics in the Wellington Shire and elsewhere are supporting the community or outspoken on the PFAS issue to promote a greater awareness rather than **EnHealth's one-sided, inaccurate information** noting **'there is no consistent evidence that PFAS cause any specific illnesses, including cancer**

Minimizers vs The Precautionary Principle

Two approaches to responding to the scientific literature on the health effects of perfluorinated chemical (inter alia other contaminants):

The Minimizers

"Human studies show that increased exposure to PFOA might increase for some health effect but those studies have scientific limitations. Human studies are difficult to interpret, and we cannot be sure that PFOA caused the observed health effects."

The Precautionary approach

"Studies both in people and in animals have shown a link between PFOA exposure and testicular and kidney cancer. There is a distinct probability that such an association exists."

Source - https://www.nysenate.gov/sites/default/files/alb_freed_testimony.pdf

The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence and is totally irresponsible for a government to be endorsing this type of approach on PFAS health impacts as you lessen the need for self-preservation.

To the Victorian government, what do you want your legacy on PFAS action to be?

I await your response.

Regards

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