

FACT SHEET: Orica Mercury Independent Review Stage Two

Background

The [Mercury Review](#) has been set up to investigate the potential for health risks to the community associated with mercury emissions from the site of the former chlor-alkali plant at Orica's Botany Industrial Park facility.

The review is overseen by a steering panel, which includes representatives from the EPA, community, Randwick and Botany councils, the Office of Environment and Heritage, NSW Health, an expert toxicologist and an independent chemical engineer.

Outcomes of Stage One

Stage One of the Mercury Review was undertaken by independent consultants CDM Smith and was finalised in December 2013. It involved analysis of historical and current data, including information from the community.

CDM Smith found that the risk of off-site soil contamination around BIP is low and there is no evidence of illegal off-site dumping of mercury waste from the former chlor-alkali plant that operated between 1994 and 2002.

Notwithstanding these results, CDM Smith recommended environmental testing be conducted; a recommendation the Mercury Review Steering Panel and the EPA fully supported.

For more information about Stage One, visit the EPA website here:
<http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/Oricabotanycttee/indrevstageone.htm>

Stage Two schedule

The EPA has commissioned independent consultants WSP Environmental to conduct environmental testing within a 1.5 kilometre radius of the former chlor-alkali plant. WSP Environmental was selected by the Steering Panel through the EPA's standard tender process.

They will take soil and vapour (air) samples on publicly owned sites, including parks, reserves, easements, verges. Up to 68 privately owned properties have also been allocated for testing, which will occur in the first quarter of 2015 subject to landowners opting in to the sampling program.

The work will be conducted as follows:

- Soil and air sampling to begin on public land in late January/ February 2015.
- Interim sample results released in March 2015.
- Sampling to begin on private land in April 2015, subject to landowners' consent.
- Full report completed and published by June 2015.



Temporary emission control enclosure, former Orica chlor-alkali plant. Photo: M Hart, EPA

Environmental testing program

WSP Environmental will:

- test for mercury in the soil (surface and shallow soil sampling)
- test for mercury in the air (vapour sampling at all soil sampling locations)
- conduct mercury vapour testing in stormwater drains
- conduct fish and sediment sampling for mercury in Penrhyn Estuary.

WSP Environmental will also sample for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and metals, including lead and chromium, in the residential area bounded by Beauchamp Road, Rhodes Street, Denison Street and the Sydney Water easement.

After Stage Two

If the results of the environmental testing find localised elevated levels of contaminants, further analysis will be done to determine the potential extent of the contamination, any associated risks and a plan of action.

If there is evidence of widespread potential off-site contamination, the EPA will assess the impacts in consultation with health experts and the Steering Panel.

Stages three and four, if required, will involve health risk assessments to determine if there is a significant risk to human health.

Independent consultants will be commissioned to undertake this work and make recommendations about population-based testing for mercury exposure among people who would potentially be at significant risk, such as children.

More information

For more information about the Mercury Review, visit the EPA website:

<http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/Oricabotanycttee/indrevoricabotany.htm>.

To find out more information about Stage Two of the Mercury Review, contact WSP Environmental at 8907 0900 or au.wspenvironmental@wspgroup.com or contact the EPA at 131 555 or info.botany@epa.nsw.gov.au.

To receive regular updates about the EPA's regulatory work at Botany Industrial Park, sign up to the EPA Botany Area Community Information Group at info.botany@epa.nsw.gov.au.

To learn more about the health impacts of mercury exposure, the NSW Ministry of Health has produced a fact sheet:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/mercury.aspx>.

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