

Errors in Dioxin study confirmed

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Errors in Dioxin study confirmed, time now for action

The Green Party has welcomed the fact that three independent reviews have confirmed the existence of errors in the original study into dioxin poisoning in New Plymouth, and that the research evidence confirms local residents were subjected to very high levels of dioxin poisoning.

"It is heartening to see Health Minister Pete Hodgson has finally owned up to the existence of errors in the Health Ministry study, which justifies some of the concerns raised at the time about the credibility of Ministry assurances," Green Party Health Spokesperson Sue Kedgley says.

"The devastating central findings of the study have also been confirmed. As Mr Hodgson says, people who lived close to the Ivor Watkins Dow plant between 1962 and 1987 probably have dioxin levels four times higher than other New Zealanders, and seven times higher in some age /sex groups.

"This is an appalling situation. Ivor Watkins Dow have been party to a level of industrial pollution in New Zealand that is comparable to Vietnam and the Seveso incident in Italy. The Government now has to take speedy, fair and effective measures to compensate the victims," Ms Kedgley says. "It is not good enough for Mr Hodgson to talk vaguely about 'some form of enhanced health support or information service.' The Government has had years to get an appropriate response to this situation up and ready to go.

"The Green Party has been saying for months that the Government should do its utmost to make the polluter pay. IWD ran the factory, and it should now be pursued through the courts to make suitable amends.

The Government should also be willing to issue a formal apology to the people of Paritutu for the decades of complicity and cover-up of this shameful episode, by successive governments.

"Other steps can and should be taken immediately. The Government should create a national register of current and former Paritutu residents likely to be affected. It should provide free healthcare and a blood serum test to all those people (and their children) potentially affected.

"The Government should also offer accident compensation assistance to all former employees at the plant, and launch an independent inter-generational study of the health effects of the IWD plant's proximity to residents and former residents.

"Now that the research results are in and the seriousness of the situation has been confirmed, it is time for action, " Ms Kedgley says.

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