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US jury finds Roundup caused cancer: call for Australian review

A federal jury in San Francisco has found Monsanto's Roundup herbicide played a big part in triggering Edwin Hardeman's non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL), a cancer that affects the immune system. (1) The jury will now hear evidence of Monsanto's undue influence over government regulators and cancer researchers, before setting the amount of liability and damages.

This judgement follows a similar case against Monsanto last year in which DeWayne Johnson was awarded \$78 million for his NHL. (2) These cases are a litmus test for over 9,000 other US plaintiffs with similar cancer claims against Bayer, Monsanto's new owner.

"The farm chemical regulator, Australian Pesticides and Vet Medicines Authority (APVMA), must immediately begin a formal safety review of Roundup herbicide and glyphosate its 'active' ingredient, with a focus on NHL and other terminal diseases," says Gene Ethics director Bob Phelps.

"The APVMA can no longer turn a blind eye to the safety of Australian workers and the public where Roundup is routinely sprayed," he says.

"The regulator's claims that following the Roundup label will protect users and bystanders are no longer credible. (3) The label print is tiny, prioritises protecting non-target plants, and inadequately guards the health and well being of vulnerable children, pets and users.

"Since the 1970s, the APVMA has registered over 500 different formulations and strengths of glyphosate-based-herbicides (GBHs) for spraying in all Australian environments - farms, home gardens, parks, playgrounds, footpaths, roadsides, golf courses, waterways, etc.

"The amount of GBHs sprayed has exploded, residues are found in many food and water samples, and in the urine and hair of people never directly exposed to the weedkiller, as far as they know.

"Warnings are rarely given when Roundup is sprayed in public places and workers usually wear minimal personal protective gear, assuming the product is as safe as Monsanto and Bayer claim.

"The chemical industry funds a large part of APVMA's regulatory budget from the levies on the sale of chemicals, including the \$1.6 billion spent annually on chemicals to kill weeds. GBHs are the most used weedkillers in Australia and the world.

"Our regulator must reclaim its independence from the chemical industry that it is supposed to regulate on our behalf and immediately begin a thorough review of the safety of all GBHs," Mr Phelps concludes.

More comment: Bob Phelps 0449 769 066

(1) <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/mar/19/monsanto-trial-roundup-verdict-edwin-hardeman-cancer>

(2) <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/sep/25/monsanto-dewayne-johnson-cancer-verdict>

(3) <https://apvma.gov.au/node/13891>