



**ENHEALTH COUNCIL POSITION ON COPPER CHROME
ARSENATE (CCA) TREATED TIMBER PRODUCTS
JULY 2005**

Introduction:

enHealth Council has considered the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicine Authority's (APVMA) report on the Review of Arsenic Timber Treatment Products, released in March 2005. The report recommends cancelling the use of Copper Chrome Arsenate (CCA) treatment of timber intended for structures such as garden furniture, picnic tables, exterior seating, children's play equipment, patio and domestic decking and handrails from March 2006. CCA is used to treat timber for the prevention of insect (termite) and fungal damage.

enHealth Council notes that:

Whilst the intentions of APVMA in eliminating a source of environmental contamination are acknowledged, there is no evidence that existing CCA treated timber structures in parks and throughout the community pose a risk to public health, or that replacement or removal of these existing structures is warranted.

The following basic hygiene practices, which should be applied during all outdoor activities, are adequate to deal with typical contact with CCA treated timber products:

- Do not place food directly on any outdoor surface that you are using as a table.
- Always place food on a plate or napkin.
- Always wash your hands after engaging in outdoor activities.

CCA treated timber should never be burnt or used as a fuel because of the toxic fumes which arise.

Background information:

The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing's Office of Chemical Safety (OCS) conducted a health risk assessment in 2003 and concluded that:

'based on a consideration of the exposure to CCA treated timber products, in particular children's play equipment, there was no compelling evidence from the available data to conclude that there was likely to be an unacceptable risk to public health from exposure to arsenic from CCA treated timber. Based on this finding, there would not seem to be a good justification for taking immediate action to remove existing CCA treated playground structures.'

Studies published in scientific literature support the OCS health risk assessment. The studies included measurements of the amount of arsenic on children's hands after playing on CCA treated timber playground equipment and a detailed risk assessment. Both types of studies found that the ingestion of arsenic by children in these situations is very low and not of a health concern.

The New Zealand Environmental Risk Management Authority also reviewed CCA in 2003 and concluded that:

'the weight of current evidence does not support measures such as banning all future use of CCA treated timber or replacing structures in current use.'

The United States Environmental Protection Agency and the European Union are not recommending the removal of existing CCA treated timber structures.

enHealth Council will work with the APVMA to further manage this issue and provide advice to local councils and other authorities who may have concerns about existing CCA treated timber structures.