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TREATED PINE RECOMMENDATIONS NO CAUSE FOR ALARM

A3P, which represents the plantation timber industry, says suggestions that timber treated with copper chrome arsenate be replaced in childrens' playgrounds is a knee-jerk reaction that must not be cause for alarm.

A3P Chief Executive, Belinda Robinson, said today that, despite its findings the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medical Authority had provided no evidence to connect timber treated with copper chrome arsenate to adverse health effects.

"The review into the use of Copper Chrome Arsenate (CCA) treated Timber *did not find* that the use of CCA treated timber was unsafe" she said

Instead the APVMA has taken an overly precautionary approach in concluding that it had insufficient information *on Australian conditions* to be entirely satisfied that the continuing use of CCA is safe for timber used in structures that the community and children come into frequent contact.

Because of this uncertainty, CCA will not be permitted for the treatment of timber used in a small number of applications — garden furniture, picnic tables, exterior seating, children's play equipment patio and domestic decking and handrails. It is permitted for all other uses.

"It important that people realise that existing structures are not affected by the ban, have not been found to present a health risk, and the report explicitly states that no regulatory authority in the USA, Europe, Canada or New Zealand have recommended the dismantling of existing structures" said Ms Robinson

The APVMA says that it will leave any decisions on existing structures with the appropriate decision-makers who can make their own risk assessments.

"In making those decisions it is important that the community and decision-makers are properly informed of the facts" Ms Robinson has urged

- The levels of arsenic exposure in treated timber playgrounds is very very small — around 20 per cent of the levels in the combined daily intake of food and water.
- The APVMA report notes that the combined levels of arsenic exposure from children eating drinking and visiting a play ground 3 days a week is at most 3-4 times less than the World Health Organisation tolerable limit for daily ingestion of arsenic and 5 times less than that set by the Food Standards Australia New Zealand.
- CCA treated timber has been in use around the world for 70 years without any scientific evidence of harm to human health provided it is properly used and handled;

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- Arsenic occurs naturally in soils and is the 20th most common element found in the earth's crust.

"It cannot be stated too strongly that there is no scientific evidence available to indicate an unacceptable risk to users of CCA treated timber. The implications of the APVMA's ambiguous conclusions is that users will face the additional costs of alternative treatments, and the public will be encouraged to use far less sustainable substitutes than timber products from sustainably managed plantations.

"**A3P** calls for an end to alarmist and misleading reporting that exploits people's natural desire to put the interests of their children above all else but fails inform of the true risks involved".

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