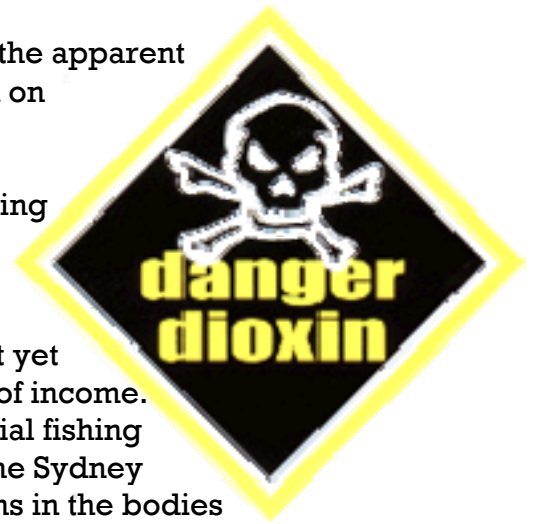


THE OLD UNION CARBIDE SITE in Homebush Bay is the apparent source of significant dioxin pollution, which led to a ban on commercial fishing in Sydney Harbour in January 2006.

Forty-four families who gained their livelihood from fishing Sydney Harbour were obliged to accept financial compensation for the loss of their professional fishing licences, and \$65,000 has been mentioned as the sum involved. Many of those hard-working families have not yet been able to establish a satisfactory alternative source of income. It is hardly surprising that families involved in commercial fishing anywhere in the world are prodigious fish-eaters, and the Sydney fishing families were no exception. So the level of dioxins in the bodies of the members of those forty-four families are likely to be much higher than for average Sydneysiders.



Even more serious, youngsters who were breastfed by mothers among those fishing families have been particularly hard hit. Dioxins attach to the fat molecules in breast milk and transfer from mother to baby, where they accumulate harmfully. There is anecdotal evidence of physical and mental retardation caused to these innocent kiddies by dioxins, but I am unaware of any official study.

Imagine the grief of parents and grandparents who with the best will in the world acted on the wisdom of generations that plenty of fish for a nursing mother is good for baby, and then discovered that every fish meal eaten by the nursing mother was actually damaging her offspring.

Australians accept that the victims of asbestosis are entitled to compensation. Clearly the victims of dioxin poisoning also deserve compensation, and the fishing families represent the appropriate starting point.

The common law rule *ferae naturae* suggests that Union Carbide (restructured and renamed Lednez) would in normal circumstances be held responsible for the consequences of any escape of harmful substances from the company's operations, even long after those operations have concluded.

However, in the case of Homebush Bay, the company handed over the site to the NSW Government in return for an indemnity against all future claims for compensation or damages. So the New South Wales Government, of whatever political colour, wears in perpetuity the whole liability in respect of any and all compensation claims. Great caution must obviously be exercised to ensure that no conflict of interest within Government is allowed to arise.

Lednez undertook remediation from 1990 to 1992, and when further tests established the persistence of contamination, the NSW Government allocated \$21m towards Bay remediation. Click [HERE](#) for details.

The closure of Sydney Harbour to professional fishing shouts loudly that remediation has not solved the problem.

Professional fisherman are convinced that the construction of an appropriate dam across the mouth of Homebush Bay would restore the quality of water in the rest of Sydney Harbour within two years, and would permit a serious assault on the pollution problem within Homebush Bay.

Sydney Harbour could be clean in two years if Homebush Bay is dammed and polluted material is removed

Parramatta River

John Whitton Rail Bridge

Ryde Bridge

Proposed Cofferddam 290m long

Rhodes

DEALING WITH DIOXIN

Homebush Bay

The proposed cofferdam to allow the cleanup of Homebush Bay

Waterbird Refuge



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