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Herbicide exposure compensation

TasNetworks will compensate a current employee, and the family of a former employee, in relation to historical herbicide contaminant exposure.

The current employee, now aged in his 60s, worked on Hydro Electric Commission vegetation teams in the 1970s and 80s, using the herbicide 2,4,5-T.

The former employee, whose family will receive compensation, also worked on those teams. He died in the 1980s, having already left the HEC.

TasNetworks has now completed a comprehensive search and screening process over 18 months, supported by independent toxicology and medical advice.

Independent medical expertise has concluded there are three conditions linked with historical exposure to the dioxin TCDD (found in some batches of 2,4,5-T), and no others. The three conditions are:

1. Hodgkin's lymphoma;
2. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma;
3. Soft-cell sarcoma.

The two men awarded compensation contracted one of the three illnesses.

TasNetworks' CEO, Lance Balcombe, said the business will honour its responsibilities.

"We've been determined to support our people – both past and present. We'll honour our historical responsibilities," Mr Balcombe said.

"This has been a very thorough process. We've advertised far and wide. We've had contact with almost 400 past and present employees, of which almost 70 have chosen to be tested. We're confident we've reached the vast majority of people who could've been affected.



“We deeply regret that a current and former employee contracted a cancer linked to this herbicide.

“Our current team member affected will be compensated, and TasNetworks will take a strong, supportive role in his ongoing treatment. His relationship with TasNetworks remains very strong, and he intends to keep working here,” he said.

About 70 people accepted TasNetworks’ offer of a funded medical examination. Everyone screened, apart from the one current employee, was clear of the three relevant conditions.

Eligibility for compensation has been determined by an independent panel of legal and medical representatives.

“While these were difficult circumstances, we’re pleased to have worked with many former and current employees to give some peace-of-mind and closure on these issues,” Mr Balcombe said.

“I want to thank the TasNetworks action group that’s worked on these matters for their commitment and sensitivity. And I want to thank every participant for their patience and mutual co-operation. They’ve each played an important role in providing a clearer picture of historical herbicide use in the old HEC,” he said.

The compensation amounts will be determined by a legal framework, and remain confidential.

TasNetworks will monitor any advances in medical knowledge, in consultation with the independent toxicologist, Dr Roger Drew. The business will share any contemporary findings about TCDD with current and former employees involved in the screening process.

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