

Media Release

The Hon Jill Hennessy MP

Attorney-General

Minister for the Coordination of Justice and Community Safety – COVID-19

Minister for Workplace Safety



Sunday, 19 April 2020

STRENGTHENING DANGEROUS GOODS LAWS TO KEEP PEOPLE SAFE

The Andrews Labor Government will undertake a comprehensive review of the Victoria's dangerous goods laws to help stamp out unsafe chemical stockpiling and keep Victorians safe.

Andrew Palmer, QC, has been appointed to conduct the review of the *Dangerous Goods Act 1985* and associated regulations.

The review is the latest step in the Government's ongoing response to chemical stockpiling after two large chemical fires in West Footscray in August 2018 and Campbellfield in April 2019.

Immediately following the 2018 fire, WorkSafe led a blitz on industrial premises to ensure dangerous chemicals were being stored correctly.

Government agency investigations led to the discovery of waste chemicals stockpiled at 13 sites in Melbourne's north last year.

A WorkSafe-led taskforce has so far removed more than 13 million litres of the stockpiled waste chemicals, clearing four sites in Epping, three in Craigieburn and three in Campbellfield. The final three sites in Campbellfield are currently being cleared.

The Labor Government last year introduced tough new penalties of up to 10 years in jail and fines of more than \$6.4 million for rogue operators who recklessly manufacture, store, transport, transfer, sell or use dangerous goods in a way that places another person in danger of death.

WorkSafe has charged Bradbury Industrial Services with 35 breaches of the Dangerous Goods Act in relation to five of the sites in Campbellfield and Craigieburn.

A review of the Act is important to ensure our laws are up to the task of protecting the community from the unacceptable risk that stockpiling of dangerous goods poses and to deal with those who do it.

A final report and recommendations are expected to be delivered to the Government next year, with opportunities for public comment and stakeholder engagement later this year.

WorkSafe has also charged Graham Leslie White, 58, of Harkness with 55 offences over the alleged illegal stockpiling of dangerous goods at four warehouses he occupied in Epping and one in Campbellfield and investigations are continuing.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Jill Hennessy

"We know that the unsafe storing, handling or disposal of dangerous chemicals poses a real threat to local communities."

"This review will make sure dangerous goods laws remain effective and keep Victorian's safe."

"Mr Palmer brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this important review which will safeguard all Victorians."

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