

# STERITECH

## THE UNTOLD STORY

Steritech Pty. Ltd. is a company that is owned by two people (Ian and Barbara Dicker), via a series of private trusts. It irradiates products ranging from pharmaceuticals and cosmetics through to industrial for sterilisation purposes. It now aims to irradiate food products. The following points are in response to the information produced by both the owners and employees of this company.

### THE IRRADIATION PLANT IS NUCLEAR

- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) identified that, “radioactive sources used in industrial radiography, radiotherapy, industrial irradiators and thermo-electric generators as those that are most significant from a safety and security standpoint because they contain large amounts of **radioactive material – such as Cobalt-60**”<sup>1</sup>
- Under the federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), Steritech’s proposed use of Cobalt 60 constitutes a **nuclear action**.<sup>2</sup>

### NUCLEAR COBALT-60 IS DANGEROUS

- The US EPA state, "All ionizing radiation, including that of cobalt-60, is known to cause cancer. Therefore, exposures to gamma radiation from cobalt-60 result in an **increased risk of cancer.**" They then state, "External exposure to cobalt-60 is usually considered a **greater threat**, because it emits such strong gamma rays. The magnitude of the health risk depends on the quantity of cobalt-60 involved and on exposure conditions."<sup>3</sup>

### COBALT-60 IS A NUCLEAR WASTE

- **George West (CEO of Steritech) stated**, "The natural cobalt-59, machined into long slender rods is used in specific nuclear power reactors". He then stated, "Eventually the Cobalt picks up an additional neutron thus lifting its atomic weight from 59 to 60. However, there is now a reaction to this **intruder**, which is in the form of Beta and Gamma rays being emitted from the Cobalt atom."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Inadequate Control of World's Radioactive Sources, IAEA press centre, [www.iaea.or.at/worldatom/PressP\\_release/2002/prn0209.shtml](http://www.iaea.or.at/worldatom/PressP_release/2002/prn0209.shtml), International Atomic Energy Agency, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2002)

<sup>2</sup> Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 Section 21 and 22A, Letter from Mal Brough MP, Federal Member for Longman, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

<sup>3</sup> RADIATION INFORMATION - Health effects of Cobalt-60, How does cobalt-60 affect people's health?, U.S. Environmental Protection Authority, [www.epa.gov/radiation/radionuclides/cobalt.htm](http://www.epa.gov/radiation/radionuclides/cobalt.htm), 10<sup>th</sup> July 2002

<sup>4</sup> Technology - Australia's Future: New Technology for Traditional Industries, Academy Symposium, Food irradiation - Its benefits and limitations, Mr George West (General Manager, Steritech Pty Limited), [www.atse.org.au/publications/symposia/proc-1998p16.htm](http://www.atse.org.au/publications/symposia/proc-1998p16.htm), November 1998

- **The US EPA Stated,** " It is also produced as a by-product of nuclear reactor operations, where structural materials, such as steel, are exposed to neutron radiation."<sup>5</sup>

## **STERITECH CAN IRRADIATE FOOD AT NARANGBA**

- Steritech Pty. Ltd. had made application (A413) to the Australian and New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) in May 2000. It states, "Cobalt 60 will be the irradiation source used for the processing of the foods and food ingredients contained in this application. Irradiation of the products included in this application may take place at **any Steritech facility.**"<sup>6</sup> Steritech have approval from ANZFA and the new food standard code will be utilised during December 2002 by which this code will cover both Australia and New Zealand.<sup>7</sup>

## **IRRADIATION MAIL CAUSED HEALTH PROBLEMS**

- Irradiation companies in the US have irradiated mail for the purposes of eradicating anthrax spores. However, numerous employees handling irradiated mail have adverse health symptoms apparently caused by contact with irradiated mail. These symptoms include headaches, nausea, nose bleeds, rashes, eye irritation, and skin irritation. The Report of the General Counsel of the Office of Compliance in the US had concluded that handling irradiated mail for substantial periods of time may be the cause of these adverse health impacts and that additional studies are needed.<sup>8</sup> This report has many implications regarding the process of irradiating any product including food.

**The construction Site is at Lot 14 Potassium Street, Narangba Industrial Estate, Deception Bay.**

For further information check out the the following websites:

www.stopfoodirradiation.com  
 www.citizen.org/cmep/food/safety/international/australia/  
 www.purefood.org  
 http://nuclearfreeqld.tripod.com/

Please sign our e-petition [www.parliament.qld.gov.au/petitions](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/petitions)  
 This e-petition is called no nuclear irradiation and no food irradiation.

<sup>5</sup> RADIATION INFORMATION - Where does cobalt and cobalt-60 come from?, U.S. Environmental Protection Authority, [www.epa.gov/radiation/radionuclides/cobalt.htm](http://www.epa.gov/radiation/radionuclides/cobalt.htm), 10<sup>th</sup> July 2002

<sup>6</sup> Request to the Australia New Zealand Food Authority To Include Herbs and Spices, Nuts and Seeds, and Teas in Standard A-17 Irradiation of Food, Steritech Pty. Ltd., 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Final Assessment Report (Inquiry – Section 17) and Regulatory Impact Statement Application A413 request to include herbs, spices, herbal infusions, peanuts, cashew nuts, almonds and pistachio nuts in standards a17 and 1.5.3 – irradiation of foods in the food standards code, ANZFA, September 19<sup>th</sup> 2001

<sup>8</sup> Report of the General Counsel of the Office of Compliance, US Congress - Investigation of the Health Effects of Irradiated Mail Case Nos. OSH-0201, 0202, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2002.