October 2023

Proposed decision on short chain chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs)

# Questions and Answers

The Minister for the Environment is seeking public comment on the scheduling of a class of chemicals under the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard (IChEMS):

* Short chain chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs)

These chemicals are recognised globally as persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and are listed on the Stockholm Convention. As POPs, these chemicals are known for their toxic properties, ability to persist in the environment and accumulate in food chains, and their risks to the environment and human health. POPs are a priority for scheduling under the IChEMS.

## What are SCCPs and what are they used for?

Short chain chlorinated paraffins are a group of chlorinated paraffin (straight chain alkane) chemicals. SCCPs were never manufactured in Australia but were used for various purposes in industry, including as a combined flame retardant and plasticiser in polyvinyl chloride (PVC) items, as lubricants for metalworking, and in treating leather.

Although many types of chlorinated paraffins are commercially available, we have focused on the SCCPs that are currently listed under the Stockholm Convention as a first step in the phase out of this family of chemicals. Other types of chlorinated paraffins are currently being considered for inclusion under the Stockholm Convention.

## What does this proposed decision mean?

These chemicals are proposed for listing in Schedule 7 of the IChEMS Register as they are likely to cause serious or irreversible harm to the environment. Schedule 7 chemicals cannot be imported, exported, manufactured, or used within Australia.

Some exceptions may apply, for example, where the chemical appears in a product or article in trace amounts, or where it is present in an article already in use before the decision’s date of effect.

For this proposed decision, the date of effect is 1 July 2024. This will give stakeholders time to prepare for the prohibitions on these chemicals before they begin.

**What sources did you use to develop your proposed decision?**

The proposed decision draws on established international practices, particularly the European Union’s (EU) Regulation on Persistent Organic Pollutants (EU 2019/1021).

The department also sought information from industry, states, and territories and the IChEMS Advisory Committee. Information gathered was used to adapt the international regulations for the Australian context.

**How did you tailor international regulations to fit Australia?**

The EU has well developed regulations for POPs, including limits for unintentional trace contamination in chemical mixtures and articles, control of waste, and details on essential uses including ‘sunset’ dates for cessation of those uses.

The EU regulation does not permit any current uses of SCCPs, which is the equivalent of a Schedule 7 decision under IChEMS. We have adopted this approach as data indicates that SCCPs are not currently used in Australia. International data indicates that these chemicals have been phased out in developed countries since the mid-2010s. This decision to take this approach was also supported by expert advice.

The proposed limits for trace contamination of products and articles and for classification of waste have been adopted from the EU regulation. These limits are set at a level to accommodate the presence of SCCPs as an impurity in other chlorinated paraffin chemicals.

A review date has been proposed for trace contamination limits to enable lowering the limits as new scientific information becomes available. It may also be necessary to review these limits following the listing of other chlorinated paraffins under IChEMS.

**What about human health?**

The primary focus of IChEMS and our department is environmental health, so proposed decisions focus on the environmental risks of these chemicals. Reducing the amount of SCCP chemicals entering the environment will lessen human exposure to these chemicals.

**Will you ratify Stockholm Convention-listed SCCPs with this decision?**

To ratify listings of chemicals on the Stockholm Convention, Australia must be able to meet specific obligations for managing those chemicals. This means ensuring nationally consistent regulatory controls are in place.

Making scheduling decisions which are then adopted by all jurisdictions will help Australia to meet these requirements. Additional work will need to be undertaken by other parts of the Australian Government to complete the ratification process.

**Where can I find more information on IChEMS?**

Please visit our [website](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/chemicals-management/national-standard) for more information. You can also visit our page on [IChEMS Scheduling](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/chemicals-management/national-standard/ichems-scheduling) for more information on how scheduling works.