



The Hon Barry O'Farrell MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 23 August 2011

ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT ORDERED INTO ORICA PLANT

A mandatory environmental audit will be undertaken into Orica's operations at Kooragang Island to determine if systemic problems exist at the plant and identify any improvements that may be needed, NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell announced today.

Mr O'Farrell told Parliament the audit will assess the operations, procedures and practices at the Orica plant to ensure they are carried out in an environmentally satisfactory manner.

"Only eight audits of this type have been ordered since 1999 - the trigger for an audit is one or more breaches which has caused or is likely to cause environmental harm," Mr O'Farrell said.

"To have two incidents at Kooragang Island in two weeks is unacceptable and sets off alarm bells that there may be inherent problems at the Orica plant.

"The community has a right to be satisfied that the Orica plant is operating within the conditions of its licence and its obligations under relevant environmental laws.

"We are going to conduct the most thorough possible audit of Orica's operations to see whether there are systemic problems at the company's Kooragang Island plant – and how they can be fixed," Mr O'Farrell said.

The audit is in addition to the independent inquiry into the response to the 8 August release of a catalyst containing Hexavalent Chromium being conducted by Brendan O'Reilly.

It follows a second environmental incident last Friday where Orica reported a discharge into the Hunter River of up to 1.2 megalitres of effluent containing concentrations of arsenic above the allowable limits.

The audit will be undertaken by a qualified, experienced and independent auditor approved by the Office of Environment and Heritage, and its costs will be met by Orica.

"The audit will be undertaken in stages until the entire Orica site at Kooragang Island is completed – and the audit reports will be made public on the EPA's website.

"This is all about giving the community confidence that this plant can operate in a safe manner that does not pose any risk to surrounding communities," Mr O'Farrell said.