



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing
NICNAS

About us

NICNAS

Regulating chemicals for your protection



Director's message

A new chapter for NICNAS



The National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) is the Australian Government's regulatory scheme for industrial chemicals. While it may not be a household name, the work of NICNAS's officers is familiar to an ever-increasing number of Australians.

Today cosmetics like sun screens and beauty products have joined more obvious 'industrial' chemicals like flame retardants, preservatives and chemicals used in paints and cleaning products under NICNAS's regulatory control.

This short guide explains how we protect human health and the environment by regulating industrial chemicals - whatever they might be - to ensure their safe and sustainable use. All our activities are directed to this end.

I commend this guide to you and encourage you to further explore NICNAS and industrial chemicals on our website.

Dr Marion Healy
Director, NICNAS

Our mission

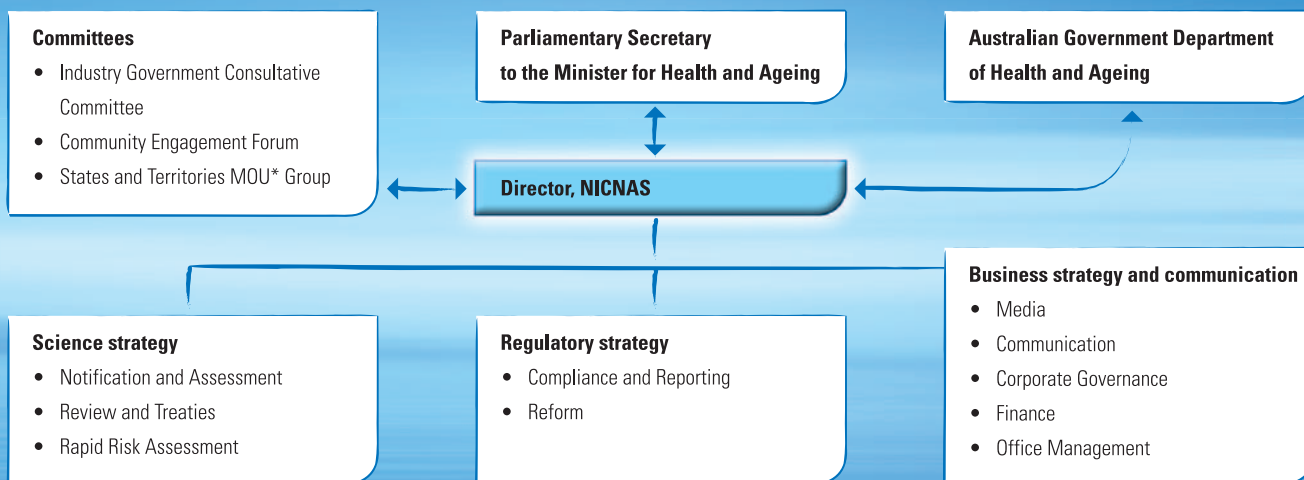
NICNAS regulates chemicals for the protection of human health and the environment through scientific excellence and regulatory efficiency to deliver the safe and sustainable use of chemicals.

Our values

Scientific excellence, Quality, Integrity, Service, Responsiveness and Credibility.

Our structure

NICNAS is located in the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The structure of NICNAS reflects its key activities.



* Memorandum of Understanding

Notification and assessment of new chemicals

New industrial chemicals imported or manufactured in Australia may pose risks to public health, occupational health and safety and/or the environment. Introducers must notify NICNAS so new chemicals can be fully assessed. Environmental risks are assessed by the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources on behalf of NICNAS.

Assessment of existing chemicals

Due to the large number of existing chemicals, NICNAS assesses existing chemicals on a priority basis. Any person or organisation with concerns about the environmental, occupational or public health effects of an industrial chemical may nominate a chemical for assessment at any time. NICNAS also undertakes other assessments of existing chemicals to fulfil specific needs – or if new data become available on a chemical that has already been assessed by NICNAS.

Treaties

NICNAS has set up administrative and legislative measures to ensure Australia meets its obligations under international agreements. Australia has ratified:

- The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade under which certain hazardous industrial chemicals are subject to national and international import and export controls.
- The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants under which the assessment of new and existing chemicals with persistent organic pollutant characteristics are subject to certain data requirements.

Regulatory strategy and reform

Consistent with NICNAS's commitment to continuous improvement, NICNAS's Industry Government Consultative Committee supports a program of reforms, with activities including international harmonisation and the review of NICNAS programs such as existing chemicals assessment and the reform of cosmetics and disinfectant regulation.

Compliance and reporting

NICNAS is committed to a proactive and cooperative compliance strategy that protects the Australian people and environment, as well as the interests of compliant companies.

NICNAS fosters conciliatory approaches to compliance by cooperating with the Australian chemical industry and focusing on education and awareness raising, including regular workshops and seminars for specific industries about their legal responsibilities and to assist in the fulfilment of their safety responsibilities. Site visits provide opportunities to build client awareness of our Scheme.

NICNAS registration

All importers and/or manufacturers of industrial chemicals for commercial purposes must register with NICNAS – regardless of the quantity of industrial chemicals imported and/or manufactured in that registration year. The NICNAS Registration year commences on 1 September each year.

Education and awareness

Through a range of NICNAS support and client education services, importers and manufacturers of industrial chemicals are assisted to meet their responsibilities under the Act (for details see 'What we do') and the public is provided with information about chemicals.

NICNAS welcomes and encourages clients to meet with staff to discuss any aspects of NICNAS's work and particularly encourages attendance at workshops and seminars where assistance is always available.

What is...

an 'industrial chemical'

Under the Act, the term 'industrial chemical' encompasses many things including cosmetics, solvents, adhesives and plastics, laboratory chemicals, chemicals used in refrigeration, paints, cosmetics and household cleaning products... just to name a few.

The Act specifically excludes articles (such as plastic chairs, glow sticks, photographic film, etc) and radioactive chemicals.

Chemicals that are used solely as medicines, pesticides, veterinary chemicals, food or food additives are also excluded.

the Australian Inventory of Chemical Substances

The Australian Inventory of Chemical Substances (AICS) lists some 40,000 industrial chemicals in use in Australia. It is the instrument that distinguishes new from existing industrial chemicals and includes all new chemicals assessed since February 1990.

a 'new' chemical / an 'existing' chemical

Under the Act, a 'new' chemical means a chemical that is either an industrial chemical that is not an AICS listed industrial chemical, or a listed industrial chemical whose introduction is subject to a condition of use.

For the purposes of the Act, an 'existing' chemical is an industrial chemical other than a new chemical.

What we do

Regulating chemicals for your protection

NICNAS was established in July 1990 under Australian Government legislation: the *Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Act 1989* (the Act).

NICNAS's activities include:

- ✓ assessing industrial chemicals that are new to Australia for their health and environmental effects, before use or release into the environment
- ✓ assessing industrial chemicals that are already in use in Australia (known as 'existing chemicals') in response to concerns about their safety on health and environmental grounds
- ✓ making risk assessment and safety information on chemicals and their potential occupational health and safety, public health and environmental risks widely available to workers, the public, industry and other government agencies, and
- ✓ enabling the public, organisations and key stakeholders to have effective input into decision-making processes regarding the safe use of chemicals.



www.nicnas.gov.au



Our website

NICNAS's website provides up-to-date information about industrial chemicals, their regulation and all NICNAS activities. The website includes sections on each of the topics covered in this brochure, and there are several regular update services including the monthly *Chemical Gazette* and NICNAS's electronic newsletter. All information sheets, brochures, publications and assessment reports can also be accessed on the website.

Community engagement charter

The safe use of chemicals has become one of our community's greatest concerns. The Charter enables NICNAS to improve public access to chemical safety information and ensure equitable community involvement in chemical decisions affecting them. NICNAS's Community Engagement Forum advises on NICNAS's community engagement approaches.

Cost recovery

Our activities – including New Chemicals and Existing Chemicals Assessment Programs and our education, awareness and compliance activities – are fully cost recovered by registration charges, and fees and administrative charges for new chemicals assessments.

We welcome your feedback

National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS)

334-336 Illawarra Road Marrickville NSW 2204

GPO Box 58 Sydney NSW 2001 Australia

T +61 2 8577 8800 Freecall 1800 638 528 F +61 2 8577 8888