

# Toxic Heavy Metals Taskforce Tasmania

Po Box 309, Deloraine, Tasmania 7304

## Proposals For Action On Heavy Metal Contamination And Health

### Risks In Rosebery

Submission to Rosebery Technical Advisory Group Meeting Hobart

17<sup>th</sup> March 2010

1. MMG Rosebery Mine needs to publicly disclose all analytical results and data from GHD environmental testing in 2007/2008 and any other relevant testing and make all data from recent and future testing publicly available.
2. There needs to be an independent and comprehensive review of all environmental monitoring procedures, emissions control procedures, Mine closure conditions, EPA Environmental Protection Notices issued to the Rosebery Mine particularly in relation to increased and proposed future increases in processing of ore at the mine facility. That MMG needs to instigate effective prevention of dust, particulates and gases escaping from the site through wind, runoff and vaporisation.
3. There is a potential health risk for people and animals from a combination of toxic heavy metals and metalloids inside homes and the Rosebery environment. Information that is comparable to USEPA standards about this potential health risk and how to reduce exposure to these toxicants must be produced and widely distributed to:
  - a) All doctors, dentists, other medical specialists and veterinarians in Tasmania.
  - b) Real Estate Agents and West Coast Council through inclusion with Certificate 337.
  - c) Job applicants for employment positions in Rosebery prior to acceptance of any position for people not currently residing in the town.
4. Where effective remediation of highly contaminated land in Rosebery as defined under USEPA standards, is not practically feasible, that these properties be 'cleaned up', highly contaminated buildings safely removed and the properties registered on the Contaminated Sites Register and that this information be included in a publicly available listing.
5. A Household Audit Service needs to be made available by the Department of Health to all Rosebery residents to help them improve their capacity to minimise risks from exposure from heavy metal toxicants in and around their homes.
6. An Abatement Fund be established to pay for costs of removal of any relevant hazards found during Household Audits with a priority on most unacceptable members of the community ie children and the elderly.

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7. Establishment of new provisions under the Contaminated Sites Act to allow for Innocent Landowner provisions and a Relocation Fund to rehouse or compensate people who live in or own property that would be placed on the Contaminated Sites Register.

8.. That the Minister David Llewellyn take action to have the Rosebery district declared as a Drainage District:

Section 169(2) of the Water Management Act 1999 provides:

169. Application for riverworks district or drainage district ...

(2)Where any considerable area of land is so situated that, owing to any permanent or recurrent cause, water accumulates and lies on the land to the detriment of the land by reason of insufficient drainage, an application can be made to the Minister under subsection (3) requesting the establishment of a drainage district.

9. That routine drinking water quality testing data for heavy metals and metalloids be made publicly available on the Cradle Coast Water Website.

10. That the growing of vegetables be discouraged totally within the Rosebery township.

11. That an independent Population Based Environmental and Public Health survey be conducted in Rosebery including a domestic pet and wildlife monitoring program to assess for health impacts of heavy metals.

12. Financial support from the Department of Health and Human Services for people suspected of heavy metals poisoning to have medical specialist assessments and relevant investigations and to cover any associated costs.

13. Financial support for veterinary costs associated with assessment, investigations and treatment of poisoned domestic animals.

14. West Coast Council made a decision on the 16th May 2000 that a letter was to be sent to the "Department of Health , Mines Department and Menzies Centre for Population Health Research" requesting "testing for contamination of heavy metals throughout the West Coast area". This environmental sampling program needs to be proceeded with particularly in relation to toxic heavy metals in the environment at Zeehan.

15. The Department of Health needs to provide a dedicated Health Advocate for the West Coast to assist people with support for accessing health services particularly specialist medical assessments.

16. In the past year new international research has shown further evidence of the long term

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health effects of children exposed to lead. In the results from one study presented at the Radiological Society of North America 95th Scientific Assembly and Annual Meeting on 1st December 2009 by Dr Kim Cecil, Professor of Radiology, Pediatrics and Neuroscience, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine Ohio, it was found that permanent brain damage is found in adults who were exposed to lead as young children. The study was funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the the US Environment Protection Authority(see Medscape Medical News).

The Department of Health should follow the example of the Western Australian Department of Health in its statement whereby an action level of 5 micrograms per decilitre for children of 5 years of age or younger has been implemented. Martin Matisons, Principal Toxicologist, Environmental Health Directorate, WA Department of Health made the following statement which will be included in the WA Lead in the Home Brochure:

“In light of the NHMRC decision of August 2009 to recommend that "all Australians should have a blood lead level below 10 micrograms per decilitre" and that "all children's exposure to lead should be minimised", the Department of Health (DOH) has adopted the NHMRC recommendation that the general public should have a blood lead level below 10 micrograms per decilitre and also that there be an action level of 5 micrograms per decilitre for children of 5 years of age or younger. This action level is to trigger an investigation and/or advice relating to minimising exposure of young children to lead in the environment. Young children are more susceptible to the effects of lead and also tend to be the first members of the community that have a significant intake of environmental lead.”

17. State regulations in the Public Health Act on blood lead lead levels need to be reviewed so that regardless of level, all blood lead levels must be reported to a National Lead Data Base. A National Blood Lead Study of all ages of people, not just workers, with oversampling in suspect locations ie Rosebery and inner cities, needs to be conducted so that enough results can be used to establish generalisations, such as blood levels in any particular group in the population. This data base needs to show ages and locations and be publicly available.