

Toxic Heavy Metals Taskforce Tasmania

Embargoed Media Release

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MMG and GHD Must Release Results from 2007/2008 Investigations Into Health Risks Of Lead In Rosebery And Use Correct Dust Sampling Methods

Past Investigations:

The Toxic Heavy Metals Taskforce Tasmania has called on MMG and GHD to release the results of their previous environmental sampling programs, especially those conducted in 2007/2008.

Spokesperson for the Taskforce today said, "The company that is now called MMG released information in the **Oz Minerals Environmental Management Plan Review September 2008** on research being conducted in late 2007/2008 by GHD consultants on the health risks of lead in the Rosebery environment. In the Environmental Management Plan Review, it stated on Page 84 Section 1.1.27.2 under the heading **Background Community Blood Levels.....that GHD have "been engaged to assist in the evaluation of lead as a health risk to the community....potential lead sources....including dust, surface water groundwater impact, rainwater, soil contamination and potential ingestion sources (i.e. fruit and vegetables)."**

Whilst clearly deficient in that it was limited only to lead, no such evaluation has ever been released to the public. Does the Government have it?

MMG must release the previous data and results of its, and GHD's, investigations so that the Rosebery community can understand any new data released from the new environmental sampling program in its proper context.

If the Rosebery community is to have any confidence in the credibility of the current GHD sampling program, then it needs to be compared with earlier sampling programs. The community needs to know if things are getting better or worse.

Sampling Methods:

We have received information from residents about the current dust sampling methods being used by GHD inside homes in Rosebery and we believe that method is not to the Australian Standard dust wipe methodology and is therefore flawed.

Elizabeth O'Brien, President of The LEAD Group Inc. in Sydney has provided us with the following advice on correct dust sampling methodology:

"There are two dust sampling techniques that are far more commonly used to determine heavy metal contamination levels in dust fall in living spaces emanating from a point source such as mining activity, and thus there are studies which can be used to assist in interpreting the results obtained by these two methods.

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Since the publication of AS 4361.2 - 1998 Guide To Lead Paint Management - Part 2: Residential And Commercial Buildings, in 1998, lead levels found in dust wipe sampling of floors and window sills has been able to be responded to according to the "action levels" set in the Australian Standard, or, because the sampling methodology is the same, optimally, the response levels used by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (which are about twice as stringent as the Australian levels) can be acted on.

If the hypothesis is that dust from the ceiling void is getting into the home and causing heavy metal contamination inside the living space, then it is still recommended that dust wipe sampling by the AS 4361.2 methodology be used, on the floor underneath any visible signs of ceiling dust entering the living space eg on the floor

The second type of dust sampling, specifically used to determine contamination levels in dust fall from a point source over time, includes the dust tray method used by Mike van Alphen famously in the research paper "Atmospheric Heavy Metal Deposition Plumes Adjacent To A Primary Lead-Zinc Smelter" - this is the paper that put paid to the notion that all the heavy metal dust contamination in Port Pirie was from the historical lead smelting process, rather than current smelter emissions.

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=10535148&dopt=Abstract

The van Alphen tray method was no doubt inspired by the inside-the-house version of the dust tray method famously used by Professor Brian Gulson *et al* in Broken Hill in research published in a 1995 paper, i.e. the petri dish method for collecting dust fall over time. Along with the isotopic fingerprinting method, Gulson *et al* were able to conclude from their research that: "For Broken Hill, a strong correlation ($r = 0.95$) was obtained between the isotopic composition of lead in blood and dust-fall accumulation." [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0048-9697\(95\)04505-U](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0048-9697(95)04505-U)

Our Taskforce has been very concerned that MMG has refused to openly release the scope and methodology of their sampling program in Rosebery. It is very disappointing that, just prior to the first Reference Group meeting being held in Rosebery, the community discovers that MMG/GHD's sampling program is already under a cloud.

According to John Lamb, General Manager at the Rosebery Mine, the EPA had considerable discussion with GHD on the scope and methodology of their new investigation in Rosebery. **The previous EPA investigation failed in Rosebery and now, on its heels, the GHD investigation appears to be following suit.**

Government Failure:

Our Government has failed again to do the right thing. It should conduct a truly independent population based public health and environmental survey in Rosebery. Australians have just seen on ABC's *Australian Story* the fantastic efforts of Dr Alison Bleaney over contamination of the St Helens water supply despite government malaise and ridicule. It would be a terrible tragedy if Dr Andreas Ernst has to go through the same obstacles from the same Departments to have a truly independent population based health survey conducted in Rosebery," said Kay Seltitzas.

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