

Toxic Heavy Metals Taskforce Tasmania

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Mayor Darryl Gerrity A Disgrace To The West Coast

Darryl Gerrity's comment to The Mercury today about Terry Ryder's listing of Rosebery and Zeehan in the "no go zone" for real estate investment in Australia are grossly irresponsible and an absolute disgrace.

Kay Seltitzas, spokesperson for the Toxic Heavy Metals Taskforce today said

"One can only assume from his comments that they were designed to whip up more anger in Rosebery especially from people in the town who want to sell their properties or whose businesses are in the midst of the winter downturn in tourism. Considering the West Coast Council Agenda for April included discussion on Council's sale of properties for non-payment of rates, one can only assume that Gerrity's comments are rooted in the other problem of Council's deep financial crisis.

Darryl Gerrity blatantly ignored the key issues raised by Ryder - the "demise of the mining sector and a declining market". He conveniently ignored the fact that Kalgoorlie and Mt Isa, both remote mining towns on the mainland, were also included in Terry Ryder's top ten places in Australia for property investors to avoid. He chose to focus his shameful attack on the one issue that he knows has caused immense conflict and distress to people living in Rosebery as well as those who have had to leave their homes in Rosebery for health reasons.

It is public knowledge that the Tasmanian EPA's environmental sampling program in Rosebery returned results up to 646mg/kg for arsenic (6 times the Health Investigation Level) and for lead up to 4,590mg/kg (16 times the Health Investigation Level). MMG's current environmental sampling program has found areas with high levels of heavy metals and released statements only about soil results but no data.

Rosebery has a history of children returning high or unacceptable blood lead levels. On 10 November 2000 the report "Health Needs Assessment of the Communities of Rosebery, Zeehan and Tullah" prepared by Alberton Consulting in partnership with DI Hollister released some shocking health statistics for these towns. The Report highlights some of the significant health problems for people living in West Coast mining towns. It found that "54% more West Coast residents died from cancer compared to Tasmanians in other non-metropolitan areas of the state" and "admissions to public hospitals for treatment of acute bronchitis, emphysema and asthma was elevated by more than 35%" and "from circulatory disease (heart disease and stroke mainly) 66% more deaths than would normally be expected."

Gerrity's dogged following of the DHHS ridiculous claims that health problems on the west coast are entirely due to 'life style' is pure folly.

The questions around potential public health risks from toxic heavy metal contamination in Rosebery will only be resolved by an independent public and environmental health survey or in court.

Mayor Gerrity's comments have further compromised any notion that his position as Chairman of the Rosebery Community Reference Group Committee is far from objective or impartial and he should immediately stand down as Chairman of this Committee and as Mayor of the West Coast Council." said Kay Seltitzas.

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