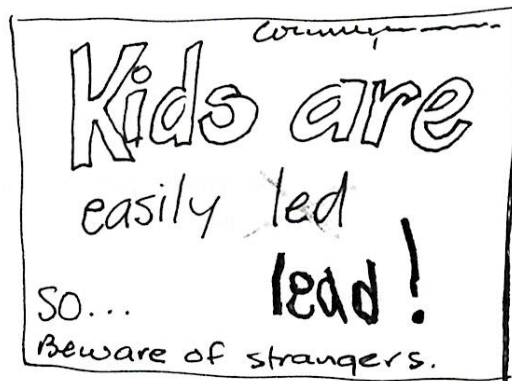


LEAD Action NEWS

LEAD Action News is the journal of the Lead Education and Abatement Design (LEAD) Group. Address correspondence to: The Editor, LEAD Action News (LEADAN), Cl- The LEAD Group, PO Box 63, Dulwich Hill NSW 2203, Australia. Telephone: (02) 550-0095; Fax: (02) 569-2634.

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Editorial

Illustration by Augustina Jones.

In this issue, we've widened our focus on the lead issue to incorporate related environmental concerns, such as hazardous chemical management, and the relationship between exhaust emissions and asthma. In the following I'll be discussing how efforts to reduce children's blood lead levels necessarily increase one's awareness of other health and environment issues.

essential factors in the attainment of a child's high blood lead level:

1. high levels of lead in one, some or all of the environmental media (dust, soil, food, water, air) which impact upon the child;
2. a pathway or pathways for that lead to enter the gut;
3. a high rate of absorption of the lead

From my experience I have found three

from the gut.

A successful intervention strategy may attack any one, two or all three of these factors. Moving a child out of a high lead contaminated environment into a low lead contaminated environment may always be the best option blood-lead-wise, but may not be possible. If you can't remove the child from the source of the lead, then the second best option is to create a barrier in any of the multitude of pathways between the lead and the child. Such barriers may be:

- spatial – for example, move child's bed to a room where there are no cracks in the ceiling for dust to get through;
- temporal – for example, don't allow children into a room which has been vacuumed until some of the dust has settled;
- behavioural – for example, discourage finger sucking;
- perpetual – for example, house-cleaning.

Cutting the rate of absorption of lead from the gut involves:

- not skipping meals,
- eating five-six small meals per day,
- not eating an excess of fatty foods in the diet and
- eating sufficient iron, calcium, zinc, protein, vitamin E, ascorbic acid and thiamin.

It is easy to see that following the above dietary rules will result in better nutrition which has other advantages apart from cutting lead absorption, and that action to ameliorate this third causal factor in high blood lead levels, whether by individuals or by governments, is paramount in any attempts to reduce blood lead levels.

Naturally, better nutrition is not the only one. There are multiple advantages of lead abatement actions, including:

- better hygiene;
- more fuel-efficient driving (in order to cut leaded petrol consumption);
- reduced use of cars/increased emphasis on non-emitter transport modes and public transport;
- gas in preference to electricity (coal-burning electric power stations emit lead);
- reduced energy consumption (in cars and houses);
- urban renewal – abatement of flaking and chalking paint on buildings and structures;
- greening – grass and trees to cover bare earth and stabilise the soil and bushes close to the house to keep children off lead contaminated soil and away from lead paint;
- increased community awareness of toxic metals and toxins generally in our environment;
- decreased need for lead mining and primary smelting as more lead is recycled, for example, from paint removal debris, contaminated soil and dust, and lead acid batteries;
- opportunities for people to discuss and come to understand the logic of various guiding principles of environmentalism – for example, "think globally, act locally", ecologically sustainable development, cradle to grave management, the precautionary principle.

There are also some disadvantages of lead abatement activities including:

- shifting lead contaminated paint, dust, soil, car bodies, building materials, sump oil, sediments, and so on, away from where they impact on people (especially children) raises serious concerns about how and where they should be disposed of or managed;
- if the recommended high phosphate cleaning agents are used for wiping all hard surfaces to remove fine lead particles, then our waterways will suffer. Hosing dust from verandahs and paths wastes water;
- wrong advice about lead abatement activities could raise blood lead levels – for example, until recently health authorities advised frequent vacuuming as a way of reducing dust in houses. Unpublished research in Broken Hill now finds a strong correlation between greater frequency of vacuuming and high blood lead levels. A logical conclusion from the research is to remove carpets though this is a hazard in itself if not done safely.

I've saved the best news till last. This week my three year old son's blood lead result was the lowest it's been found to be in his lifetime, since his first high reading of 31 micrograms per decilitre (ug/dL), at the age of twelve months. His (eighth) blood test result was around 10 ug/dL, right on average for an inner western Sydney 1-4 year old child.

Season's greetings!

Elizabeth O'Brien
National Coordinator



REPORT TO THE FIRST MEETING OF THE WORKING PARTY OF GOVERNMENT

Present Situation in Development of Lead Abatement Strategy

by Alan Cummine, Advisor to Ros Kelly, Federal Environment Minister

Sequence of Key Decisions	(Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology) report to NHMRC;	20) with testing of proprietary additives and devices (\$1.0m over two years); new funds for R&D into improvement and testing of ethanol fuels (\$3.94m over two years); and a bounty to assist market development for ethanol fuels (\$25m over three years, beginning in 1994/95).
March Election commitment to reduce lead in petrol;	October ANZECC endorsed the direction of the Roundtable Conference on Lead in Petrol, and endorsed the progress with development of the national lead education campaign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National education campaign – Broadly based, but with lead in petrol a key element. Commonwealth funds approved for 1993/94, to be supplemented by industry. Consultative process set up. Strategy endorsed by ANZECC on October 15. Free media component started (\$4.0m over two years).
May ANZECC (Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council) decision to develop a national strategy to reduce exposure to lead;	Agreements reached at Roundtable and follow-up action so far	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys and monitoring of blood lead levels to improve knowledge of the extent of the problem and to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures. Funds approved for 1993/94 (\$1.0m with rollover provisions).
June NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council) revised its guidelines for lead in blood down to 10 ug/dl and called for an immediate national education and environmental management strategy especially for lead in petrol;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of lead in leaded petrol to 0.2 g/L at 96 RON by end of 1994 in Victoria and New South Wales and by end of 1995 in other States (subject to reduction in total octane demand), and phase-out as soon as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price differential for leaded petrol. Crucial to the switch. Now decided at 2 cents/L (1 cent in February 1994 and another 1 cent in August 1994).
July Roundtable Conference on Lead in Petrol, attended by Commonwealth and State Ministers, and a wide range of national groups from industry, unions and the community;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the effects of lowering the octane rating, now begun by the oil companies. Investigation of substitute additives for lead to be funded in 1993/94 and 1994/95 (\$1.0m per year); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further consideration of the
August Public release of RMIT	– supplemented (as of October	

public transport option. For consideration by this working party of government.

- **Change name of "Super" to "Leaded" petrol** (likely to be done as part of the national lead education campaign).

- **Investigation of how Premium ULP** could help (to be considered by the Technical Working Group of the National Lead Abatement Strategy Consultative Committee)

- Support for development of a broad **national lead abatement strategy** (see below).

Development of Lead Abatement Strategy

- The National Strategy on Environmental Lead Abatement will be done under the auspice of ANZECC. Will draw upon the recommendations of the RMIT report to the NHMRC, and be consistent with work already proceeding via the NSW Lead Task Force, in which the Commonwealth participates. This Working Party of Government will be an important part of the Commonwealth's consultative process.

- CEPA (Commonwealth Environment Protection Authority) has set up a Lead Abatement Task Force to coordinate and administer the process.

Lead Toxicity in Dogs and Cats

Jill E. Maddison BVSc, PhD, FACVSc and
Christine G. Hawke BSc(vet), The University of Sydney

Unlike the dramatic onset of clinical signs seen with most small animal poisonings, lead poisoning often has an insidious onset. The potential sources of lead for domestic animals are numerous and widespread. Ingestion of lead-based paints is the most commonly identified source of lead in poisoned cats and dogs. Renovation of older houses involving sanding or scraping lead-based paint, is believed to be the major origin of the lead-based paint in these instances. Other lead sources include electric storage batteries, roofing materials, plumbing supplies, bullets, solder, pewter, linoleum, grease, putty, lead foil, toys, improperly glazed ceramic water or food bowls and fishing sinkers. Cats only rarely chew or ingest non-food objects, thus eliminating many of the common sources of lead that poison dogs. However, because of their grooming habits, cats are more at risk of accidental ingestion of lead particles that contaminate their fur and paws.

The clinical signs of lead toxicity in dogs include convulsions or fits, vomiting and diarrhoea, abdominal pain and bizarre behaviour such as hysteria. Lead poisoning is more commonly diagnosed in younger dogs because they are more likely to chew on objects. However, adult dogs may also be affected. In

contrast, lead poisoning in cats often only causes loss of appetite and signs such as fits are uncommon. Vomiting and diarrhoea occur occasionally. Cats with lead toxicity are usually adult although occasionally kittens may be affected.

Diagnosis of lead toxicity involves either a urine or a blood test. The diagnosis is sometimes difficult and two different tests may be required to confirm that lead poisoning is present, particularly in cats.

Recent work at The University of Sydney has shown that there is no significant difference between blood lead concentrations in cats residing in the inner suburbs of Sydney and in a semi-rural area such as Camden, although blood lead concentrations in healthy cats from Broken Hill are significantly higher than in urban or semi-rural cats. Similar results were found in a study of dogs from Adelaide, Port Pirie and Kangaroo Island - that is, urban and rural dogs had similar blood lead levels but dogs living near a lead smelter had significantly higher levels. This would suggest that environmental contamination may be similar in urban and semi-rural or rural areas but is clearly higher in areas around lead mines or smelters.



"KAD", a clay derivative mineral found in Australia, could eat up the world's toxic metal pollution.

Combined university researchers (University of Queensland and the Australian National University) produced the new material as an alternative to expensive "clever" chemicals in removing heavy metals including lead, copper and cadmium in solution.

(Extracted from an article which appeared on page 6, *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 2, 1993.)

Two important groups of nutrients found in breast milk but not in any commercial infant formula may hold the key to why breast-fed babies appear brainier, according to a Sydney paediatrician, Dr. Patricia McVeagh.

In *The Lancet* last year, the results of a published study of 300 eight year old children who had been born prematurely showed that most of those who had been breast-fed had "significant IQ advantage". Dr. McVeagh said for those children who received breast milk, the study had showed they had an average eight-point IQ advantage over the formula-fed premature babies.

Extracted from an article by Jennifer Cooke, page 3, *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 3, 1993.)

Lead Problems in Inner City Suburbs

by Ted Floyd, campaigner with Friends of the Earth

Currently, there is major debate in Australia, with many people calling for the reduction of lead in petrol. It is essential that lead levels in petrol be reduced, but it would also be beneficial if the use of cars were reduced, especially in lead sensitive areas such as inner city suburbs.

Lead in petrol affects many children over a wide area, and is probably the most important contribution to the mean blood lead levels in NSW children. Over 50% of petrol now consumed is leaded and by the year 2000 it is expected about 30% of petrol will be leaded.

The inner suburbs of Sydney are criss-crossed by many busy roads, feeding cars into the Central Business District (CBD). Lead content of air, soil and dust near major roads can be high. High soil lead levels are important, because children absorb most of their lead burden through the stomach and it can be surprising how much dirt some kids eat.

The risk of lead poisoning in inner suburbs could be greatly reduced if the number of cars entering the CBD were restricted. Fewer cars entering the CBD will have many environmental and social benefits and especially

the lead burden in the City and surrounding suburbs will be lowered.

There should be no more freeways constructed which channel cars into the CBD. In the city centre cars should be discouraged, pedestrian malls extended, and especially the number of car parking spaces reduced. Every car travelling on the F2 or F5 heading to Sydney needs a car park. If there were limited parking spaces then there would be no need for these freeways. Public transport needs to be improved so there is a viable alternative to cars.

The effect of lead on children is a major problem in our cities. Inner city suburbs are prone to lead pollution because of lead paints on old buildings and the concentration of major roads. To reduce the lead burden on inner suburbs, lead in petrol needs to be reduced, and the number of cars entering the CBD should be restricted.



Tigers Under a Cloud

by Louise Williams

When more than one hundred people were rushed to hospital after breathing toxic fumes from a battery acid factory in a Bangkok suburb last week residents nearby assumed the plant had caught fire.

In fact, all that had occurred was a seasonal shift in the weather pattern which held the same poisonous fumes, normally dispersed upwards into the air, down like a blanket of fog over their homes. Thousands of people were reported to have run for open spaces, many of them vomiting and passing out along the roads.

In much of Asia the environmental debate is not about terrifying future scenarios. The evidence is already in. Rapid economic growth plus the pressure of supporting more than half the world's population have devastated the natural environment to the point that contaminated air, water and land have become a daily reality for hundreds of millions of people.

While much of the developed world has lauded the remarkable economic achievements of Asia's rapidly growing economies, and even hitched their own economic future to Asian growth, less attention is being paid to the consequences

of industrialisation in the most densely populated region in the world.

Those consequences are not just local. It is of immense concern globally, and particularly for Australia and New Zealand, that China has opened twelve factories to manufacture ozone-depleting CFC's for refrigerators for an estimated 250 million households, according to a United Nations' report released in Bangkok last week. India, the report said, is expected to have built about 300 million refrigerators by the end of the century, using similar out-dated CFC technology.

Right across Asia increasing affluence has pushed up energy demands by fifty per cent, most of it coming from both non-renewable and polluting sources such as coal burning. Logging in the past decade has reduced natural forest cover to about 10 per cent of the land in most nations, and erosion, pollution, and pesticide overuse affects between 17 and 50 per cent of China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand.

Even Malaysia, with its relatively small and prosperous population and well-developed infrastructure, is reported to have

poisoned forty-two rivers with palm oil and rubber effluents and other industrial waste to the extent they are now classified as ecologically "dead".

The growth of the Asian economies must force a rethinking of the environmental debate in both the West and within the region itself. Economic growth has never previously occurred at such a rapid pace or on such a vast scale. According to Rafeeuddin Ahmed, executive secretary of the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the damage to and depletion of the region's natural resources will eventually destroy that economic growth.

With such overwhelming evidence of disregard for human health and sustainability on the part of businesses and governments in the Asian region it would be easy for Western environmentalists to continue to call for various boycotts and bans on products such as tropical timber.

But that approach has already widened the gap between East and West. Within Asia criticism from the West on environmental issues is widely seen for the hypocrisy it is. Malaysia's Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir

Mohamad, has effectively articulated the view that the developed world cannot ask Asia to sacrifice its own path to affluence for the sake of the global environment, when Western nations wreaked all kinds of havoc in the process of enriching themselves.

It is a normal aspiration to want a refrigerator or a motorcycle or TV in India or China. Nor should it be surprising that both India and China are burning more and more coal to meet their energy needs.

At the same time much of the investment across Asia is coming from the developed world, and to a lesser extent from Japan and Taiwan, directly fuelling the process of environmental degradation.

Lax controls by Asian governments desperate to attract foreign investment have also been blamed for appalling safety and environmental standards in many industries. But the truth is that many foreign companies willingly exploit this weakness and operate far below the minimum standards of their own nations with full knowledge of the consequences.

Instead of criticising, developed nations have a responsibility to transfer technology. Clean coal technology, now used in many Western power stations, might also reduce air pollution right across the region immediately. Equally, it is not technically

necessary to produce new CFC's for refrigeration.

The issue of technology transfer is fraught with commercial problems. Much of the most sophisticated pollution control technology is within the private sector and not available to be given away by the United Nations or international donors as aid. But, it is a proposal which goes part of the way towards bridging the impasse between the East and the West over who is ruining our world.

At the same time it is important to note that people living under poisonous clouds do not necessarily consider such disasters an acceptable price to pay for economic development. In some parts of Asia the local environmental movement is restricted by political authoritarianism. But there were two positive developments this week.

In Bangkok a former Prime Minister, Anand Panyarachun, launched a high-powered council of business leaders committed to sustainable development, and in Pakistan the environment was on the political agenda during the election campaign for the first time.

(First appeared in *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 11, 1993. Reprinted with kind permission of Louise Williams.)



My Kind of Car

– What's Up, Doc?

by Stuart Scott

Remember the British television comedy series, *The Good Life*, the hilarious misadventures of a suburban couple who decided to become self-sufficient? Well, Dr. Pat Howden says his life is even better.

The fifty-nine year old former scientist has dropped out, escaping city life for the tranquility of Macleay Island in Morton Bay, but he hasn't left his sense of humour behind.

He chuckles behind his white beard as he describes himself as a "downwardly-mobile academic greenie peasant", and he's proud of it.

Home is a self-erected kit house, power comes from a solar panel, water from a pond, food from his trees – Pat lives in "luxurious frugality" on \$28 a week, and believes everyone else could do likewise.

Not that he goes without. There's his television, computer, printer, calculator, radio, fan, washing machine, bed warmer and refrigerator.

Naturally he has all the episodes

of *The Good Life* on video tape. "Isn't it a great show? I just love it, but I reckon I'm more self-sufficient than they were."

Ever-ready with a statistic, he reckons that ten percent of Australians are planning to become self-reliant, but only one percent are actually doing so.

His days are spent inventing ("Not just gadgets, but processes"), writing, lecturing and researching. "It's all a lot of fun. And to think I once thought that at sixty I'd have nothing to do but sit and watch tv."

After graduating from The University of Sydney, he worked in America and England, and travelled widely, before moving to the sleepy Bay island in 1985.

He describes himself as a missionary for better alternatives but says he's not anti-car – **he simply believes it is doomed** because of increasing prices, fuel crises, over-crowding and, **eventually, a shortage of vital minerals such as lead for batteries**, zinc for galvanising, copper for wires. Even tar to make roads.

In the meantime he uses an old van ("I bought it for \$1,499. It has a certain rustic rustiness.") if heavy loads have to be carried.

He likes the way it is big enough to sleep in... which is how Pat measures the efficiency of most vehicles he has owned.

But everyday transportation

around the island is his "collapscycle", a much-modified child's bike with a fold-up frame, special gears and larger rear wheel, towing what he calls "Dolly the Trolley".

Even better, he suggests, would be semi-motorised bicycles like the Europeans use.

Or why not have man's best friend lend a hand? "A vegetarian labrador or alsatian, with a comfortable harness, could double both the speed and distance of bicycle power, with a little training and use of foot shoes..."

These days, he has such little faith in motor vehicles that he argues all cars should be roomy enough to sleep in (when they break down), and always be parked facing downhill (for when the battery fails).

"Why don't they build cars with crank handles any more? It would mean you could always get the thing started."

Looking for transport solutions further afield, he has come up with an improved form of roller skates, a diesel-powered pogo stick, stilts, skateboards, wheel-chairs, hitch-hiking, a wood-burning engine which could power a car and, his current favourite, the bicycle.

Even a small car, he argues, is embarrassing – up to one hundred times worse than a bike on every score except comfort and speed.

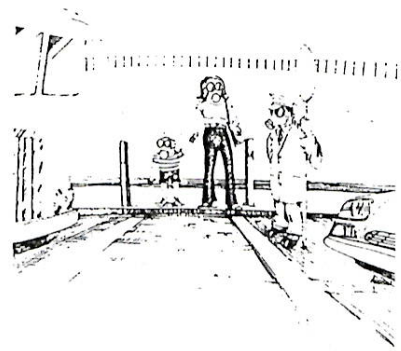
"If bikes were used exclusively, the safety and health in such a low-momentum, non-aggressive vehicle environment could improve by a similar factor.

"There can be enormous pride about riding a bicycle – you are beating a system, you can inter-relate with other cyclists and you gain a great sense of freedom instead of being lonely and shut up in a cramped car."

Another of Pat's statistics: **people work 1500 hours a year for their car, earning money to pay for it and fuel it, cleaning it and driving it.**

"People haven't added it all up yet, but they're about to, and it will start a revolution in the way they look at personal transport."

(Extracted from an article first published in *The Road Ahead*, journal of RACQ, October, 1993. Reprinted by kind permission of Gary Fites, Editor, *The Road Ahead*. The views expressed in this article do not necessarily represent the views of the RACQ membership of 900,000 in Queensland.)



Lead Toxicity

by Kathryn E. Mitchell, MS, RN and Cynthia Hobbie, MPH, RN, CPNA

[This article was first published for health care professionals in Minnesota. It sets the pace for lead health care in Australia.]

Lead poisoning is a serious environmental health hazard for children. Exposure to lead in early years, when the brain and nervous system are developing, is especially harmful. Recent studies indicate that even at low levels of exposure some toxic effects can be detected in neurological development. Children under six years of age are more likely to put lead-tainted objects into their mouths through frequent hand-to-mouth activity. In addition, the hands of children in leaded environments are often coated with leaded dust. Children absorb much more of the lead they ingest than adults do, and it crosses the blood-brain barrier more readily. The effects of lead toxicity are rarely detectable at the time of exposure. The symptoms are subtle, often leading to learning disabilities in later years. Because of these factors, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently lowered the guidelines for acceptable levels. Through routine screening of pediatric populations, children at risk of neurological damage can be identified early and treated. Health care providers not only provide this screening but also act as resources for educating parents and communities. The

following resources are helpful in raising both health care provider and consumer awareness.

Materials for Health Care Professionals

•*Case Studies in Environmental Medicine: Lead Toxicity* (United States Department of Health and Human Services; Public Health Service Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, June 1990.)

This excellent manual, available for continuing medicine education, includes case studies in a step-by-step self-learning approach covering risk factors, exposure, health effects, clinical evaluation, treatment, management, standards and regulations. Order from Public Health Service ATSDR, Division of Health Studies, (404) 639-6205.

•*Preventing Lead Poisoning in Young Children* (Atlanta, Georgia: United States Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, 1991.)

This publication outlines the new guidelines from the CDC and the appropriate interventions/treatments. Order from CDC Lead Poisoning Department (404) 488-4880.

•*Strategic Plan for Elimination of Childhood Lead Poisoning* (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1991.)

This comprehensive plan outlines in detail the first five years of a twenty year plan to eliminate childhood lead poisoning. Order from CDC Lead Poisoning Department, (404) 488-4880.

•*Lead Poisoning and Children* (Health and Environment Digest, 1991.)

An excellent overview is presented in a sixteen-page booklet. Single copies available only. To order, call Dianne Kocourek Ploetz, Health Educator, Lead Program, Minnesota Department of Health, (612) 627-5018.

Materials for Consumers

•*Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning* (Washington, D.C.).

This Advocacy program can provide a parent with a package of informational pamphlets written in laymen's terms. They also have a legislative/policy package for professionals. The Alliance has compiled a list of resources available state-by-state. To order call (202) 543-1147.

Your local or state health department is another source of information for health care providers and consumers. Contact the lead poisoning prevention program or health education department and inquire about available resources. This may be the best source of handouts and fact sheets for parents. In Minnesota the health department provides fact sheets that explain lead poisoning, testing, prevention, and treatment and that give common sources and safe abatement of lead-based paint. Many of these fact sheets are available in foreign languages. Items already listed under materials for health professionals may be readily available through your health department.

The following educational video materials are also available for viewing in a clinic lobby or perhaps for making available for check out from the provider:

- *Lead Poisoning: It Doesn't Have to Happen* (10 minutes). Cost \$12.00. Send cheque or money order to Pennsylvania Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, Dayton Building, Suite 220, 610 Old Lancaster Road, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010. For additional information, call Pennsylvania Academy of Pediatrics, (215) 520-9123.

- *Lead Poisoning*. This 22-minute video describes what lead poisoning is and is not and how a child can become lead poisoned; it gives practical tips on how to prevent lead poisoning. This video is a good overview of the lead poisoning problem. Narrated in the Hmong language¹. An English script is also provided with the video².

- *Lead in the Blood*. This 20-minute video shows the sequence of events that will occur once a child has been diagnosed as having been lead poisoned. Topics of discussion include why we are concerned about lead

poisoning, the environmental assessment of the home, the hospitalization of the child, and medical follow-up. This videotape is for use with the parents and other concerned adults who live with a child who has been lead poisoned. This video is narrated in the Hmong language. An English script accompanies the video.

- *Kids and Lead Hazards: What Every Family Should Know*. Cost: \$24.95. Produced by Consumer Reports and Connecticut Public Broadcasting, June 1991. To order, call (800) 323-4222, ext. 44.

¹ The language of refugees from the hills of southeast Asia.

² Send letter requesting permission to copy video. State intended use, number of copies you will be making and target audience. Address to: Dianne Kocourek Ploetz, Health Educator, Lead Program, Minnesota Department of Health, 925 Delaware Street S. E., P. O. Box 59040, Minneapolis, MN 55459-0040; telephone (612) 627-5018.

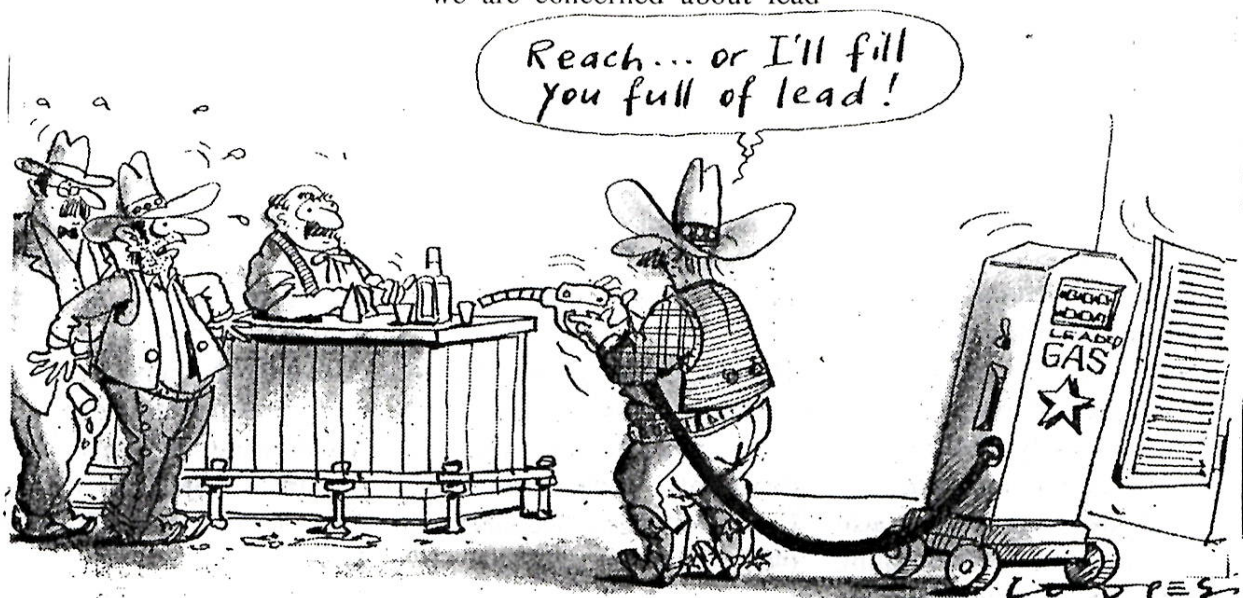
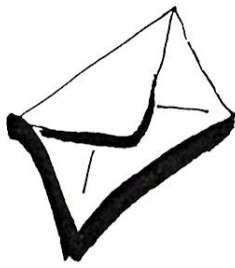


Illustration by Jenny Coopes.



Letters

Dear Elizabeth,

I came across your name in the recent edition of "Parents" magazine and wondered if you could help me with some information we are finding difficult to obtain.

Our dog recently had a fit due to lead poisoning. My husband had sanded the back wall of the outside of the house two weeks previously and although neither the dog or my eldest son were present, both have high levels of lead.

We contacted the Health Department and they tested paint scrapings and said it had a high level of lead. The problem we have is that we can't get an answer to "What do we do now?"

What can we do about making the backyard safe again for our children? Will the soil be "contaminated"?

Any information you can give us would be greatly appreciated as we don't seem to be able to get a straight answer from anyone and we are worried for the health of our children.

Yours faithfully,

Sandy Wilson
45 Brentnall Street
Norman Park QLD 4170
November 1, 1993.

Dear Sandy,

I'm sorry to hear that the Queensland Health Department has still not come up with a satisfactory response to your kind of situation, even though they have been aware of the problem for over 100 years.

Our series of information sheets should answer most of your needs. I would be most interested to know further details of your situation because the action that you take is quite dependent on the actual levels of lead involved, for example, how much lead is in the paint, what exactly is the blood lead level and the age of your eldest child, and have your other children been tested and what was the result?

What I don't understand is why the Health Department didn't test the soil and determine whether it is contaminated and advise you what to do about it. Are they claiming that this is the responsibility of the owner, or that the advice should come from the Department of Environment and Heritage? It is only through media coverage of such cases that change will come about.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth O'Brien.

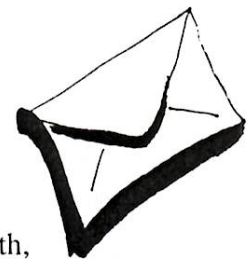
Dear Ms. O'Brien,

Following the recent meeting at North Sydney Demonstration School, I had a brief chat with you about the use of Water-Methanol injection as a means of reducing "knocking" of old car engines using unleaded petrol.

I now recall that the water-methanol injector kits widely used in NSW in the 1950's were marketed by Frank Kleinig, then a well-known sports driver. I suggest that you seek further information from Frank Kleinig Motors, at Girraween (phone 896-3672). The petrol companies introduced "Super" petrol to provide higher octane when they upgraded their refining and additive blending, and in the end user-need for water-injectors ceased.

Yours sincerely,

James D. McCredie
11 Tessa Street
Chatswood NSW 2067
October 25, 1993.



Hi Elizabeth,

While overseas I found a very fascinating article in an English newspaper which reported the findings of a conference in Florence of 4000 chest specialists who clearly related the asthma epidemic now affecting one child

in seven in England (or one family in three) to motor vehicle exhaust gasses NO₂ and Ozone. In one instance a school near an express road has an incidence of one child in four. The evidence is coalescing that NO₂ and ozone over-ride all other causes such as genetic, dustmite, and so on. Asthma puts 100,000 people a year into hospital and once a child has it, he/she will suffer for life. The article says pretty clearly that society will have to choose between children's health and the comfort derived from the motor vehicle. Apart from technical improvements possible, the article argues that our whole way of life will need to change.

I am now researching the position in Sydney and New South Wales.

Early information in respect to children and asthma indicates that their position in Sydney may be much worse. I'll send you something on it for the next *LEAD Action News*.

Herbert Beauchamp
Toxic Chemicals Committee
Total Environment Centre
Shop 1, Gloucester Walk
88 Cumberland Street
The Rocks NSW 2000
December, 1993.

Editor's Note

Removal of carpets is recommended for asthma sufferers and lead poisoned children. Any successful lead abatement strategy which reduced lead from vehicle emissions by reducing car use

and reducing fuel use would also reduce nitrogen dioxide and ozone levels. So reduced asthma rates could conceivably be another advantage of lead abatement activities.

Interestingly, there is more than one connection between lead and asthma. In the South Australian lead smelter town of Port Pirie, asthmatic children have a higher blood lead level than non-asthmatic children. The difference is small but statistically significant. It may be the result of asthmatics being mouth breathers (mouth breathing denies the nose the opportunity of filtering the air) or of the frequent vacuuming of carpets which many carers of asthmatics are advised to do.

Ignore the Precautionary Principle at Your Peril

Elizabeth O'Brien

From the biography of "Boss Kettering", first president of Ethyl Corporation, makers of tetra ethyl lead (TEL), comes this cautionary tale*.

After working with TEL for twelve months, Ethyl's vice-president, Thomas Midgley, the man responsible for the discovery of the anti-knock properties of tetra ethyl lead, asked his boss, Kettering, for leave in order to throw off his organic lead poisoning. Eighteen months later, in mid-1924, two men had died and sixty others had been seriously affected by lead poisoning in the Ohio blending plant.

Kettering needed medical research which would prove TEL was safe to manufacture and to use, in order to

effectively market the new leaded gasoline nationally. Only weeks after the required research was published, an accident in the New Jersey TEL blending plant killed ten men and sent fifty more to hospital, many in straight jackets to control their delirium. New York City quickly banned the manufacture, sale and use of leaded gasoline and soon after, Ethyl suspended production and marketing of leaded fuel in most areas.

Kettering was angered by the government interference and public hysteria. Despite a dozen men dead, he managed to convince the Surgeon General that the economic and military benefits of TEL far outweighed the unsubstantiated health risks.

Accordingly, and in contradiction of the Precautionary Principle, the burden of proof was placed on those who were concerned about the effects of scattering large amounts of fine lead powder over a long period of time from exhaust emissions.

Production started up again in 1926 and the proof for the risks to public health came nearly forty years later.

* James McCredie kindly supplied the reference for this extract, 'Boss Kettering'—*Wizard of General Motors by Stuart W. Leslie, Columbia University Press, New York, 1983.*

Why the Need for Community Right-to-Know?

by Theresa Gordon, campaigner, NO-LEAD (Northern Lakes Environmental Action Defence)

Hazardous materials pose a substantial and growing health threat. In the U.S., it has been estimated that over 70,000 processed or synthetic chemicals are in commercial use and that an additional 1,000 chemicals are introduced to commercial use each year. Moreover, the production and consumption of these materials has risen significantly over the last forty years. This increase in chemical use has led to an increase in injuries caused by exposure to hazardous chemicals. The community right-to-know system emerged in the U.S.A. as a legislative response to this health threat.

The main aim of the community right-to-know system is to ensure the public availability of information regarding hazardous chemical use, to enable greater participation by the public in decisions regarding the use, handling and storage of hazardous chemicals and the drafting of regulatory policies.

Advantages of Community Right-to-Know

Though the legal rules that underlie the community right-to-know system are complex, the basic structure of the system is simple. Businesses handling hazardous materials must report

that activity to the government and, through government disclosure, to the community generally. Community members and governmental officials use the reports both to assess the health threat created by the hazardous materials and to develop plans for dealing with accidents and emergencies involving those materials. **Finally, as a byproduct of the reporting and planning processes, community members, business people and government officials develop a political dialogue over the role of hazardous materials in the community. Ideally, this dialogue forms the basis of a co-operative relationship between these groups.**

The sorts of public participation made possible by a community right-to-know system include:

- formulation of "good neighbour" agreements between local industry and concerned community groups;
- worker involvement in research into reducing hazards in the workplace;
- involvement in the planning of effective local emergency response strategies;
- informed lobbying of industry and government to stimulate

cleaner production practices.

Problems Associated with Community Right-to-Know

Unfortunately, in the U.S. the community right-to-know has evolved into a confusing bureaucratic system rather than one which fosters community involvement. The two main problems facing the community right-to-know system are:

1. **poor compliance** – State and Federal agencies estimate that only fifty percent of businesses required to file reports had done so by 1989; and
2. **confusion over implementation** – due to the different requirements of Federal, State and local agencies.

Many businesses fail to submit reports because they lack the expertise necessary for drafting such documents and are unwilling or unable to meet the expense of hiring experts to compile such reports. Even those companies which comply with the legislation often submit poor quality reports of their chemical use.

According to the community right-to-know rules, businesses which do not submit reports risk being heavily fined. However,

many businesses continue to take this chance as the responsibility of prosecution tends to be passed from Federal body to State and then to local agency which often does nothing.

These problems have meant that the actual level of public participation made possible by the community right-to-know system in the U.S. has been low.

Possible Improvements to the U.S. System

Moves are being made in the U.S. to computerise the community right-to-know system. Though expensive, this would facilitate the handling of a massive number of often bulky and complicated reports. Computer access to this information would also facilitate greater community participation.

Storage of this data on computer would allow more efficient use of information in the event of an emergency.

Where does Australia Stand with Respect to a Community Right-to-Know System?

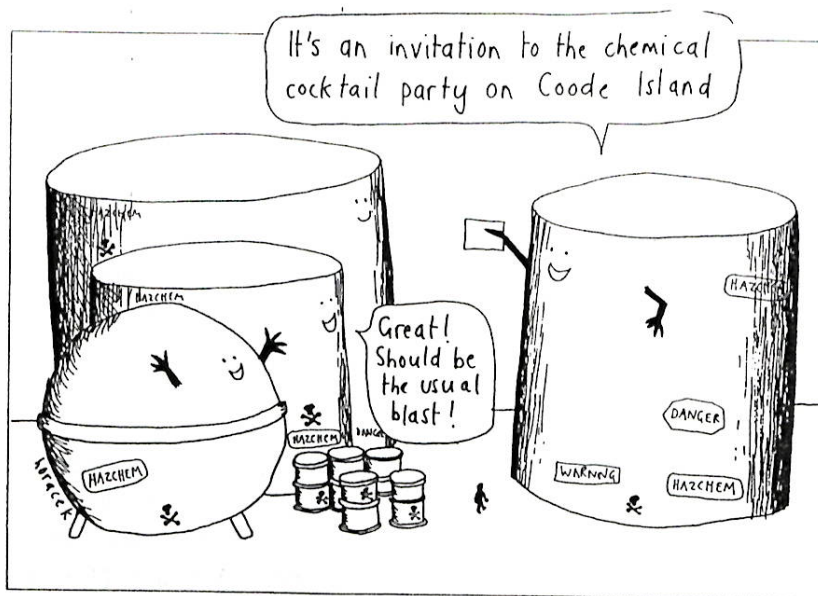
Though a comprehensive legislative system similar to that of the U.S. has been proposed by Senator Janet Powell, a mixed bag of laws and initiatives are currently in place in Australia.

- The Workcover Authority has two initiatives:
 1. National mandatory workplace availability of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). This initiative, though essential, is designed to cover occupational exposure to extremely hazardous materials by the individual in the workplace, and so does not cover situations in which large numbers of people suffer "milder" exposure.
 2. Workcover is presently drafting a National Standard for the Control of Major Hazardous Facilities. This document is

intended to cover the void in emergency response planning for major hazardous industry. Though only in draft form, it has already been criticised for not recognising the role of the public in formulating emergency response strategy.

- The Prime Minister, Paul Keating, in his December 1992 statement on the environment, committed the Government to spending \$5.9 million over the next four years to establish a National Pollution Inventory. This initiative should provide an important stimulus for waste minimization and the introduction of cleaner production practices. The inventory, which will be publicly available, will progressively bring together data on the emissions of pollutants to the air, water and the land.

However, by avoiding proper community right-to-know legislation, we are missing the opportunity to centralize all information pertaining to toxic chemicals and thereby establish a collection point where the community can access information about toxics which can affect their health, lives and that of their communities.



NO-LEAD

**Northern
Lakes
Environmental
Action
Defence**

Two Toddlers and No Car

by Sally Lewis

Sally Lewis is a townplanner by profession - Thinking Globally and Acting Locally.

When we bought our house in Summer Hill (8 kilometres west of the city of Sydney) several factors were important to us. We loved the size of the house, even though it was a total wreck, and we wanted to be close to the railway station. Not only is the house close to the station, it is also close to shops, the bank, doctors, and so on. As we had had experience living in the suburbs of Campbelltown (50 kilometres south-west of the city of Sydney) where we relied heavily on our car, and also close to a rail station in Bankstown, we knew what a difference being close to transport and shops made. The full implications of our decision became obvious over the next few years when I had to manage with two small children and no car.

Shortly after moving to Summer Hill we sold our car. Our first child was still only eighteen months old and our second baby had just been born, our house was a mess and I definitely did not want to return to work. We found we just could not afford to run the car anymore. I had never

liked driving, and in fact had not driven our car for about four months before we sold it, so it was no wrench for me. We were lucky – my husband leased a new, comfortable car from his employer which we did have access to, but only after work hours.

After the car was gone we felt

terribly relieved. We did not have to worry about it breaking down or crashing or filling it with petrol or paying the rego or insurance. In our precarious financial position this feeling was wonderful.

I began to make use of all the facilities within a two year old's walking distance from home. I shopped at the local centre, we went to the doctor directly across the road from our house, we used the local hairdresser, the local bank, the baby health clinic two doors down and the accountant on the corner. I took the children

to the local community centre for Playgroup and dance class. I joined local women's groups and Nursing Mothers. I regularly visited the local park. As a result, all of the friends my children and I made were living within our local area.

If an event was important we always found that there was someone who would be happy to give us a lift, and my neighbours occasionally lent me their car. Sharing cars like this makes good sense, and if carried out on a larger scale

would have benefits for the environment and people's bank accounts. I did try to reciprocate in the evenings or on weekends whenever possible.

As you can imagine, there were things that I could not do with two babies and no car. For example, weekly expeditions for fruit and vegetable shopping are now done by my husband on his way home from work or during his lunch hour. I don't go running around paying bills but instead pay by mail or by phone and then reimburse my Bankcard at the local autobank (a one minute



Illustration by Anne Warburton.

walk away). I can't go to the supermarket every week so we rely on the local butcher for our day to day food needs. We may get to Franklins every four to six weeks, when we stock up on cleaning goods, dairy products and dry goods. Because we are not exposed to a lot of the goodies at the supermarket or mall, we don't buy, saving money and the planet, too, I suppose. There are some social events that the children and I have missed out on, and we have not been able to take the kids to all sorts of classes held during the week outside of the local area. Some friends, classes and destinations have just had to wait until the weekend.

I can honestly say that I do not feel like I have missed out on anything. The children have lots of friends nearby that they can visit easily, without the need for elaborate arrangements or long travelling times. They have gone to Playgroup with the same children that they go to Kindy with, similar to growing up in a country town. We have had many extra hours of time together that might have been spent shopping, running errands, or in the car. All this and we have the satisfaction of knowing that we are supporting local business and community activities, and protecting the environment.

A big contributor to my satisfaction with our lifestyle without a car is the nature of the area we have decided to live in. Its high density means that activities are close enough to

walk to – something we could not manage to do in Campbelltown. Also, our area is full of families with small children like ours, so there are good facilities and family-orientated facilities nearby. I have not missed the opportunity to try lots of different doctors, shops, Playgroups, Kindies or schools because I've always been happy with what is locally available.

I am now working part-time and we could afford to run a car, but we don't really find it necessary. I don't think we will ever own a car again. As my children have grown older and needed to travel further afield to activities such as swimming they have also become old enough to travel safely in a taxi. Using taxis once or twice a week is still cheaper than buying and running a car. My kids really enjoy going on trips on the bus, train or ferry, and I believe their familiarity with public transport will result in them being more independent as they grow older.

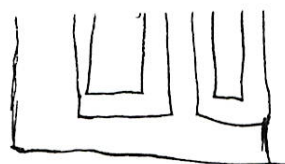
Living without a car and with small children is possible in the right area, and, for us, has resulted in a more relaxed pace of life and a beneficial sense of belonging to a community.

Poet's Corner

Yuk Poem

*Yuk is lots of mud piled on
grandma's head,
Yuk is lots of chicken pox when
you are in bed,
Yuk is muddy shoes on the
kitchen floor,
I'm lucky I leave my shoes
back at the back door.*

by Alexander Claud,
age 8 years.



*Still life -Shoes
on a wet towel at
the back door.
By Alexander
Claud aged 8*

The Laundry's the Key to those Really Steamy Nights

by Richard Glover

With all the extra housework occasioned by lead-poisoned children, it's lucky someone can joke about it.

You can read more humorous stories by Richard Glover in his recently published book entitled "Laughing Stock – One Man's Battle with Sex, Work and a Son called Batboy", published by Allen and Unwin, \$14.95.

According to yesterday's front page, the Americans have finally manufactured an effective aphrodisiac – but my wife Jocasta's not interested. She says there's only one thing that really gets her going – and that's the sight of her husband, bending over in a pair of shorty pajamas, buttocks wagging and thighs clenched, as he scrubs the kitchen floor.

Just like powdered rhino horn, it's an aphrodisiac whose appeal may well be linked to its extreme rarity. Knowing that the kitchen floor – and its cleaning – now represents one of Jocasta's major erogenous zones, I have begun approaching the task with some caution.

Jocasta, after all, may be so delighted to see me stir from the couch that she'll demand I

spring-clean the whole house. That's the problem with my wife's idea of foreplay – it always seems to involve rubber gloves, a bucket of sudsy water and my spending two hours in the company of major cleaning products.

As she puts it herself, lifting the ironing basket into my arms and nodding sternly towards the iron: "If it's not on, it's not on."

Many other women get stimulated these days by plug-in appliances, but only Jocasta ends up with a full rack of neatly pressed office-wear. She's my Lysistrata of the pots and pans, and she expects things to be a turn-on for both herself *and* the iron.

That's the thing about a lot of men: they don't realise how women can be erotically affected by the sight of a man ironing. "Who needs Iron John," as various feminists have put it. "It's an Ironing John we're after".

Forget spray-on female attractant pheromones, whose optimistic sales pitch appears in *People* magazine: "*You've probably noticed the appeal that some guys have for girls, although they are not handsome. They're wearing pheromones.*"

You'd do better by far to save your \$44.95, and instead try a far more effective attractant: that subtle smell of the Sensitive New Age Guy, achieved by a quick squirt of Fabulon behind the ears.

Just like the pheromones, the incredible Fabulon works on a woman's sub-conscious – WITHOUT HER KNOWING WHY. Amazingly, she won't understand why she wants to leave the disco, clutching your arm, somehow thinking you're a nice houseworky sort of bloke.

Nor, when you get home, will she understand why she's behaving so rashly: suddenly removing all her clothes, throwing them dramatically in the corner, and begging you, in her throatiest voice, to gently launder them.

It's the power of Fabulon, and it's working for you.

The next morning she'll report back to her friends: "It was great – he did it non-stop – with his iron getting hotter and hotter. It was one of those really steamy nights."

By the end of the week, you'll have women queuing to take off all their clothes, and find yourself filling in the *People* coupon for

yet another can. "You've probably noticed the appeal that some guys have for girls, although they're not handsome – that's right, they're wearing Fabulon."

But Fabulon isn't the only odd aphrodisiac. My first girlfriend was aroused by something even stranger: the fact that her parents might come home any minute and discover that we were not, as promised, engaged in our divinity project.

The father involved was about ten feet tall, a one-time army commando, a lifelong Catholic, and was already on the verge of having both his daughters and me executed on the grounds of suspected communism.

Perhaps she liked the fact that,

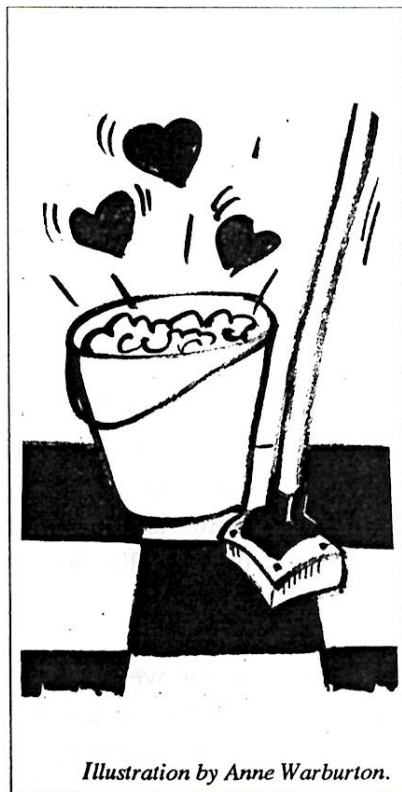


Illustration by Anne Warburton.

whenever we were together, my heart starting pounding, and the blood would drain from my face. But what a range of emotions I felt when cradled in her arms, with the bedroom door closed – the full gamut from paralysing terror to nauseous fear.

Perhaps the Americans would be better off forgetting their chemicals, and instead battle the world's anti-aphrodisiacs: those ten-foot parents with quiet footsteps; or, later in life, those two-foot children with the pitter-patter of incredibly loud feet.

The Americans want to help those with suppressed libidos, but we can do the work through legislation. We'll just ban everything likely to reduce the nation's sex drive: polyester shirts, children who won't go to bed, car seats that won't shift back, bras that won't undo, parents that ring after 10 pm, and Bert Newton broadcasts at bedtime.

And, of course, we'll demand that all men take a daily dab of that subtle but unmistakable fragrance that is Fabulon. I think I'll pop some on right now.

(Reprinted with the kind permission of Richard Glover. First appeared page 12, *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 30, 1993.)

Acknowledgements



The LEAD Group is exceedingly grateful to Ashfield Council Mayor John Ward and to Bill Stephenson and Natural Horizons for their very generous donations which have kept the Community Lead Information Centre afloat at this otherwise low-income time of year. Many thanks also to Anne Warburton who volunteered to typeset this issue of *LEAD Action News*.

All LEAD Group members are invited to the Annual General Meeting on the first Wednesday in February.

AGM

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Solidarity

Choir

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Contact Nick on 560-4553.

Weevils in the Flour

[Reprinted with the kind permission of Ann O'Donovan Pty. Ltd.
(Publishers), 56 Claremont Street, South Yarra VIC 3141.]

Music by Michael Leyden. The words were written by Dorothy Hewitt and describe conditions in Wollongong during the depression of the thirties. First published in *The Second Bushwackers Australian Songbook 1983*, published by Ann O'Donovan. This beautiful song and other songs about fighting oppression appear on the self-titled audio cassette of the Solidarity Choir. Price: \$10.00. For copies contact Nick on (02) 560-4553.

Arpeggio style

On an is - land in a ri - ver How that bit - ter ri - ver ran, I
grew on scraps of cha - ri - ty In the best way that you can On an
is - land in a ri - ver Where I grew to be a man For
dole bread is bit - ter bread, Bit - ter bread and sour There's
grief in the taste of it There's weev - ils in the
flour There's weev - ils in the flour

On an island in a river
How that bitter river ran,
I grew on scraps of charity
In the best way that you can -
On an island in a river
Where I grew to be a man.

And just across the river
Stood the mighty BHP.
It poured pollution on the water,
All the lead of misery,
And its smoke was black as hades
Rolling hungry to the sea.

In those humpies by the river
We lived on dole and stew
While just across the water
Those greedy smokestacks grew,
And the hunger of the many
Filled the bellies of the few.

On an island in a river
How that bitter river ran
It broke the banks of charity
And baked the bread of man -
On that island in a river
Where I grew to be a man.

Chorus:
For dole bread is bitter bread,
Bitter bread and sour.
There's grief in the taste of it
There's weevils in the flour
There's weevils in the flour.

Merry
Christmas
from
The LEAD Group.



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