

# The LEAD Group Incorporated

## Toxic Heavy Metals Taskforce Tasmania

### Media Release Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010

### Toxics Groups Reject Mine / DHHS Findings

The Toxic Heavy Metals Taskforce have today condemned MMG Rosebery mine for failing to release any data from their recent environmental sampling program. At a meeting held in Rosebery on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010 MMG released their conclusions that there is no evidence of dangerous levels of metals in Rosebery or harm to human health from the presence of heavy metals in Rosebery. This is an opinion that the Taskforce rejects totally. Rosebery mine's recent comments on their environmental sampling program, lack any credibility as the methodology used and data analysis is fundamentally flawed. In addition, not all of GHD sampling results in Rosebery have been released from previous investigations and we yet again call for full disclosure of this data which must be made publicly available. Without this data the true extent of contamination is not being revealed.

Spokesperson for the Taskforce Kay Seltitzas said.

**“Slater and Gordon are conducting the only truly independent investigations into the presence of heavy metals in the environment in Rosebery and their effect upon the residents.”**

“The Taskforce has already reviewed the methodology used by MMG, in particular in relation to the use of bioaccessibility as a means of reducing levels of exceedances of heavy metals. Exceedances must be based on raw data and not on a manipulation of data adjusted for bioaccessibility. MMG has also failed to release any peer reviewed reports of the conclusions, methodology and analysis from their sampling program.”

“The Tasmanian Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) and MMG's position on the levels of arsenic contamination in Rosebery is nothing but appalling. In the United States, where there has been extensive experience in remediation of Superfund contaminated sites projects over many years, the levels for clean up/remediation are much lower compared to those accepted in Rosebery by the DHHS and MMG. Tasmania is leading world's worst practice for contaminated site management.”

Arsenic levels found in soil in Rosebery have been as high as 646mg/kg. A research paper by Professor Imamul Huq et al.: *Extent and Severity of Arsenic Contamination in Soils* states:

**'The current regulatory soil screening levels as well as soil cleanup goals for remediation of contaminated sites vary greatly internationally but are also under developed in many countries. For instance, the regulatory limits established for environment health investigation levels and Human Health investigation levels in Australia are 20 and 100 mg kg-1 (NEPC- ACS, 1999). This suggests that in agricultural soils exceeding 20 mg kg-1 will require cleanup. In contrast, the regulatory limit established by UK is set at 10 mg kg-1 for domestic gardens, and 40 mg kg-1 for parks, playing fields and open spaces (O'Neil, 1990).'**

“The levels at which the precautionary principle is applied in the US and Europe in environments with such high levels of arsenic, lead and other heavy metals as found in Rosebery are not being applied in Australia. EPA guidelines for action and remediation of soils contaminated with heavy metals, especially arsenic and lead, are in urgent need of review.”

“The DHHS investigations failed to investigate the synergistic effects of complex heavy metals. In addition, the three toxicologists appointed by the DHHS did not conduct examinations on patients. The Tasmanian Department of Health merely supervised desktop theoretical reviews. These failures amount to an avoidance of the urgent clinical problems which are evident in Rosebery. The well known carcinogenic effects of arsenic should cause the Department of Health to be extremely proactive rather than adopt their present complacent attitude.”

“Independently of the Health Department, several doctors and specialists have now diagnosed several residents from Rosebery with symptoms of heavy metal poisoning including the eminent Dr Andreas Ernst who has extensive experience in risk management in the mining industry.”

“The DHHS needs to conduct a thorough population based health survey in Rosebery with the use of a comprehensive questionnaire and clinical examinations by all the relevant specialists as required.”

“Until such time as this survey is conducted, the Rosebery community can have no faith in DHHS advice and assurances that heavy metals from mine activities do not pose any health risks.”

“New residents or property buyers in Rosebery need to be notified of the potential health risks in the town. In Lutana and other eastern shore suburbs of Hobart, where lead levels alone are less than one third of those in Rosebery, agreement was reached in May 2009 by Clarence and Glenorchy Councils with the DHHS to notify new property buyers through Council Certificate 337's of the contamination. The West Coast Council must adopt these same measures immediately.”

“The release of the findings by MMG and the DHHS will not bring closure to the scientific and medical questions which we have been deeply involved with for nearly two years now.”

“We continue to have had interest shown from national and international scientists in regard to the issues raised by heavy metal contamination and poisoning in Rosebery.”

“Slater and Gordon have been conducting the only truly independent investigations into the presence of heavy metals in the environment in Rosebery and their effect upon the residents.”

Elizabeth O'Brien, President of The LEAD Group said

**“There is an urgent need for the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to review its guidelines in relation to health risk assessment where complex mixtures of heavy metals can expose people to long term health problems from low level exposure.**

**“As long ago as January 1992 an [NHMRC guideline](#) stated ‘synergistic effects of multiple toxicants being present have not as yet been evaluated.’ The [1999](#) and [2001](#) guidelines both reiterate: ‘protocols on complex issues such as home-grown produce sampling,...groundwater testing, and the implications of complex mixtures for health risk assessment may need further development in future versions of the Guidelines’. Yet the affected community is still waiting on credible investigations and clean-up of the contamination.”**

**“We can only reiterate the comments made by Premier Bartlett in July last year when he said in Queenstown that “the final arbiter will be the courts”. We look forward to the court case commencing in the near future” said Kay Seltitzas.**

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