

GLASS provides information & referrals on lead poisoning & lead contamination prevention & management, with the goal of eliminating lead poisoning globally & protecting the environment from lead. GLASS is run by The LEAD Group Incorporated ABN 25 819 463 114



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Current ‘acceptable’ blood lead levels too high

Overwhelming body of research supports The LEAD Group’s call for a change in national policy

The publication today of two annotated bibliographies on the health effects of so-called ‘low’ levels of blood lead in [children](#) and in [adults](#) challenges the current acceptable levels in Australia.

The two bibliographies represent an outstanding body of evidence on the health effects of lead at lower levels, supporting The LEAD Group’s [newly-published proposed health policy on lead](#), aimed at the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), for recommendation to federal and state health ministers.

The documents have been presented by The LEAD Group to the federal Health Minister, The Hon Nicola Roxon, and the federal Minister responsible for occupational health, The Hon. Senator Chris Evans.

The LEAD Group believes the current blood lead levels which the NHMRC and Safe Work Australia consider ‘acceptable’ are too high, and calls for a fresh examination by both authorities of the evidence, and thus the blood lead levels.

Elizabeth O’Brien, President of The LEAD Group, says that such a review of the latest research could not fail to convince the NHMRC and Safe Work Australia that a change in Australia’s policy on lead is imperative. ‘I don’t see how they can ignore what the research is telling us,’ she said, “unless there is some policy reason which we don’t know about but can only guess at.”

“Lowering the so-called ‘acceptable’ level of blood lead would have implications for the public health system and for occupational health,” she said.

“Under the public health system, environmental testing for the source of the elevated blood lead levels would be required for more individuals.”

“More workers would have to be removed from the source of the lead exposure, and employers would have to spend more on prevention of lead exposure at work.

It is now acknowledged by health professionals that there is no such thing as a ‘safe’ level of blood lead.”

“In the meantime, The LEAD Group recommends that doctors order blood lead tests for every child with learning difficulties, and for every adult with hypertension. This would be a start to revealing how widespread the impacts of lead are. Hypothecated state lead mining royalties and federal lead export earnings could help cover the costs.”

“Canada and the USA are currently reviewing their policies on lead; the UK and Ireland are collecting data on elevated blood lead levels. Australia should be a role model on the health effects of lead, because it is the world’s largest exporter.”

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