



## **Letter to the Editor re: proposed Chunxing ULAB Secondary Smelter at Morwell, Victoria, Australia**

From: Ian  
Sent: Monday, November 4, 2019 7:50 PM  
To: The LEAD Group Inc  
Subject: Proposed Lead Smelter for the Latrobe Valley



Hello,

I'm one of many concerned residents worried that a proposal will be passed for Chinese company Chunxing Corporation to build and operate a used lead acid battery smelter (ULAB) in Latrobe Valley Victoria.

Annually the secondary lead smelter will process 50,000 tonnes of used lead acid batteries, smelt and refine into 28,000 tonnes of lead all to be exported to China. As a result of this, also produced annually will be 4,000 tonnes of toxic waste lead slag and from the plant stack - 17kg of lead, sulphuric acid, Antimony, Dioxins & furans, Chromium, Arsenic and Cadmium as vapours, gases, mists and particulate solids/dusts. Median PM Size distribution for lead from smelters is 1.5um and 85% of PM is under 10 um.

The proposed life of the plant is 20 years.

From the draft WAA, we are concerned that we have no way of verifying the emissions data (as the emissions data is extrapolated from their Chinese Smelter. The EPA have no way to verify this Data either.

Attached is Chunxing's original Power point presentation (that only about 12 families out of 600 in this area saw when they held 2 public meetings) Note, that they have since changed data and results to be even more unbelievable.

All the health and environment issues aside, the economics alone do not justify a gas fired Smelter, there is a smelter near Melbourne that has been put in mothballs, as it is not economical to process due to the high gas price. This begs the question, has a deal been done with the Andrews government to subsidise the gas price for them? The current ULAB Smelters have more than enough capacity to deal with the batteries that this plant will process. We also suspect that "other" financial help is coming from the State government.

Latrobe Valley region due to its polluting industries, see references 1-2 at the bottom of this email. Yallourn and Loy Yang power stations still operate locally, however the closing of Morwell and Hazelwood power stations has seen some improvement in the region's air quality. Imagine our disappointment when news that Chinese company Chunxing was proposing to build and operate a ULAB in our neighbourhood.



Background: Latrobe Valley produces the majority of Victoria's electricity through the burning of brown coal power stations, (Loy Yang and Yallourn). With the privatisation of the State Electricity Companies in the 90's and now the closing of Morwell and Hazelwood Power stations there is pressure for the Government to provide "jobs and growth" in this region. The State Treasurer met with the owner of Chunxing when they were last in China. We are concerned Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has already done a hand shake deal for this proposal to go ahead.

Local residents have experienced poorer than average health outcomes for years. When the Hazelwood mine fire burned for 45 days and the health of local people was affected, the government was pressured to examine the health impacts. One of the actions resulting from two subsequent mine fire enquiries the State Government decided to make Latrobe Valley Australia's first Health innovation zone.

"The Victorian Government established the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone (LHIZ) in 2016 to improve the health and well-being of residents in Latrobe City, with partners, local health providers and the community working together to drive innovation and change".

The Latrobe Health Assembly consists of various representatives of the community. The region also has a Health advocate who apparently reports directly to the Health minister. This proposal goes against everything the State Govt say they want to achieve for this community?

In June this year: We were alerted to Chinese company, Chunxing Corporation preparing to lodge a Works Approval Application (WAA) to the EPA (the proponents are saying this month) and if successful apply for planning approval from our local Council, Latrobe City. It is understood the Chinese company has already purchased the 33 acre site at the No. 2047 Fourth Road site, conditional on obtaining a successful WAA. Chunxing plan to obtain approval by the end of 2019, with construction commencing early next year.

The company claim that they will employ 50 people, but admit a portion of these jobs will be given to Chinese workers trained in operating the plant.

This plant will adversely affect human health. Every past and present lead refinery/smelter in Australia has produced and is still producing impacts to the health of plant workers, their families and nearby communities.

Residences, several schools, childminding and learning facilities are within and just outside a 2km radius of the plant location. Plant emissions will also adversely impact adjacent pastures, stock, waterways, aquifers and the region's already high SO<sub>2</sub> levels.

The action group's goal: Delay any decision making on a lead acid battery recycling facility until the community can have guarantees that there will be no lead contamination in the community, environment or workforce.

**Our three core messages:**



There is no safe level of lead contamination (World Health Organisation, American Association of Pediatricians).

Lead removed from paints, inks and petrol because of the danger it caused.

Lead poisoning is irreversible, there is no cure.

**Let's have 21st century jobs, not last century jobs.** The proposed facility is a very old process, it will release lead contamination. It is based on furnaces and smelting.

Facilities using this technology produce lead dust and slag, which impacts workers, their families, community and surrounding land and communities.

There is a new technology that is much safer. It is based on electrolysis.

The new technology is low energy, has minimal emissions and recovers more lead.

Let's have all options on the table, not just one.

The Gippsland community can be a leader in new industries and technologies.

Any new industry should bring world leading technologies and skills.

For the health, image and future of the community we need to choose the best of all options.

Bearing in mind we are an action group that has never been involved in activities such as this, any advice you could provide our group would be greatly appreciated. ...this has to be highlighted to the community. To date we have carried out letter drops, collected 2500 petition signatures, carrying out discussions with local MP's, Councillors, Council planning and EPA officers, local health advocate and health innovation staff, sought media opportunities (3), held two public meetings.

I realise that this is a lot to absorb all at once, and this is just a portion of what we as a committee know, so please do not hesitate to email me back about any detail at all.

Looking forward to hearing your ideas and thoughts,

Thanks and kindest regards, Ian

References:

1. The Guardian: *Australian power stations among world's worst for toxic air pollution*, 19 Aug 2019, Air Pollution News, Dr Ben Ewald [https://www.greenpeace.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Global-Hotspot-and-Emission-Sources-for-SO2\\_August-2019\\_AU\\_final.pdf](https://www.greenpeace.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Global-Hotspot-and-Emission-Sources-for-SO2_August-2019_AU_final.pdf)
2. *The dirty truth: Australia's most polluted post codes*, 20 Nov 2018, Air Pollution News <https://www.dea.org.au/the-dirty-truth-australias-most-polluted-post-codes>
3. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-17/latrobe-valley-battery-recycling-smelter-sparks-local-fears/11607368>