

Toxic Heavy Metals Taskforce Tasmania

EPA Notice to Rosebery Mine: the toxic heavy metals that dare not be monitored!

Isla MacGregor, Marsha Stejskal Toxic Heavy Metals Taskforce Tasmania 18.11.09 7:00 am

The Environmental Protection Notice 7153/2 (EPN) issued to the MMG Rosebery Mine by the Environmental Protection Authority in August this year has failed to include new conditions for the environmental monitoring of arsenic and thallium.

Isla MacGregor, spokesperson for the Toxic Heavy Metals Taskforce today said:

“Arsenic levels at six times the Health Investigation Levels were found in environmental samples taken during the Government’s heavy metal investigation in Rosebery this year. High levels of arsenic were found in the roof cavity dust, soil and seepage water of several residents’ properties. Very immediate and compelling reasons for the EPA to require MMG to commence monitoring for arsenic.”

“Arsenic is classified as a Grade A carcinogen, an endocrine disruptor and is present in arsenopyrite minerals which are a major component of the Rosebery ore body.”

“Thallium is a highly toxic and rare metal and is also present in the Rosebery ore body, but astonishingly, it was excluded from the Rosebery investigation. Thallium also needs to be included in the EPA’s monitoring requirements for the Rosebery mine.”

“Both arsenic and thallium are included in health surveillance requirements for hazardous substances in Schedule 4 of the Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 1998.”

“We are not aware that workers at the mine are being routinely checked for biological levels of arsenic and thallium even though several residents have now been diagnosed with arsenic poisoning.”

“The National Pollutant Inventory estimates the Rosebery Mine emissions of arsenic at 64 kilograms every year yet the newly created Tasmanian EPA has decided that no independent monitoring to measure arsenic emissions in Rosebery is required! After repeated requests to the EPA our Taskforce has been unable to obtain any information on dust monitoring in Rosebery.”

“The Report on “Health Needs Assessment of the Communities of Rosebery, Zeehan and Tullah” conducted in 2000 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 acute hospitals for treatment of bronchitis, emphysema and asthmawas elevated by more than 35%” and “from circulatory disease (heart disease and stroke mainly)....66% more deaths than would normally be expected.”

“The EPA’s Environmental Pollution Notice for the Rosebery Mine was issued:

“To ensure that there are adequate safeguards against the potential for environmental harm or nuisance to be caused by the activity.”

“Monitoring of arsenic and thallium and recognition of the significance of public health risks is Best Practice Environmental Management (BPEM) for similar mining operations throughout Australia. That the Tasmanian EPA intentionally excluded monitoring for arsenic and thallium and public health risks in its new conditions contained in the Environmental Pollution Notice served on the Rosebery Mine requires a public explanation.”

“We believe that the Tasmanian Environmental Protection Authority has failed to apply Best Practice Environmental Management conditions to the Rosebery Mine operations.” said Isla MacGregor.

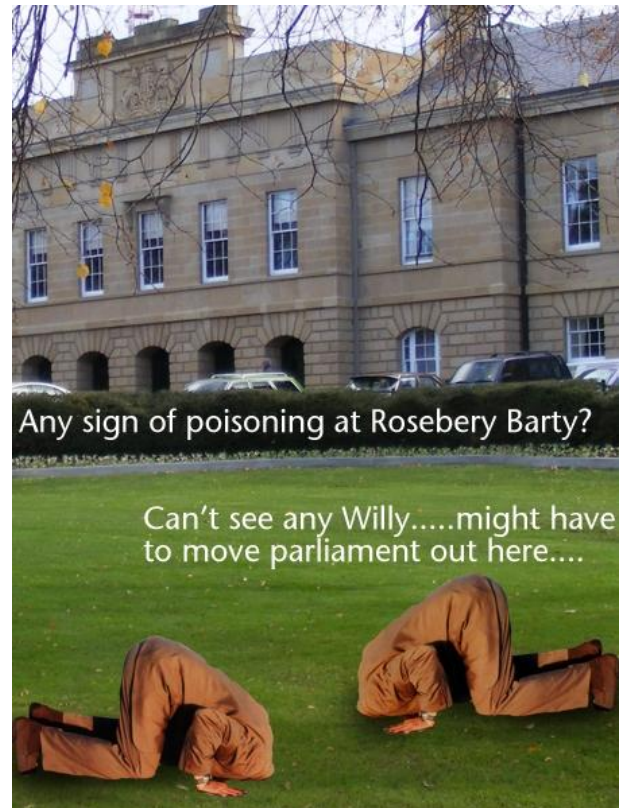


Image: Dave Groves