



Department of Health  
Government of Western Australia

Public Affairs

## *Media Statement*

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19 March 2007

### **Update on health response to lead issue in Esperance**

The Department of Health will run a clinic at Esperance Hospital from this Wednesday to take blood tests and provide health information for concerned members of the community.

The clinic, located in the hospital's A Ward, will open from 8am to 4pm weekdays (from 9.30am this Wednesday) and members of the public can call 9071 0891 to make an appointment.

Director of Environmental Health Jim Dodds said the clinic was established to assist GPs with community demand for voluntary blood tests.

"We became aware that some people were having to wait for two weeks for an appointment to see their GP so we hope the clinic will address this problem," he said.

"The community health nurse that was to be located at the Esperance Community Health Centre will join the hospital clinic and will be available to provide general health advice."

"People can also call HealthDirect on 1800 022 222 to discuss their concerns."

The Department of Health and the Shire of Esperance are continuing to carry out testing on local rainwater tanks, with six out of the 60 tested so far showing lead levels above Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG).

As part of this investigation the Department has now become aware of 20 rainwater tanks that exceed the ADWG for nickel.

Mr Dodds said the majority of these rainwater tanks were located within a two-kilometre radius of the Port.

“We are reiterating our advice that residents should get the water in their rainwater tank tested before drinking it,” he said.

“The Department is sending two Environmental Health Officers to Esperance tomorrow to assist the Shire with testing and to provide advice to residents.”

People should contact the Shire of Esperance on 9071 0666 to make arrangements.

Mr Dodds said the Department would also review the results of 100 blood tests taken from the community and port workers last week, when they become available.

“These results will enable us to better assess any possible health risk,” he said.

Results from all of the investigations will be discussed at an information day for the Esperance community, which will be held on Saturday 14 April.

Mr Dodds said that the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) was continuing to conduct lead dust monitoring in Esperance and that these results would also help to determine if there was any public health risk.

“The Department of Health is working closely with DEC to ensure that any possible source of lead in the community is identified,” he said.

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