



Alannah MacTiernan MLA
Minister for Planning and Infrastructure

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Portfolio: Planning and Infrastructure

New information on Esperance blood lead levels

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New evidence suggests that lead in the blood of Esperance residents comes from a number of sources and has not all originated from activity at the port.

Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan said that blood lead levels in Esperance were consistent with those in the general community, as measured by previous studies.

Also, after more detailed examination of blood samples from young children with raised lead levels, preliminary advice indicated that while in most cases the majority of the lead was from the Magellan mine, in all cases other lead was present and in some samples accounted for up to 70 per cent of the total lead.

Ms MacTiernan also moved to reassure Esperance residents that anyone who suffered loss as a result of lead pollution would be compensated, even if the effects did not become evident for a number of years.

The Minister presented the information to a hearing of a Parliamentary Committee inquiring into the Cause and Extent of Lead Pollution in the Esperance Area.

“While it is beyond doubt poor management of lead exports has exposed the community in Esperance and that this is unacceptable, it is vital that the impact of this on the health of local people and visitors to the town is properly understood,” she said.

“A total of 22 blood samples from young children were tested to determine the origin of lead of which 19 were from children with lead levels above five micrograms per decilitre. These samples showed that lead from the port made up between 30 and 87 per cent of the total lead present.

“It is also important that the committee understands that various studies over the last 20 years show blood lead levels in the current Esperance community were comparable to those in other communities, and were indeed lower than was the case when leaded fuel was still in use.

“None of this information in any way reduces our resolve to clean up Esperance and to take action to ensure such pollution does not occur again and to compensate those who have suffered loss as a result of the pollution.

“Hopefully, however, it will reduce unnecessary anxiety among local people and

encourage more tourists to continue visiting one of Western Australia's most beautiful destinations.

"I was also able to reassure the committee and the community that the Government has resolved to remove the statute of limitations on claims for lead related damages, so that any injury only becoming evident in the future would still be eligible for compensation.

"The funding and detail of compensation arrangements has not been finalised, but we will not be avoiding our responsibilities."

Click on PDF icon below to view Comparison of Blood Lead Survey and Report prepared for WA Department of Health, May 2007.



Comparison - Lead isotopic Analyses.pdf

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