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Portfolio: Planning and Infrastructure

State Government launches investigation into lead levels

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The State Government has launched an immediate investigation to identify the cause of elevated lead levels in four Esperance rainwater tanks following the latest round of testing.

The launch of the investigation follows new Department of Health results that reveal elevated lead levels in four out of 12 rainwater tanks in Esperance that had previously been professionally cleaned.

All tanks showed a reduction in nickel levels to below the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines recommended level and reduced levels for lead. However, four tanks have returned levels that still exceed the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for lead.

These tanks are all within close proximity to the port facility.

Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan said the State Government was committed to protecting the health of Esperance residents.

“These results are hard to understand, given that blood lead levels have declined significantly over the past three months,” she said.

“Air monitoring results for May and June showed no detectable levels of lead. However, air monitoring results for July are inconsistent.

“The high volume sample monitors, considered more reliable, have shown no lead, while two of the 10 depositional gauges recorded significant levels of lead. I have instructed Government Agencies to also investigate this matter immediately.

“We have also been advised that one home that was cleaned still shows significant levels of lead in and around the home. The home will be re-cleaned and the Department of Health is examining why this home is still showing lead levels.

“We have already undertaken a tremendous amount of work to clean up the town of Esperance,

“The lead levels detected in the four rainwater tanks clearly show that there is more

work to be done, and I can assure the people of Esperance that this work will be done.

“As soon as the cause is identified, we will take immediate action to ensure this issue is resolved, as the health of Esperance residents remains a high priority for the government.

The Department of Health has reiterated its general advice on use of rainwater tanks to all Western Australians, which is not to drink, or use for cooking, water from rainwater tanks that have not yet been tested and shown to be in compliance with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

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Government of Western Australia

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