

**ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY
LEAD EXPERT WORKING GROUP
LEAD EXPOSURE MANAGEMENT FOR SUBURBS AROUND THE FORMER
PASMINGO SMELTER SITE**

Minutes – Meeting #2

29 January 2014, 10:00am - 11:30am

Chair: Adam Gilligan (EPA)

Working Group Attendees: John Coffey (EPA), Dr Craig Dalton (NSW Health), Professor Mark Taylor (Macquarie University), Graeme Nyland (Environ), Associate Professor Stephen Cattle (University of Sydney) and Dean Chapman (Lake Macquarie City Council).

Secretary: Matthew James (EPA)

Other Attendees: Tony Farrell (Lake Macquarie City Council), Cindy Gliddon (NSW Health)

Apologies: none

1. Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and adoption of agenda

Agenda adopted unanimously.

Cindy Gliddon of NSW Health is in attendance to assist discussions regarding the blood lead testing program.

2. Agenda Item 2 – Declaration of interests

LEWG members have declared any interests on their member's acceptance and pecuniary interests declaration and undertaking forms provided to the EPA.

No further updates.

3. Agenda Item 3 – Minutes and Actions

3.1. Endorsement of previous minutes

Agenda adopted unanimously with minor edits from Council and the Auditor.

3.2. Update on Actions from previous meeting

| Action Number | Action Item | Responsible for Action | Update |
|---------------|--|-----------------------------|--|
| December 17#1 | ACTION 1: Comments from LEWG members on the draft Terms of Reference should be provided to the LEWG Secretary by the 23 December 2014. | All | Action 1 complete |
| December 17#2 | ACTION 2: The EPA to develop an effective community engagement strategy for the work of the LEWG. | All | Ongoing – discussed under Section 5.4 |
| December 17#3 | ACTION 3: LMC Council, NSW Health and the EPA are to inform the LEWG of its existing community engagement programs and information held regarding lead issues. | EPA, NSW Health and Council | Action 3 complete Any further information provided will be shared using the established information exchange portal |
| December 17#4 | ACTION 4: The EPA to commission an external party to conduct a literature review of smelter remediation practices in order to establish best practice standards and procedures. | All | In progress – discussed under Section 5.2 |
| December 17#5 | ACTION 5: An information exchange portal is to be established by the EPA for the LEWG. | All | Action 5 complete. The information exchange portal system has been established. Action 11 will consider how the portal can replicate the information on the LEWG website. |

4. Agenda Item 4 - Adoption of final Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference adopted unanimously without amendment.

5. Agenda Item 5 – Updates

5.1. Blood Lead Program for 2015

NSW Health has committed to newly developed *Point-of-care* testing device. This device is the latest and most sensitive piece of testing equipment available, measuring a blood lead as low as 1.9µg/dl. Previous *Point-of-care* devices were only able to measure levels as low as 3.9µg/dl.

Elevated blood lead results will be confirmed by a secondary analytical test at an external laboratory. The blood lead results can be corrected when determining an average blood lead result based on the limitations of point-of-care testing to 1.9µg/dl. This has previously been done in Broken Hill blood lead studies.

Testing with this new device will be less invasive than a traditional venous blood test, allowing collection of a small amount of blood through a finger prick (capillary testing). Hunter New England Health is awaiting the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approval on the device before purchasing it. Following approval, delivery is expected from the supplier in the coming months. Once the equipment has arrived testing should commence within one month. March/April pending approvals is likely.

Logistic arrangements are progressing with Council to consider an appropriate venue for the testing.

An appropriate response protocol to elevated blood lead results as a part of the program needs to be developed.

ACTION 6: NSW Health with input from the EPA to develop a response protocol in the event of elevated blood lead results.

5.2. Literature review

The EPA developed a draft tender document, dated 21 January 2015, for the procurement of a 'Literature review of Practices to Manage Lead (Pb) and Lead Slag in Soil and Associated Human Exposures'. The document was provided to the working group for review prior to the meeting.

Preliminary comments regarding the proposed literature review and on the draft document were:

- The objective needs to be very clear so that the literature review is focused on the current issues.
- The scope is currently very large and needs to be tightened to reflect the current issues that are specific to this site. Consideration should be given to providing a 'testable' question to each discussion area. A tighter scope would also reduce time and costs.
- The independence of review is important.
- A multi-disciplinary team may be required due to the complexity and broadness of the current issues.
- The timing is such that the findings should be presented to the LEWG to be able to be referred to upon presentation of the blood lead testing results.
- Input from working group members of literature which should inform the review should be made possible. The information sharing portal can be made accessible to the successful tender. Alternatively, for the reasons discussed above regarding the scope, it may be worth having a screening process of the proposed literature to be reviewed. This may however reduce the independence of the review.
- 'Best practice' needs to be benchmarked. 'Best practice' can then be related to the circumstances of clean up/management when limited funding is available due to the polluting company being in administration.
- The effectiveness of remediation, abatement, risk management, education programs on similar smelter sites should all be reviewed.
- An economic assessment of societal costs should also form part of the review or perhaps follow the literature review to inform the LEWG recommendations.
- The findings of the blood lead survey and the literature review will guide the decision making process of the working group.
- The work done under the LAS should be contextualised and its effectiveness studied.
- Blood lead studies give a point in time assessment. Does a more comprehensive risk assessment beyond blood lead studies needs to be carried out? Will the literature review be able to answer this question?
- Remaining lead sources need to be documented. Behaviour of these lead sources in the environment needs understanding with respect to seasonality, particle size, lag following ingestion and correlations to site specific sources and pathways.

- The IEUBK model cannot be applied to this site as it has been shown to not be applicable.
- Community education programs and their efficacy should be examined. Noting that effective Council engagement on this issue appears to need revitalisation every 4- 5 years.

The working group decided to take the above points on and to provide further individual input to the literature review procurement process.

ACTION 4.1: LEWG Members to provide comment to the EPA regarding the draft Literature review procurement document for potential endorsement at or prior to the next meeting.

5.3. Waste disposal options program

It has been indicated that the Pasminco cell will close at the end of February 2015. Future options are being sought by the EPA and Council for disposal of lead and slag impacted soil. The EPA is developing a policy on local disposal options for lead impacted and slag impacted soil from sites within the LAS grid. Preliminary discussions with waste disposal facilities in the local area have commenced.

The EPA is currently reviewing previous characterisation studies that have been done by both internal and external parties (where available). An additional preliminary waste classification sampling program has also been conducted to gain further information on both; lead impacted soil from the Pasminco smelter fall out; and Pasminco slag samples. Soil and slag samples have been collected and waste classification analysis is being conducted.

An EPA media release about the Preliminary Waste Classification project went out on 12 January 2015 (see **attachment 1**).

5.4. Community Reference Group

The EPA is establishing the 'Lake Macquarie Lead Community Reference Group' (CRG) to enable the community to engage directly with government and experts on issues related to potential lead and lead slag contamination in the suburbs of Boolaroo, Argenton and Speers Point.

The CRG will work in partnership with the LEWG and will be comprised of a broad range of individuals who represent a range of community interests. For example, schools, business, real estate and sporting.

The CRG's functions include:

- providing a conduit to inform the community on all matters relating to this issue
- providing a voice for the community to raise concerns and issues
- facilitating ongoing communication between industries and the local community.

The EPA is finalising the appointment of a Chairperson and will be calling for community representative nominations.

The Minister will visit the Pasminco site on 11 February 2015.

ACTION 2.1: LEWG Members to be provided with the ToR for the CRG and consider options for how the LEWG and CRG can best work cooperatively and effectively.

6. Agenda item 6 - PRESENTATION: Consideration of 'actions taken to date to reduce/limit exposure of children to lead'

The EPA presentation is attached (**Attachment 2**) and will be made available on the LEWG website. A chronology of site history was also presented and is attached to the presentation.

Comments on the following points were made and are shown in *italics*.

- Period 1995-2014
 - Activities – to be considered
 - Smelter emission reduction

The numbers were sourced from the National Pollution Inventory and include fugitive emissions.

- Zonal clean-up
- EHC activities
- Smelter shut down
- Site remediation
- LAS

The LAS grid is a rectangular shape around the smelter and was made in the 1990's with regard to local wind patterns, smelter location and the Munnibung Hill ridge line. A lot of this information can be found in the 'EIS - Pasminco Environmental Upgrade' report which provides pre-remediation information on other factors that have been considered in the past such as the halo effect and the fallout factor.

ACTION 7: LMC Council to provide a copy of the 'EIS – Pasminco Environmental Upgrade.'

Mark Taylor questioned the LAS soil sampling as to whether it was done according to Australia Standards.

Council stated that the LAS data is not spatially defined and that deposition from the smelter has historically been found to be highest in First, Second and Third Streets.

ACTION 8: LMC Council to consider how it can best share the existing LAS data set in an appropriate spatial manner.

- Outcomes
 - Who to engage for further information?

No requests for further information about any of the above subjects were made.

7. Agenda Item 7 - Other Business

Mark Taylor is considering providing his draft paper on the data collected by his students around the former Pasminco smelter to the LEWG members for comment prior to submission of the paper for publication, to check for site specific factual errors.

ACTION 9: Mark Taylor to distribute his draft paper on the data collected around the former lead smelter to LEWG members for discretionary comment.

8. Agenda Item 8 - Working Group Administration

Administration items to attend to are submission of appointment forms. The appointment forms are a requirement of the NSW Government under the NSW Boards and Committees Guidelines.

The EPA is setting up a LEWG website to publish minutes other matters related to the projects under the LEWG. A short bio and suitable picture is required from each LEWG member.

The LEWG requested that the information being shared exchange portal be made publically available.

ACTION 10: The EPA to consider developing a suitable public sharing arrangement for the information exchange portal.

9. Agenda Item 9 - Confirmation of Actions

Actions from Meeting #2 January 29 2015

| Action Number | Action Item | Responsible for Action |
|---------------|---|------------------------|
| December 17#2 | <p>ACTION 2 (ongoing): The EPA to develop an effective community engagement strategy for the work of the LEWG.</p> <p>ACTION 2.1: LEWG Members to be provided with the Terms of Reference for the CRG and consider options for how best the LEWG and CRG work cooperatively and effectively.</p> | All |
| December 17#4 | <p>ACTION 4 (ongoing): The EPA to commission an external party to conduct a literature review of smelter remediation practices in order to establish what is 'best practice'.</p> <p>ACTION 4.1: LEWG Members to provide comment to the EPA regarding the draft literature review procurement document for potential endorsement at or prior to the next meeting.</p> | All |
| January 29 #1 | <p>ACTION 6: NSW Health with input from the EPA to develop a response protocol in the event of elevated blood lead results.</p> | NSW Health and EPA |
| January 29 #2 | <p>ACTION 7: LMC Council to provide a copy of the EIS – Pasminco Environmental Upgrade to LEWG members.</p> | LMCC |
| January 29 #3 | <p>ACTION 8: LMC Council to consider how it can best share the existing LAS data set in an appropriate spatial manner.</p> | LMCC |
| January 29 #4 | <p>ACTION 9: Mark Taylor to distribute his draft paper on the data collected around the former lead smelter to LEWG</p> | All |

| Action Number | Action Item | Responsible for Action |
|---------------|---|------------------------|
| | members for discretionary comment. | |
| January 29 #5 | ACTION 10: The EPA to consider developing a suitable public sharing arrangement for the information exchange portal. | EPA |

10. Agenda Item 10 – Next meeting date proposal

Next meeting date/time – End of February or start of March

Further meeting date/time – TBC