

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

Minutes

17th December 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)

Apologies: none

1. Agenda Item 1 - Introductions

Adam Gilligan (AG): EPA. Chair of the Lead Expert Working Group (LEWG).

The key Issues that the expert working group has to address are as proposed in the Draft Terms of Reference:

- Understand what has been done in the past; and
- Determine what if any actions are required in the future, informed by new blood testing results, to further address lead contamination in the area, particularly where exposure pathways are identified.

John Coffey (JC): EPA Major Project Coordinator for the Contaminated Sites Section.

Dr Craig Dalton (CD): NSW Health. Public Health Physician, Hunter New England Population Health.

Professor Mark Taylor: (MT) Macquarie University. Professor of Environmental Science, Department of Environment and Geography.

Graeme Nyland (GN): Environ. NSW EPA accredited Contaminated Site Auditor for the former Pasmingo and Incitec Sites and Principal remediation consultant.

Associate Professor Stephen Cattle (SC): University of Sydney. Associate Professor in Soil Science, Department of Environmental Sciences.

Dean Chapman (DC): Lake Macquarie City Council. Environmental Security Coordinator.

Tony Farrell (TF): Lake Macquarie City Council. Director City Strategy. Asked to attend by the Chair.

Matthew James: (MJ) EPA. Secretary for the Working Group. Senior Regulation Officer for the EPA Contaminated Sites Section

2. Agenda Item 2 – Terms of Reference (ToR), Working Group Administration and Declaration of Interests

2.1. Terms of Reference (ToR)

The ToR document has been drafted and presented to the LEWG.

The DRAFT ToR provides Context of the Group, Its functions and roles, the membership, operation, decision making, communications, reporting, mechanisms for community engagement.

ACTION 1: Comments from LEWG members on the DRAFT ToR should be provided to the LEWG Secretary by the 23rd December 2014.

2.1.1. Community Engagement

It is proposed in the ToR that:

The EPA is responsible for community engagement activities related to the operation of the Working Group. This will include but not be limited to:

- Publication of meeting minutes on the EPA website;
- Production of fact sheets, brochures and similar information for dissemination to the community;
- Community outreach activities; and
- Media releases.

The LEWG is to review the mechanisms for community engagement by:

- Understanding the objectives of the LEWG and other groups engaging with the Community on this issue. (E.g. NSW Health and Lake Macquarie City Council). Hence avoiding replication of engagement processes.
- Reviewing other similar working groups and their context. E.g. Broken Hill (Lead Reference Group) and Mount Isa.
- Considering inclusion of a local parent of an under 5 year old or a local GP.
- Seek additional advice (EPA or external) as to effective ways to ensure the community is engaged in an effective manner.
- Operating in an open and transparent manner with informed discussions with the community and encouragement of community input and dialogue.

ACTION 2: EPA to develop an effective community engagement strategy for the work of the LEWG.

ACTION 3: LMC Council, NSW Health and EPA are to inform the LEWG of its existing Community engagement programs and information held regarding lead issues.

2.1.2. Lead Abatement Strategy (LAS)

The charter of the LEWG will be to understand the effectiveness of past remediation/abatement activities that have taken place and then focus on solutions in the future where exposure pathways are identified.

The Pasminco site is unique and complex. The legal responsibilities and liabilities of Ferrier Hodgson for cleaning up residential areas outside of the Pasminco site are not well understood and are difficult to communicate.

The EPA will look at all issues and where there is an issue supported by credible data. The EPA will support action to resolve the issue.

ACTION 4: The LEWG recommends that the EPA commission an external party to conduct a literature review of smelter remediation practices in order to establish what is 'best practice'.

2.2. Working Group administration

There are NSW Government requirements for participation in NSW Government committees or groups. LEWG members are required to tend to some administrative processes in order to participate. The LEWG Secretary will distribute the relevant documentation.

2.3. Declaration of interests

This will be a standard item on the agenda. LEWG members and other attendees will update the group at each meeting.

Tony Farrell: Owner of two properties in the local area; one in Lakelands the other in Speers Point (neither in the LAS area).

Graeme Nyland: Has been commissioned by Ferrier Hodgson to conduct Site Audits on the former Pasminco and Incitec Sites.

3. Agenda Item 3 – Updates on:

3.1. Site remediation

Incitec Site: Remediation complete, Final Validation Report reviewed, Site Audit Statement Issued and Declaration removed. The site remains regulated under the site-wide Pasminco EPL. EPA and NSW Office of Water are establishing a site-wide moratorium on groundwater extraction.

Pasminco Site:

- Remediation of all areas complete. Almost all contaminated materials are in the on-site containment cell.
- Re-sculpting of the site is occurring subject to Auditor Conditions.
- Creditors are reviewing a proposal for Ferrier Hodgson to sell the site or continue to develop.
- Triangle paddock has sales pending.
- Bunnings is being built under a lease/sale arrangement
- A sinking fund is being established by Ferrier Hodgson to operate and maintain the containment cell in perpetuity.

3.2. Waste disposal options program

- Off-site lead impacted materials from the LAS grid area can still be received by Pasminco prior to the cell closure in February 2015.
- Future options are being sought by EPA and Council for disposal of lead-impacted soil and slag impacted soil. This includes analytical assessment of lead impacted and slag impacted soil. Previous characterisation studies have been done by multiple parties and the research should be shared and made available to the LEWG.

ACTION 5: An information exchange portal is to be established by the EPA for the LEWG.

3.3. Blood Lead Program for 2015

- The program is yet to be formally approved with some details still being finalised. The blood lead testing program will be available for children less than five year old and pregnant women who reside in the LAS grid. It is expected that there will be an onsite clinic in Boolaroo for a period of two weeks. The existing Pathology North clinic at Warners Bay will remain available as the backup clinic for those not able to be tested in Boolaroo.
- NSW Health runs a campaign annually to remind GPs in the Hunter to consider lead exposure in children.
- The program will be promoted by NSW Health through local GPs, childcare centres and parental groups. Pregnant woman will also be sought for testing. NSW Health will continue to engage with the Newcastle Herald to assist with promotion of the blood testing program.
- Testing is likely to take place in March and April 2015 and an interim report available soon after.
- The details of the type of blood collection are being formed through an internal NSW Health expert group. Capillary testing is much less invasive, quicker and easier however venous testing may be required in this program for greater accuracy at low levels. Any elevated capillary test would be confirmed by venous testing. Previous programs in North Lake Macquarie and other programs such as those run in Broken Hill and Mount Isa provide a great deal of information to guide this program.
- If elevated blood lead levels are identified exposure pathways will be investigated by NSW Health. A summary of risk factors will be presented by NSW Health to the LEWG. The presence of exposed lead slag may be an exposure factor. The LEWG are to form a position about what is already known about the bioavailability, bio-accessibility and variation that can be expected for the slag having been in the environment. The information exchange **ACTION 5** is to be used for presentation of research regarding the behaviour of slag in the environment.

MILESTONE 1: March/April blood lead program reported to LEWG in May.

Agenda item 4 - Rolled over to next meeting

Agenda Item 5 - Other Business

None

Agenda Item 6**Actions from Meeting 1st December 2014**

Action Number	Action Item	Responsible for Action
December 17#1	ACTION 1: Comments from LEWG members on the DRAFT ToR should be provided to the LEWG Secretary by the 23rd December 2014.	All
December 17#2	ACTION 2: EPA to develop an effective community engagement strategy for the work of the LEWG.	All
December 17#3	ACTION 3: LMC Council, NSW Health and EPA are to inform the LEWG of its existing Community engagement programs and information held regarding lead issues.	EPA, NSW Health and Council
December 17#4	ACTION 4: EPA to commission an external party to conduct a literature review of smelter remediation practices in order to establish what is 'best practice'.	All
December 17#5	ACTION 5: An information exchange portal is to be established by the EPA for the LEWG.	All

Milestones established from meeting 1st December 2014

Milestone Number	Milestone Item	Responsible for Updates on Milestone
#1	MILESTONE 1: March/April 2015 blood lead program reported to LEWG in May 2015.	NSW Health

Agenda Item 7 – Next meeting date/time**Proposed for Wed 4th or Fri 13th February 2015**