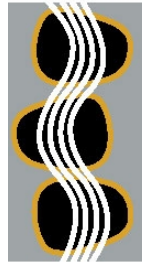


10 September 2008

STATEMENT TO MIKE PRITCHARD

No Scientific Evidence for MineWatch's Speculation About Link Between Mining and Lead Levels in Water

- Wendy Bowman from MineWatch has speculated that mining may be responsible for high levels of contamination found in 292 NSW schools' drinking water, as reported in the *Daily Telegraph* earlier this week.
- Contamination of water is a serious matter and serious matters deserve more than idle speculation.
- Speculation of a link between mining and lead contamination of drinking water is simply not borne out by the facts.
- The Department of Education tested 330 schools for possible contamination of drinking water obtained from rainwater tanks. Of these, 36 registered lead levels above the recommended rates.
- The 36 schools were dispersed throughout the State, as were all the schools in this study. Most were in regional areas or on urban fringes.
- All of the schools in the study had rainwater tanks linked to bubblers and the purpose of the study was to monitor the water from the tanks for contamination.
- The DoE told the NSWMC that there was "absolutely no link with mining areas". Most of the lead in the water came from the roofs and old lead flashing.
- The DoE study included scientific monitoring. A report on the issue prepared by the DoE states "**in most cases metals are being leached from plumbing material and are not derived from the catchment or tank**".
- The DoE reports that the findings are consistent with other Australian studies of rainwater tanks.
- A study by Monash University and CSIRO earlier this year, which looked at lead levels in 49 rainwater tanks in the Melbourne area, found that lead flashing in the roofs was the most important contributing factor in those tanks found to have higher than acceptable levels of lead.
- It is a popular sport among many individuals and groups to blame the mining industry for all sorts of things, and all types of environmental and social ills, without one shred of supporting evidence.
- This is extremely unhelpful for the general public. Not only is it completely misleading about mining, it is misleading about the serious issues of our times and can prevent the public from taking informed action.
- The DoE's study, like the Monash University study before it, contained a serious health message – rainwater tanks can contaminate water if they are not properly maintained. Yet anti-mining activists are more than happy to cloud the issue whenever there is an opportunity for a free kick at the mining industry.



CONTACT: Lancia Jordana (02) 9274 1402. Mob 0412 283 252. Email ljordana@nswmin.com.au