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MEDIA RELEASE**

No Scientific Evidence for Hunter Water Keepers Alliance's Speculation on Causes of Lead Contamination in Rain Water Tanks

Contamination of water is a serious matter and serious matters deserve more than idle speculation.

The samples from two private rainwater tanks investigated on behalf of the Upper Hunter Waterkeepers Alliance show no causal link between the alleged higher levels of heavy metal concentrations found in the water and mining. In fact there has been no attempt to examine the reasons for the results.

There are previous studies which have been carried out on contamination of rainwater tanks and these have shown absolutely no link to mining. NSWMC is also conducting a study and reviewing the literature.

The most recent study, by the Department of Education, involved 330 school rainwater tanks dispersed throughout the State, including some schools in mining areas and some schools on the urban fringes.

The Department's study found that 36 schools had tanks with higher than expected levels of lead in the water and concluded that "in most cases metals are being leached from plumbing materials and are not derived from the catchment or tank".

An earlier study by the CSIRO and Monash University found that lead flashing in the roofs was the most important contributing factor in tanks found to have higher levels of lead in the water.

There is an important public health message here about the need to maintain rainwater tanks and plumbing in order to prevent contamination. The Department of Health also recommends using first flushing devices to prevent the first run-off of water from entering the tank.

The Hunter Water Keepers Alliance is doing the public a disservice by clouding this very important message with unproven speculation.

It is a popular sport among anti-mining groups to blame the mining industry for all sorts of things without a shred of supporting evidence. The claims made by the Alliance show that their enthusiasm for this sport remains unabated.

Please attribute these comments to Dr Nikki Williams CEO NSW Minerals Council

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