



Hazelwood North Action Group - Media Release: 2nd October 2019: Lead Poisoning Concern from Proposed Plant

Latrobe Valley residents concerned about the potential for lead poisoning from a proposed battery recycling plant have announced two public meetings this month.

“The proposed battery recycling facility in Morwell will release lead in the air,” said group spokesperson Peter Ingwerson

“We are concerned that the World Health Organisation and other health and environmental authorities have openly stated that there is no safe level of lead. Any level can cause poisoning.”

“As a result, we have called two community information meetings on 15 and 22 October. Both sessions will be at the Hazelwood North Hall starting at 7.00pm.

“Lead can affect workers, their family and community. Our biggest concern is that its greatest effect is on growing children and there is no cure for lead poisoning.

“Australia has gone to great lengths to remove lead from the atmosphere through mandating unleaded petrol, we can’t understand why anyone thinks it’s a good idea to allow it in the Latrobe Valley’s air.”

Peter also said the group is not opposed to a lead battery recycling plant as such, it is just opposed to the outdated technology proposed.

“There are new technologies that are less dangerous. We want the Valley to consider these 21st century technologies and 21st century jobs. We don’t want last century jobs and the dangers they bring.”

Peter said these issues would be discussed at the community meetings.

The meetings have been formally registered with the World Health Organisation (WHO) as part of International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (20 -26th October).

WHO (www.who.int) advises:

“Lead exposure affects human health, especially for children

- There is no known level of lead exposure without harmful effects.
- Even low levels of lead exposure may cause lifelong health problems.
- Lead is toxic to multiple body systems, including the central nervous system and brain, the reproductive system, the kidneys, the cardiovascular system, the blood and the immune system.



- Lead is especially dangerous to children’s developing brains, and can cause reduced intelligence quotient (IQ) and attention span, impaired learning ability, and increased risk of behavioural problems. These health impacts also have significant economic costs to countries.”

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Detailed issues to be discussed at the community information meetings include:

Lead was removed from paints, inks and petrol because of the danger it caused.

Lead poisoning is irreversible, there is no cure.

The proposed facility is a very old process, it will release lead contamination. It is based on furnaces and smelting.

Facilities using this technology produce lead dust and slag, which impacts workers, their families, community and surrounding land and communities.

There is a new technology that is much safer. It is based on electrolysis or solvents. The new technology is low energy, has minimal emissions and recovers more lead.

We need to protect our children and health.

We need 21st century jobs, not last century jobs. Let’s have all options on the table, not just one.

The Gippsland community can be a leader in new industries and technologies.

Any new industry should bring world leading technologies and skills

For the health, image and future of the community we need to choose the best of all options.

Note added on 19th October 2019: Local Media in Victoria, Australia has covered the topic of this media release, including:

- WIN News (the night after the first community meeting)
- Latrobe Valley Express 7th October 2019 page 4
- ABC Gippsland Radio (it is listed in the Facebook page on 17th October 2019), a radio interview held the morning after the community meeting
- Gippsland FM Radio
- Prime 7 News