



# **LEAD Group replies re: proposed Chunxing ULAB Smelter in the La Trobe Valley, Victoria, Australia**

EMAIL ONE

From: The LEAD Group Inc  
Sent: Tuesday, November 5, 2019 10:41 AM  
To: Ian  
Subject: Re: Proposed Lead Smelter for the Latrobe Valley - can I forward your email to others opposing the proposal?

Hi Ian,

thanks for your email and for becoming an individual member of The LEAD Group. I wrote four emails to members of the Hazelwood North Action Group in October 2019 including offering them free corporate membership of The LEAD Group which would enable them to put a paragraph about your opposition to the proposed Chunxing Secondary Lead Smelter on our Lead-Safe Partners page at <http://www.lead safeworld.com/partners/lead-safe/> - so if you want to join forces with the Hazelwood North Action Group or if there's another more geographically-relevant Action Group that you could join or set-up (two people is the minimum requirement to create an unassociated group) - then I'd happily extend that same offer to you.

I will forward each of my four emails to you including their replies, if you let me know that you guys are all on the same page and you give permission for me to forward your emails to them and if they give me permission to forward their emails to me and my emails to them, to you - so that those opposing the current proposal can connect and all have received the same referrals and information from The LEAD Group (charity).

I'd suggest that you refer readers to any information you've located online on the new ULAB recycling technology and the old. I'm staggered that both today and when I first did the Google search on 21/10/2019, I got: No results found for "Vertical Smelt Furnace".

Please reply soonest

Yours Sincerely

Elizabeth O'Brien,

Lead Scientist and Lead Adviser (full-time volunteer)  
The LEAD Group Inc. (environmental health charity)



## EMAIL TWO

From: The LEAD Group Inc  
Sent: Sunday, November 10, 2019 11:36 AM  
To: Ian  
Subject: Community Health Surveys proposal

Hi Ian,

I will shortly forward the four emails I've previously sent to Hazelwood North Action Group Members and hope that you can benefit from reading them.

The one other thought I've had about your situation since the last time I emailed you all, was that, if it was my community, I'd advocate that the local health unit of the state health department undertakes a comprehensive pre-operations (ie before the smelter is approved or built) Community survey including blood lead testing, blood pressure testing, and a medical examination of a statistically-valid percentage of the population in all age groups looking for the typical health impacts of both lead exposure (eg hearing problems, balance problems, poor memory, cataracts, osteoporosis) and exposure to any other hazardous emissions listed in the proposal. The results of this health survey could then be compared to a similar survey (including of anyone who remains resident in the area that was assessed in the first survey) 6 months to one year after the smelter becomes operational (if it is built). I would argue that the proponent should support (including financially) these surveys because it is the one way to demonstrate nil health impacts on the community (as claimed) and the Health Department should support it because the first survey should reveal people impacted by lead even before the smelter is operational and the local health unit can then prepare a strategy for reducing lead exposure generally in your community.

Regards

Elizabeth O'Brien

## EMAIL THREE

**From:** The LEAD Group Inc  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 10, 2019 12:45 PM  
**To:** Ian  
**Subject:** Fw: Hazelwood North Action Group & The LEAD Group Inc charity should join forces!!

Hi Ian,

This is the first of four emails I've sent to the Action Group and it includes 3 attachments sent to me by the Hazelwood North Action Group. Which reminded me that when you emailed me via our Contact us form, the form cannot handle attachments so I hope you will be able to send me the attachment you referred to as follows:

“Chunxing's original Power point presentation (that only about 12 families out of 600 in this area saw when they held 2 public meetings, that's another story)”

Cheers, Elizabeth



**From:** The LEAD Group Inc  
**Sent:** Saturday, October 19, 2019 7:30 PM  
**To:** Hazelwood North Action Group  
**Subject:** Re: Hazelwood North Action Group & The LEAD Group Inc charity should join forces!!

Hi,

that is a helluva media release! Truly excellent and covers exactly the points I would have concentrated on.

You may have already thought of all these things but in response to the Ascend “Responses to issues raised by action group” document [[Ascend Responses to issues raised by action group re Chunxing ULAB Smelter 201910.pdf](#)] and [[Chunxing Lead Battery Recycling Facility - Fact File 201910.pdf](#)], you could request:

the actual data (in writing and with reference data sources including the name of the “other” plant), ahead of the 22nd October meeting they refer to when they wrote: “...actual emissions data from the China plant into the Hazelwood North context) that lead emissions will be extremely low – much lower than the other main (modern) plant in Australia.”

If you get the data in time and it relates (as it should) to Enirgi Power Storage Recycling (EPSR), Bomen, Wagga Wagga, NSW (ULAB recyclers), then email [ben.pritchard@enirgipower.com.au](mailto:ben.pritchard@enirgipower.com.au) (mobile 0400830270) and [Cameron.jennings@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Cameron.jennings@epa.nsw.gov.au) (phone 0249086828) to ask them to confirm the data or supply the real figures.

Then point out that no amount of air lead modelling compares to actual data on blood lead levels and ask Ascend to produce the blood lead levels of workers in the China plant, as well as of children in the surrounding community.

You could also ask Ben Pritchard if he would supply blood lead levels of workers at the Wagga Wagga plant (though of course he’s not legally obliged to supply the data to you) and the angle there could be that perhaps Enirgi just never thought to build another plant in Victoria and maybe they should consider it now...

Ascend’s response to your Claim#2 is ridiculous – the same nonsense that was famously argued by Dr Robert Kehoe for the petrol lead additive industry for decades last century. As I wrote in my last newsletter, LEAD Action News vol 20 no 1 (October 2019), at: <http://www.leadsafeworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/LANv20n1-Who-can-mend-old-leaded-men.pdf>; accessible via <http://www.leadsafeworld.com/media-page/>; <https://lead.org.au/lanv20n1/LANv20n1-Who-can-mend-old-leaded-men.pdf> :

Any reference to Kehoe should be particularly viewed with skepticism as Robert A Kehoe was the chief medical advisor of the Ethyl Corporation, a tetraalkyl lead (TAL) manufacturer, and according to Wikipedia: “Kehoe's work is now considered discredited.” Eg Hunter quotes Kehoe as saying the following patently untrue statement: “To prevent such unnecessary exposures [of leaded petrol tank sludge cleaners who suffered consequent lunacy or death], adequate supervision of the cleaning of tanks has now been instituted all over the world (Kehoe, 1953).”



Regarding Ascend's statement:

"Safe levels" of lead are identified by way of standards for air (such as EPA's limits), drinking water (such as the WHO's own limit of 10 µg/L), soil (in children's playgrounds), food etc.

- they were wise to use the inverted commas around "safe levels" because the term "safe levels" has not been used in relation to blood lead levels or any of the other standards they've mentioned for at least 20 years, in recognition of the fact that governments set levels which are achievable (not too costly) rather than levels which result in zero health effects. A blood lead level of less than 5 micrograms per decilitre (5 ug/dL) is not called a "safe level", rather, a level of 5 ug/dL or higher is called a "notifiable level" ie a level at which the government recommends identification and removal of lead sources, dietary intervention, etc. The soil lead level above 300 mg/kg in Australia has been called the "level for further investigation" since 1992. And besides, the FAO (Food and Agricultural Organisation) has indeed withdrawn the food lead tolerable intake limit they previously set, because they have not identified any level of lead in food (besides zero) which does no harm.

The World Health Organisation wrote (December 2010), for instance, at <http://www.who.int/ceh/publications/leadguidance.pdf> :

"Recent research indicates that lead is associated with neurobehavioural damage at blood levels of 5 µg/dL and even lower. There appears to be no threshold level below which lead causes no injury to the developing human brain. The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives re-evaluated lead in June, 2010 and withdrew the provisional tolerable weekly intake guideline value on the grounds that it was inadequate to protect against IQ loss."

Ascend's statement re: Claim#3

"Then the Australian Uniform Paint Standard was amended to reduce the amount of lead in domestic paint from the previously recommended level of 50% to 1%." is wrong. In 1970, the Australian Uniform Paint Standard limited lead in residential paint for the first time, to 1%. Prior to 1970, the lead content of house paint was not limited at all, and no level was "recommended". Painters who mixed their own paint in the early decades of paint use, and paint manufacturers were allowed to use as much (cheap) lead as they liked. Pre-1970 residential paint in Australia has been found to contain up to 64% lead.

"The maximum content was further reduced to 0.25% in 1992 and to the current level of 0.1% in 1997. In other words, lead may have been heavily reduced in paint but it has not been "removed" fully." is interesting. The 1997 limit of 0.1% lead equates to 1,000 mg/kg or ppm and this figure was chosen by the Australian Paint Manufacturers Federation (APMF) because they couldn't guarantee that raw materials used in paint, such as zinc, would be lead-free. The correct statement for you to make is: "Residential paint in Australia since 1997 has had no added lead." As you probably saw at the ILPPWA site when you were uploading your Town Hall Meeting Events for International Lead Poisoning Week of Action 2019, WHO now recommends lead be further limited to 90 ppm and this is what The LEAD Group advocates. Levels of lead in paint raw ingredients must have reduced in the past 22 years because the Philippines and even Zambia have begun their move to 90 ppm lead in paint so Australia's Paint Standard is falling behind...





You are of course right when you say Claim #4: Any level of lead can cause poisoning, because the definition of lead poisoning has changed and it now means having a detectable level of lead in the blood.

Your Claim#7 should be (as noted above): “Residential paint in Australia since 1997 has had no added lead.”

Ascend’s statement re: Claim#7 - “Lead is still used in Australia in some road line marking paints” is countered similarly with “Lead has not been added to road line marking paints in Australia since 2010.” 2010 is when The LEAD Group and APMF finally succeeded in getting NICNAS to limit all paints (not just residential) and inks in Australia to 1,000 ppm (by banning the addition of all the common lead additives to paint and ink).

It is my understanding that Ascend’s statements re: Claim#8 are contradictory, ie:

“...they follow the same procedures of workplace task rotation applied in Australia” and “Lead levels in the blood of workers at the China plant are below those set in both China and Australia, to protect worker health.”

In Australian OHS legislation, workers are only required to be rotated from a workplace task, after they’ve exceeded the occupational notifiable blood lead level. Workers must be given a low-lead risk job to do until their blood lead level falls to the “return to lead task” level. If a task is truly lead-safe, no worker would need to be rotated from it.

You should ask them if they meant “4,500 tonnes of slag” **per annum**. And ask where is it going and will the trucks carting it be covering their loads or fully enclosed? Then you could notify the community around the waste dump...

I hope this helps.

Do keep in touch and keep up the good fight.

Kind regards

Elizabeth

Yours Sincerely  
Elizabeth O'Brien,  
Lead Scientist and Lead Adviser  
The LEAD Group Inc. (environmental health charity)

EMAIL FOUR

**From:** The LEAD Group Inc  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 10, 2019 2:03 PM  
**To:** Ian  
**Subject:** Fw: Hazelwood North Action Group & The LEAD Group Inc charity should join forces!!

Hi Ian,

this is email 2 of 4 that I previously sent to Hazelwood North Action Group.



Cheers, Elizabeth

**From:** The LEAD Group Inc  
**Sent:** Monday, October 21, 2019 1:04 PM  
**To:** Hazelwood North Action Group  
**Subject:** Re: Hazelwood North Action Group & The LEAD Group Inc charity should join forces!!

Hi,

Happy International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action (which started yesterday)!

It occurred to me overnight that you could also send Ascend's pdfs (or at least extracts from them about plant technology), to NSW EPA, Vic EPA, Enirgi, and Hydromet Lead Acid Battery Recycling Plant - HydroMet Corporation Pty Limited - Southern (Head Office), Unanderra, NSW, to ask for their comments on ULAB recycling plant technology.

The contact details for Hydromet are:

office@hydromet.com.au

Phone 02 42711822, 02 42472100

and I've attached Hydromet's 2005 pdf <Hydromet Unanderra proposed battery recycling plant 2005.pdf> which was previously at

[www.hydromet.com.au/pdf/Upgraded%20Lead%20Products.pdf](http://www.hydromet.com.au/pdf/Upgraded%20Lead%20Products.pdf) – take a look at their SLAG GENERATION figures for comparison to Ascend's.

The above Hydromet pdf is no longer online but is mentioned at

<https://lead.org.au/q&a/2007/200707102.html> which also refers to a government fact sheet from the US called "Preventing Lead Poisoning in Scrap Metal Recycling" at [http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/files/lead\\_scrap.pdf](http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/files/lead_scrap.pdf)

In relation to Ascend's claims that:

"Any lead emissions from the proposed ULAB facility will be so low that they will be indistinguishable from background levels that are present in our daily lives."

and

"Chunxing uses world-leading technology to recycle car batteries to ensure the safety of its employees and surrounding communities. Its Vertical Smelt Furnace (VSF) has been granted a Chinese invention patent."

it would be good for you to present the context of that statement [and ask why, in a Google search, do you get: No results found for "**Vertical Smelt Furnace**"]. Here are two pertinent quotes from *Health hazards of China's lead-acid battery industry: a review of its market drivers, production processes, and health impacts* by Tsering Jan van der Kuijp, Lei Huang and Christopher R Cherry, in *Environmental Health* 2013, at <https://ehjournal.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1476-069X-12-61>:

In response to recent mass Pb poisonings, in March 2011 the MEP [Ministry of Environmental Protection, China] along with the National Development and Reform Commission jointly issued an environmental protection special action decree (UNCED [2011] No. 41), with remediation of the LAB industry as its primary goal [44]. The central government tasked all local environmental protection bureaus to immediately conduct



a thorough investigation and remediation of all environmental law violators. All LAB enterprises under investigation would be forced to comply with inspections. As a result of this decree, by July 31, 2011 the investigation of all 1,930 known LAB enterprises (manufacturing, assembly, and recycling) resulted in the complete shutdown of 583 and discontinuation of 405 LAB enterprises.

and

Links between lead poisoning and the LAB industry

China faces a public health and social stability challenge with regard to Pb poisoning, especially in children. Scores of mass Pb poisoning incidents involving children have directly fueled large-scale protests, resulting in factory damage and violent riots. A comprehensive review of children's blood lead levels in China demonstrated that from 1995 to 2003, the mean BLL of children was 92.9 µg/L [9.29 ug/dL], and that 34% of the subjects had BLLs higher than 100 µg/L [10 ug/dL]. This level stands multiple times higher than the mean found in developed countries (30 µg/L) [3.0 ug/dL] [47].

You might want to even consider emailing two of the three authors listed for Correspondence: to ask for their comments on Ascend's claims.

For a more global context for Ascend's claims, you can't go past the WHO which says in *Recycling used lead-acid batteries: health considerations* (2017), at <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259447/9789241512855-eng.pdf;jsessionid=1A9F565D3691174CBEA4DD235F2245C5?sequence=1>

Even established, industrial-scale recycling facilities can, however, cause significant environmental contamination and human exposure to lead in countries without adequate standards or when regulatory controls are inadequately enforced (California Environmental Protection Agency, 2015).

and

In their review, Gottesfeld & Pokhrel (2011) summarized 11 studies in seven countries on lead exposure of children residing near lead battery manufacturing and recycling facilities and reported an average blood lead concentration of 29 µg/dL, with values up to 71 µg/dL. Recently a large recycling plant in the USA was closed down after it failed to meet emission controls and waste management standards. This plant was found to have contaminated the surrounding area with lead to a distance of 1.7 miles (California Environmental Protection Agency, 2015).

Perry Gottesfeld (quoted above) is a member of The LEAD Group's Technical Advisory Board, and runs BEST - Better Environmental Sustainability Targets (BEST) Certification for Lead Battery Manufacturers, c/o Occupational Knowledge (OK) International so if anyone could comment on Vertical Smelt Furnace technology, it should be him. Please write to him or phone him - he's in San Francisco.

Also please find attached, The LEAD Group's objections to a proposed ULAB facility in Western Sydney – <Planning NSW LEAD Group objection to Ingleburn Battery Recycling Facility 20160916.docx> online at

[http://www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/?action=view\\_submission&job\\_id=7195&submission\\_id=163029](http://www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/?action=view_submission&job_id=7195&submission_id=163029) (The LEAD Group also was successful in encouraging Enirgi to object to this proposal (see the attached: <Enirgi Group Objections to Ingleburn Battery Recycling Proposal due 20160916.docx> so, in a similar way, you might want to ask the Simstar Alloys ULAB recycling plant at Laverton North – to make a submission objecting to Ascend's proposal. Contact details:

Simstar Alloys Pty Ltd, Australia, acquired by Hydromet Corporation Pty Ltd 4/3/2014, PREVIOUSLY Australian Refined Alloys Pty Ltd (ARA) owned by Simsmetal & Nyrstar



(previously called Zinifex, & Pasminco)] on vic.office@hydromet.com.au or phone 0393153886.

I could go on, but I'd better get this to you so you have time to act on it before your meeting tomorrow night!

Kind regards

Elizabeth

EMAIL FIVE

**From:** The LEAD Group Inc  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 10, 2019 2:04 PM  
**To:** Ian  
**Subject:** Fw: Hazelwood North Action Group & The LEAD Group Inc charity should join forces!!

Hi Ian,

this is email 3 of 4 sent to Hazelwood North Action Group.

Cheers

Elizabeth

**From:** The LEAD Group Inc  
**Sent:** Monday, October 21, 2019 4:07 PM  
**To:** Hazelwood North Action Group  
**Subject:** Re: Hazelwood North Action Group & The LEAD Group Inc charity should join forces!!

Hi,

further to my most recent email, I asked NSW Planning if they had approved the Ingleburn Battery Recycling Facility in Sydney's western suburbs and the answer came back as Yes (in January 2018), but construction has either not begun or at least, they have not sought pre-operational approval yet. Nevertheless, the attached approval documents may well be of interest to you (as these ones are searchable whereas the online versions are just images) noting the small number of jobs created and the large number of heavy vehicle truck movements per day (18):

NSW Planning Ingleburn Lead Acid Battery Recycling Facility Assessment Report 201801.pdf  
NSW Planning Ingleburn Lead Acid Battery Recycling Facility Approved Consent 201801.pdf

Cheers, Elizabeth

EMAIL SIX

**From:** The LEAD Group Inc  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 12, 2020 12:19 PM  
**To:** Ian; Perry Gottesfeld  
**Cc:** Hazelwood North Action Group





**Subject:** Re: WAA open for objections. Chunxing smelter. - Hazelwood North

Hi Ian and Perry,

I've just read through the Ascend Chunxing ULAB recycling facility at Hazelwood Works Approval Application (December 2019).

My strong recommendation is that Ian or other members of the Hazelwood North Action Group should firstly confirm with Dr Perry Gottesfeld, The LEAD Group's Technical Advisory Board member who is an internationally-recognised expert on ULAB recycling facilities, whether Perry would be willing to be paid by the Victorian Environment Protection Authority (Vic EPA) to review the Chunxing Hazelwood Works Approval Application, along with Victorian standards for heavy metal and other toxics limits in all the "re-useable waste" products from the proposed plant and data on the levels of contaminants found in these products at the existing Chunxing ULAB recycling facility in China, and the Chinese standards for same. If Perry is willing to be paid to review the Application, then I recommend Hazelwood North Action Group requests that Vic EPA pay for this expert review.

The resulting review would also constitute The LEAD Group's submission on the Chunxing Application.

Yours Sincerely

Elizabeth O'Brien