

**Queensland Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young: In response to Mark Taylor research linking lead exposure and criminality.  
16<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

The National Health and Medical Research Council has identified that at blood lead levels below 10 micrograms per decilitre ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ), there is insufficient evidence about links between lead exposure and behavioural issues.

Many other contributing factors would influence criminal behaviour, such as socioeconomic status, education, parenting style and diet.

Conclusions cannot be drawn from studies reporting statistical associations between exposure to chemicals and broad social outcomes without a credible critical mass of scientific studies to support the claim and rule out other explanations.

The management of the health impacts of environmental lead in Mount Isa has been a priority for the state government.

Blood lead levels greater than 10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  can have harmful effects on many organs and bodily functions.

At blood lead levels between 10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  and 60  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ , effects such as increased blood pressure, abnormally low haemoglobin, abnormal kidney function, long-term kidney damage and abnormal brain functions have been observed.

A wide range of initiatives have been developed to promote living safely in a lead environment such as Mount Isa. These include greening Mount Isa, undertaking promotional activities at local primary and childcare centres/kindergarten and development of guidance material.

Information regarding the impact to health from exposure to lead, how exposure occurs, precautionary actions and personal exposure surveillance options are readily available and activity promoted in the Mount Isa community.

The Living With Lead Alliance was established in 2008 to undertake initiatives and information programs relating to lead and lead exposure within the Mount Isa community.

The Mount Isa Lead Health Management Committee – chaired by myself as Chief Health Officer – was established in 2012 to provide additional guidance, oversight and strategic direction to the management of lead health risks in Mount Isa.

A free voluntary blood lead level testing program has been in place in Mount Isa through QML laboratories since 2010. A blood lead level testing program for children under five also runs at Mount Isa Hospital.

The results of the various testing programs in 2015 indicate a steady reduction in average blood lead levels recorded in tested children under five since extensive community surveys undertaken in 2006–2007 and again in 2010.

These results indicate the intervention and information strategies we have put in place over the years are having some effect and we will continue building on these.

Furthermore, there have been no recorded cases of acute lead toxicity in children for more than 20 years.

In addition, from 1 January, Queensland's mandatory blood lead notification level has been reduced from 10 µg/dL to 5 µg/dL.

This reduction was recommended last year by the National Health and Medical Research Council and accepted by the Queensland Government.

**ENDS**