

**Submission  
No 145**

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF  
GOLD, SILVER, LEAD AND ZINC MINING ON HUMAN  
HEALTH, LAND, AIR AND WATER QUALITY IN NEW  
SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Mr Tim Slade  
**Date Received:** 5 September 2023

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5 September, 2023.

I wish to present to the Committee for this Inquiry, my decade-long experience, 2012 – 2023, with heavy-metal exposure and risk in the drinking water at Pioneer in Tasmania, where I am a resident, advocate and freelance writer of twenty-eight articles about this issue.

A parliamentary inquiry in 2021 made a finding in favour of Pioneer, and against TasWater. My 5000 word critique of this parliamentary inquiry, *The Condemned Well*, can be read at the following link: [The Condemned Well – a Parliamentary Inquiry into TasWater - Tasmanian Times](#)

My folio of twenty-eight articles about Pioneer's decade-long crisis with heavy metals in our drinking water, 2012 – 2023, can be read at the following link: [Tim Slade - Tasmanian Times](#)

TOR 1:

Lead (Pb) is a slow-acting toxin, affecting children especially, damaging the brain's development, and only detectable during a brief window of time by blood test, one or two months following a major exposure. When this window of time closes, the elevated lead (Pb) is no longer traceable in the blood stream, as it then resides in the body's organs, permanently affecting the child's life function, physically and cognitively.

TOR 2:

At Pioneer a study by MacQuarie University in 2015 determined that the original source of lead (Pb) into the town's reticulated supply of drinking water was lead (Pb) seams in the major pipes bringing water to the town (historically for tin mining) from the Frome Dam and other tributaries. Over decades this lead (Pb) accumulated in the soil of Pioneer's dam, causing elevated levels of lead (Pb), and ultimately, the calling of a Do Not Consume Alert at Pioneer in 2012 (November).

TasWater's proposed solution to customers at Pioneer, was to install individual rainwater tanks. TasWater failed to test every roof, testing only four of approximately thirty-two. TasWater

installed rainwater tanks in any case. Years later, with the assistance of the Tasmanian Ombudsman, it was determined that two of the four roofs tested were high in lead (Pb), with TasWater in full knowledge. A Tasmanian barrister, president of the Law Society of Tasmania, recommended that TasWater had a duty of care to test each and every roof, given that a roof is an essential component of a homes' rainwater catchment set-up. TasWater failed it's duty of care. In 2019 the first ever whole town testing of roofs and tanks determined that twelve homes, one-third of the town, had heavy-metal contaminated set-ups, all of which were directly installed by TasWater.

TOR 4:

Be aware that regulatory authorities, including government, often do not act in a satisfactory, nor timely, manner, even when National Guidelines are in place. For example, in 2018 the Tasmanian Director of Public Health, Dr Veitch, confirmed in a letter to the CEO of TasWater, Mr Brewster, that TasWater had failed, specifically in relation to lead-painted roofs, to apply the National Guideline for the Installation of Rainwater Tanks. Dr Veitch cited three major breaches by TasWater in relation to lead-painted roofs at Pioneer.

Self-regulation by companies does not work and puts people and communities at risk.

After one decade at Pioneer, where TasWater, following the original source of lead (Pb) in the reticulated supply, introduced a new, second source of lead-contamination, via lead-painted roofs for the collection of rainwater.

Even after the 2021 parliamentary inquiry, finding in favour of Pioneer, there were no sanctions, dismissals, nor fines imposed upon TasWater, nor upon any publically elected official, nor the DHHS, nor the owners of TasWater, the 29 local councils as represented by the Owners' Representatives Group (ORG).

TasWater breached its duty of care, and it misled its regulators over the timeline of a decade.

This highlights the inevitable inadequacy of government regulation, thus the need for a PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH at all times. Such an approach must be applied by the Committee in this phase of application by this mining company.

TOR 5:

It has been brought to my attention that a historical study revealed that metal concentrations were up to 400 times the National Guidelines in Tonnali River, a tributary of Burragorang / Warragamba Dam.

TOR 7:

I refer the Committee to the ABC's 7:30 Report, Sarah Ferguson, aired on 8 August, 2023.

[7.30: ABC iview - Start watching with a free ABC Account](#)

[Regional New South Wales residents questioning the health impacts of a nearby gold mine - ABC News](#)

TOR 8:

Personal impact upon a community is incalculable. There is the real and potential exposure to heavy metals by children, women and men. There is also the profound stress to people, potentially over a long timeframe. For example at Pioneer, Tasmania, over one decade and six months. There is also the inevitable breakdown of community, and a breach of trust between government and citizens. This is worsened when the community is of a low socio-economic status, where education and literacy levels are low, and where representation by publically elected officials is absent or insincere.

Thank you to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Slade (B.Ed.)