

DRAFT:

There are a number of aspects of the mining industry which concern the Commissioner for Public Health.

(A) General - Silicosis and Asbestosis:

He is concerned with the occurrence of silicosis and of silico tuberculosis in gold miners, of asbestosis and silicosis in employees of the Australian Blue Asbestos Mine at Wittenoom. At present, through his medical staff, a check on the health of these mine employees is regularly made. However, he feels that his Department could be more actively concerned in the prevention of this disease. For example, he would like to see established a more efficient method of dust counting at Wittenoom. The Konimeter method of counting, used for silica dust, is not the most suitable for the count of asbestos fibres.

He is concerned with problems in other mining fields.

Lead:

In the years 1949-1958, there were more cases of lead poisoning in the mining industry in Western Australia than all other industries. Not less than 30 cases are recorded; many are probably not recorded. This high incidence has occurred despite the relatively few men engaged in the industry which is indeed only of an intermittent nature.

Manganese:

He is concerned with manganese mining. Manganese poisoning may result in a grossly disabling, crippling disease with severe mental changes. This condition has occurred mostly in manganese miners, drilling underground in dry, poorly ventilated conditions. He considers that the manganese mining industry in Western Australia should be assessed by his Department, with a view to the prevention of poisoning rather than to await a first case.

(B) The Mines Regulation Act:

He considers that his Department is best equipped to advise and implement Section 61 (V) of the Mines Regulation Act No. 54 of 1946.

The assessment of the danger of noxious fumes (Regulation 158) should be that of this Department.

The only specific mention of the Commissioner of Public Health is in Regulation 137. This stipulates that he shall be a member of the Mines Ventilation Board in an