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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **National health authority sets stricter standards for lead**

Higher standards for the level of lead in blood have today been recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), according to North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) Coordinator Wendy Tubman.

'Until now the NHMRC recommended investigation into lead sources if blood tests showed 10 micrograms per decilitre of blood. But this has been lowered to just 5 micrograms per decilitre' Ms Tubman said.

A statement distributed by the NHMRC reinforced the need for policies which minimise communities' exposure to lead, including by minimising the amount of lead that is introduced into our living environments.

'NQCC does not support widespread blood testing in Townsville, but the new standard underscores the fact that community tolerance of lead in the environment is decreasing. Indeed, Queensland Health accepts the World Health Organisation view that there is no 'safe' level of lead.

'NQCC acknowledges improvements that Glencore has introduced with its new lead-loading berth at the Townsville Port. But we are concerned that there is no dust deposition standard for Townsville. The standard set for Mt Isa is not seen as relevant for Townsville' Ms Tubman said.

'It is unclear why any dust standard for Townsville would not be the same as that for Mt Isa; after all the standard is there for reasons of environmental and human health.

'NQCC will be calling on the Minister for Science and Innovation to set a standard for Townsville' Ms Tubman said.

Ms Tubman expressed disappointment with the slow start to the Port Strategic Working Group, which was set up in response to the findings of research commissioned by NQCC.

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