



The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Member for Wentworth
6th November 2015

Dear Prime Minister,

Our organisation extends heartfelt congratulations on your tremendous achievement of becoming Australia's twenty-ninth Prime Minister. We know your longstanding interest in innovation, corporate social responsibility and the environment and are excited this vision is being brought to the Prime Minister's office.

Response-driven innovation is an exciting promise for Australia's direction as a Smart Country in the twenty first century, and beyond (<http://www.skynews.com.au/business/tech/2015/09/18/call-for-turnbull-to-embrace-smart-country.html>). Australia is on the precipice of great change, and the environment sphere has an important part of to play as Australia transitions to a flexible, services-based economy.

I am writing in my capacity as President of the **Lead Education and Abatement Design (LEAD) Group Inc.** We are a small Lead Decontamination organisation based in Sydney. In 2007, as Minister for the Environment, you generously provided us with funding to combat "chemicals of concern" (<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/67588/20071024-0001/www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/2007/pubs/mr08may1207.pdf> (archived)). This grant was revoked by the Abbott Government. The purpose of this letter is to demonstrate our work **adds real value** to business, academia and the community.

The proposal outlined in this letter represents a scaling up of our current services. We hope you will find it of interest. We understand there are many issues requiring your office's attention, but hope to demonstrate our organisation can provide taxpayers and businesses with a valuable, cost-effective service. This letter covers the following areas:

Current Capacity Constraints

Lead Testing Kits – an internationally recognised product

Community Engagement and the prevention approach

Innovation and new markets

Testimonials

Proposed Goals, Budget and Accountability

Capacity Constraints

The funding we received from 2007- 2013 allowed us to widen our scope and reach out to business.. The data received from the testing encouraged better business practices, and preventative management of lead risk in the environment. In

Appendix 1, you can see during the grant period, engagement with business was consistently high. During this period we were able to develop relationships with major companies, including Xstrata and Orica.

Unfortunately, your successor as Federal Environment Minister, Mark Butler, discontinued funding in 2013/14. Whilst we continue to run a skeleton team of volunteers, our capacity is much constrained. A direct result of the lack of funding is that our advocacy work is reduced, our public profile is diminished and we cannot reach as many business stakeholders, in Australia or in the region, as we would like.

A win-win for Sustainable Business

This is key to proactive, preventative work with business on minimising the risks of lead in the environment. The recent outbreak at Broken Hill shows that this remains a live issue in Australia. We do not want to wait until companies, or the taxpayer, are forced to foot the bill to clean up contaminated land. Or dangerous lead disturbed during renovation of old homes. Constructive engagement to develop an awareness of lead within corporate sustainability structures is, we feel, the way forward. We want to empower businesses to better manage lead risk. To do this, they must have accurate data.

Best Practice Testing

Lead testing lies at the core of our community organisation. The LEAD Group sells laboratory Analysis DIY-sampling Test Kits. These have been recognised by the United States, the United Nations EPA, Commonwealth Government departments and business associations as a model in chemical detection services. The kits have been used by National Association of Testing Authorities for accredited analysis, by State/Territory & Commonwealth Governments and by businesses as a model in chemical management advice services utilise National Association of Testing Authorities accredited analysis, and have been utilised by State/Territory & Commonwealth Government and by businesses as a model in chemical management advice services.

Our kits have been distributed to a wide variety of groups, from the resources sector to parents, concerned that their toddler may have ingested contaminated soil or paint residue. We hope to be able to increase the number of kits sold with adequate funding. There is substantial demand within the community (as demonstrated by the number of enquiries our office has received) – it is only our low public profile and small staff that limits kit sales.

We have received funding via an NRMA Community Grant (\$4,850) and a local council grant (\$500) from Marrickville LGA). These amounts cover basic costs but do not allow for expansion or full-time staff. We continue to seek private funding opportunities but these have been limited.

Public Health and Information Services

The LEAD Group maintains one of the world's largest online lead-related library databases. This is a major asset to academia and members of the public. Recent media coverage pertaining to lead exposure shows research findings reveal a correlation between lead poisoning and NAPLAN results in Australian schools,

(<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2015/s4325619.htm>). Lead poisoning is clearly still a ‘live’ issue. Mark Taylor, Professor of Environmental Science, Macquarie University, has recently noted lead contaminated soil may reduce a child’s NAPLAN score by as much as 20 points, or about 5%.

The LEAD Group is committed to providing not only an excellent information service, but also providing practical actions towards lowering risk factors for business and individuals. We are regularly the first point of contact for families concerned about lead in their homes or related to recalled products.

Innovation agenda

We understand how important it is for Australians to innovate in this Asian Century. We plan to explore strategic partnerships in India, Indonesia, New Zealand and China. .

Our charity is part of the environmental services sector. A friend ours, the late Dr John Rosen, did much to increase awareness among China’s political leadership of the need to have a public health response to lead contamination in China. (<http://en.people.cn/90782/8091013.html>)

In China, there is an opportunity for Australian organisations, like the LEAD Group, to partner with local organisations to get kits into the hands of those who need them, whether this be the Chinese Ministry of Health, Provincial Government officials, approved NGOs, major companies, the Ministry of Agriculture or concerned individuals.

This is a great opportunity to capitalise on ChaFTA and promote Australia’s brand as a clean, safe, trustworthy partner interested in the wellbeing of the Chinese people. Significant upfront costs would be involved, as (due to quarantine restrictions) in-country testing would be required.

Testimonials from Key Stakeholders

At a local level, The LEAD Group maintains strong relations with the community and business. Our organisation has gained a reputation for sound responsible action, validating the need for The LEAD Group to continue its work towards a lead-free environment, at home and globally. Our LEADLINE phone and email service is a key point of contact for concerned residents seeking advice and referrals about lead in their homes.

Here is how the community feels about The LEAD Group:

"We had a lead pollution incident on our property in Elizabeth Bay as a result of a substandard paint removal on the neighbouring building. Having no experience in these matters an immediate problem we faced when researching what to do was, in fact, a barrage of too much information. In the internet age, the volume of often conflicting information is bewildering. Fortunately we found the lead.org.au site which was able to provide us with relevant, local advice and the team was invaluable in providing safety instructions and helped to formulate a plan to contain and mitigate the problem. This was a valuable lesson for ourselves, our neighbours and the painting contractors. Given the wide spread use of lead based paint in Australia and especially in our high density neighbourhood these matters are clearly

issues of public health and as such need to be taken seriously. I strongly feel government funding for the LEAD Group is money extremely well spent when viewing these matters from a long term, public health perspective.” –

Prof. Richard Walton, **Elizabeth Bay**

“I run a painting business in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney. Local residents who renovate houses built prior to 1970 are concerned about disturbing old lead based paint. From Bondi to Watson’s Bay, lead exposure is a problem which is entirely preventable with education. These residents deserve a lead-safe environment, and as their local member I know you are concerned for their welfare. The LEAD Group have an important role to play in raising community awareness, letting people know the facts and making space for sustainable businesses.”

Rohan Calvert, **Randwick**

Purpose of additional funding

Additional funding will allow us to assist with training and roll-out of our best-practice testing kits. This would make possible the important business-reach scale-up beyond Australia, with New Zealand and China being the key markets.

Proposed goals

- Raise awareness of contamination in soils, paint, ceiling dust, and demonstrate the importance of managing the hazards to reduce the amount of lead in the environment and community
- Showcase practical techniques and best practice in notification of, identification and management of lead hazards
- Make lead-testing kits available for sale locally and globally
- Increase kit sales by 25 percent annually over the next three financial years
- Strike a Memorandum of Understanding with a China-based strategic partner by June 2017
- Increase knowledge of local councils, hardware stores and paint supplies so that they can in turn educate consumers and provide printed or on-line supporting materials
- Provide training for members/volunteers of The LEAD Group Inc.
- Maintain The LEAD Group’s website with regular updates

Proposed budget

We request a grant, of **up to \$250,000 for FY 2016**, from the Department of the Environment, to form the basis of an ongoing relationship where we would employ 5 staff (instead of 8 Work-for-the-Dole volunteers) to progress agreed lead safety goals in Australia and beyond.

Accountability

We are aware of the importance of regular reporting, agreed timeframes and compliance. We currently report to the Australian Federal ACNC, the Department of the Environment’s Register of Environmental Organisations (REO), and

the NSW Department of Fair Trading (DOFT). We hope for 3-5 year recurrent funding to pursue some of the longer term goals we have outlined. Lead is an ongoing, real and present danger to Australia and the region. Medium term goals are therefore optimal.

Conclusion

We are a small organisation ready to work proactively with neighbouring countries and with business to secure sustainable outcomes. We have a great product, but have found private wages funding impossible to source. With your help, we can scale up our operations, ease the concerns of residents living on lead-contaminated sites and reduce the risk to taxpayers, by empowering business with better data.

We hope we will be able to secure a small grant and one day we can congratulate you as being the Prime Minister who helped create a lead-safe Australia.

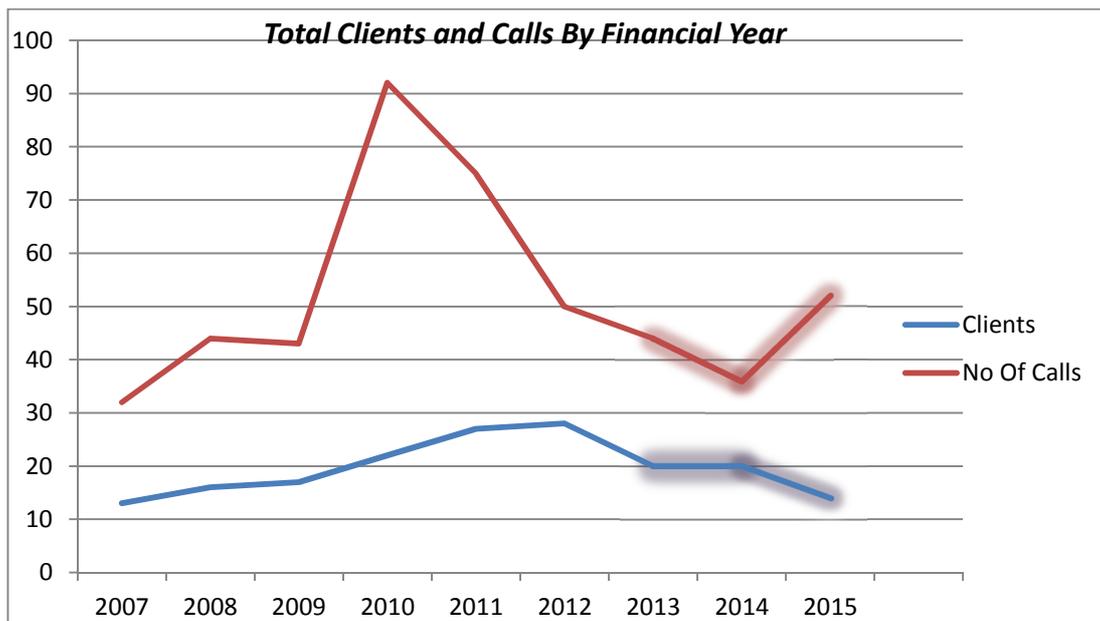
Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth O'Brien'.

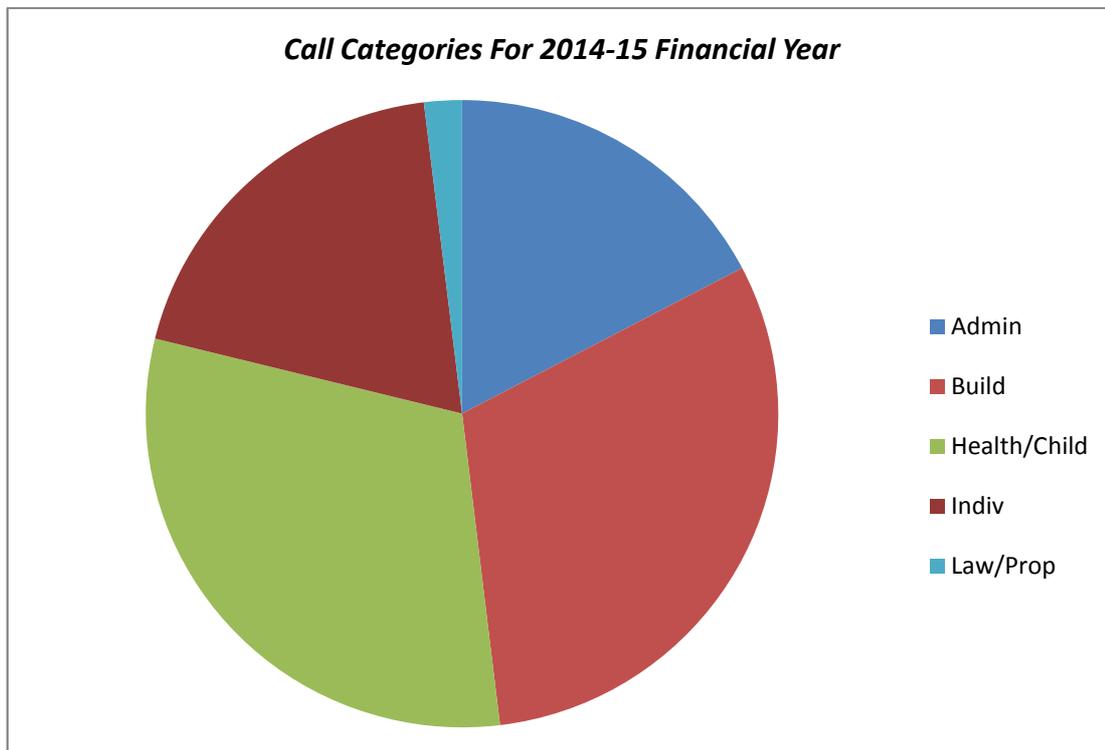
Elizabeth O'Brien
Co-Founder & President, The LEAD Group Inc.

Professor Mark Taylor
LEAD Group Committee & Macquarie University

Appendix 1



Please note: FY 2007-2013 represents the period of our Federal Government grant. During that period we were able to advocate and received more calls. The recent increase in calls indicates renewed public and media interest in lead safety. With more resources, we can engage more clients.



As you can see from Figure 2, in Financial Year 2014-15, our four major service users have been building and property related, legal, health-related and individuals. Making sure kits are in the hands of concerned individuals and organisations continues to be a key objective of the LEAD Group.