

# GOVT HAS UNHEALTHY ATTITUDE

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COMMENT

There is no clearer example that WA's health system is veering off a cliff than Roger Cook prematurely declaring lead issues at Perth Children's Hospital were "well and truly in the rear-view mirror".

He made the comment on Friday after The West Australian revealed 11 samples of PCH's drinking water taken between January 2023 and March 2024 had exceeded the lead safety benchmark under the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

But on the same day the Premier made his "mission accomplished" remark, PCH's management became aware of five new exceedances of the toxic metal.

The blunder was just the tip of the iceberg in a saga plagued by a titanic lack of transparency.

WA's Chief Health Officer, Andrew Robertson, has maintained that elevated lead levels over the past three years posed "no risk" to patients or staff, yet scarce detail has been provided as to how these conclusions have been reached.

The threshold of 0.005 milligrams of lead per litre has been set with PCH's core patient demographic — infants and children — in mind.

"A drinking water guideline for lead of 0.005 mg/L was set with the general aim of reducing or minimising lead exposure to a blood-lead level target of less than five micrograms per decilitre," a spokeswoman for the National Health and Medical Research Council said.

Lead in PCH's water is not the only issue crippling WA's health system. Ambulance ramping is at unprecedented levels and Sir Charles Gairdner is falling apart.

For a State that enjoyed \$9.9 billion of iron-ore royalties last year this situation is simply not good enough. Maybe it's time to put the Burswood racetrack in the "rear-view mirror" and focus on fixing our broken hospitals?