

Transparency 'key to a successful clean-up'

September 17 2013

Keeping the public well informed can help dispel their fears and doubts about environmental clean-ups, an environmental researcher says.

This can lead to an effective clean-up of contaminated industrial sites, more of which are now being transformed into residential areas as the [world population](#) increases, Dr Kate Hughes a postgraduate researcher at the University of Technology Sydney will tell the CleanUp 2013 conference in Melbourne today.

"More abandoned industrial or commercial areas are being turned into new communities where people live, work and play," says Dr Hughes. "Before new buildings are developed, however, the polluted land has to be cleaned. This is called brownfields remediation and it can be done in a variety of ways.

"At CleanUp 2013 new and emerging soil clean-up technologies are being showcased and this gives me a lot of confidence about the future."

Dr Hughes explains that communities that live close to the clean-up area are often concerned about the noise, smell, dust and possible [air pollution](#) that result from the process. "They are afraid of being poisoned and do not always trust developers or remediators – companies that perform the clean-up.

"They also doubt the quality of the clean-up even after environmental auditors have inspected and approved the outcome."

Dr Hughes shows that keeping people well informed, addressing their concerns and recording a detailed history of the process can increase public confidence in the project. Her findings are based on the Rhodes Peninsula Remediation Legacy Project where two major sites in the City of Canada Bay in New South Wales were cleaned.

"Before the project started, the NSW Government required that an independent expert be appointed to clarify the plans in plain English and with straightforward explanations," Dr Hughes says. "The written explanations would include the history and current situation of the area as well as the process being used and expected outcomes of the clean-up.

"The remediators then held monthly meetings with the community for five years, where the public was able to raise questions and concerns. The minutes of the meeting, along with the written explanations, were posted on the remediators' dedicated website."

The remediators also worked to address concerns that were raised during the meetings, Dr Hughes says. "After getting requests from the community, they monitored the clean-up more closely and spent more money and effort to prevent contaminants from getting into the air.

"It wasn't all smooth-sailing, but once people had their questions and concerns addressed, and had detailed information about the clean-up, the majority seemed to be fine with it."

Following the clean-up, the local council agreed to set up a website detailing the entire process.

"By providing an 'information legacy' about the remediation and redevelopment of the Rhodes Peninsula, we hope that an understandable and accessible record will increase people's confidence in future clean-ups," Dr Hughes says. "People also have a right to know about the

industrial and clean-up history when they buy a property in the area.

"Brownfields remediation is an essential part of urban development and it benefits the environment, the economy and society. Communication is key to increasing people's trust and acceptance of the process."

Dr Hughes will deliver her presentation "History is the hand on our shoulder: the Rhodes Peninsula remediation legacy project" at 3.50pm, Tuesday 17 September.

More information: www.cleanupconference.com/

Provided by CRC for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment

Citation: Transparency 'key to a successful clean-up' (2013, September 17) retrieved 27 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-09-transparency-key-successful-clean-up.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.