

New guide shields Aussies from toxic groundwater, land

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A cleaner, healthier, safer and more prosperous Australia is the goal of a new national framework for remediating contaminated sites.

Developed by the Cooperative Research Centre for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment (CRC CARE), state and federal governments, environmental authorities and clean-up industries, the new framework complements the National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) that assesses site contamination, and will help identify the best ways to clean up the nation's polluted land.

It will encourage every state to meet minimum clean-up requirements, allowing all Australians access to clean groundwater and clean land, says Dr Bruce Kennedy, the Executive Policy Adviser at CRC CARE.

"Each state is responsible for its own regulation and remediation of contaminated sites, and these laws differ from state to state," says Dr Kennedy. "Some states have more detailed laws than others, and this means we lack uniform Australian requirements for remediation.

"If we want to clean up Australia more efficiently and effectively, we need a common approach to help fill in the gaps as well as share useful guidance with one another."

The new framework – expected to be completed in 2016 – will include guidelines on developing remediation plans, such as how to:

- choose the best clean-up methods, the most cost-effective technology and treat different contaminants
- protect clean-up workers
- address the concerns of surrounding neighbours during clean-up
- document the entire clean-up process for future reference and
- validate and monitor the site after remediation.

Apart from protecting the public from toxic groundwater and land, an effective clean-up will also boost the local economy, Dr Kennedy says: "Today, cities contain many contaminated sites. These used to be chemical factories, power stations or gas plants, fuel depots or industrial estates that once lay outside the main city area.

"As cities continue to grow, these lands are now needed for redevelopment – so the better we can clean up these sites, the higher their economic value and the greater the safety of their local communities."

He explains that the framework isn't mandatory, but will provide standard guidance on managing contaminated land.

Over the next two years, CRC CARE will release a series of documents related to clean-up, inviting the public to comment on these guidelines. Currently, two documents are available at the CRC CARE website bit.ly/1rVsUBy – the first focuses on worker health and safety considerations; the second on the principles of the new framework.

The public submission deadline for both documents is Friday 14 November 2014.

"Our following documents will focus on engaging the surrounding neighbourhoods before clean-ups as well as documenting the remediation. All our documents will be available on the CRC CARE

website," says Dr Kennedy.

"Apart from seeking feedback from the public, we're assuring people that the framework includes safe work practices on clean-up sites, and that any ongoing traffic, noise or dust from clean-ups will be managed."

"This framework will help us get on top of our nationwide contamination much more quickly, and make our cities safer and cleaner for their citizens," says Professor Ravi Naidu, Director of CRC CARE.

"Having standard guidelines will help reduce the burden of disease caused by pollution, and improve the economic value of urban land."

More information: For more information, see:
www.crccare.com/knowledge-shar ... emediation-framework

Provided by CRC Care

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