Schedule B (8)
Guideline on Community Consultation and Risk Communication

NEPC

National Environment Protection
(Assessment of Site Contamination)
Measure 1999

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The following guideline provides general guidance in relation to Community Consultation and Risk Communication in the assessment of site contamination.

This Guideline forms part of the National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure 1999 and should be read in conjunction with that document, which includes a Policy Framework and Assessment of Site Contamination flowchart.

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CONTENTS

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND RISK COMMUNICATION

Page

1. GLOSSARY 1

2. PURPOSE AND APPLICATION 2

3. GOALS OF THE CONSULTATION PLAN 2

3.1 Benefits of Consultation 3
3.2 When to Consult 4

4. PERCEPTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES 4

4.1 Risk Perception 4
4.2 Stakeholder Perspectives 5
4.3 Industry 6
4.4 Non-Government Organisations 7
4.5 Common Questions 7
4.6 Risk Management Concerns 8

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES 8

5.1 Consultation Plan 11
5.2 Planning and Formulating a Plan 11

6. CONSULTATION TECHNIQUES 13

6.1 Risk Communication 13

7. CASE STUDIES 21

7.1 Case Study 1: Radioactive Site in Metropolitan Area 21
7.2 Case Study 2: Ardeer, Victoria 22

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY 23

1. GLOSSARY

Consultant means professional or expert employed to develop and implement the Community Consultation and Communication Plan.

Community means those individuals and/or groups residing in the locality where a site assessment is to be conducted and who may be affected by the assessment and/or possible site contamination physically (for example, through risks to health or the environment, loss of amenity) or non-physically (for example, via concern about possible contamination).

Contamination means the condition of land or water where any chemical substance or waste has been added at above background level or bioavailability of a chemical substance has increased and represents, or potentially represents, an adverse health or environmental impact. This does not apply where materials are added in accordance with relevant government approvals or endorsements such as to improve its suitability for agriculture.

Hazard is the intrinsic capacity of a chemical, biological, physical or social agent to produce a particular type of adverse health or ecological effect, eg one hazard affecting human health associated with benzene is leukemia, one hazard associated with DDT is the thinning of egg shells of some predatory birds.

Remediation means the clean-up or mitigation of pollution or of contamination of soil or water by various methods.

Risk means the probability in a certain timeframe that an adverse outcome will occur in a person, a group, or an ecological system that is exposed to a particular dose or concentration of a hazardous agent, ie. it depends on both the level of toxicity of hazardous agent and the level of exposure.

Risk Communication means the two way process involving interchange between project managers and the potentially affected community to decide how a potential health or environmental hazard should be addressed.

Risk Management means the decision-making process involving considerations of political, social, economic, environmental and engineering factors associated with site contamination together with risk-related information to identify, develop, analyse and compare the range of options for site management and select the appropriate response to a potential health or environmental hazard.

Site means the parcel of land being assessed for contamination.

Stakeholder means one who has an interest in a project or who may be affected by it.

Wider Community means individuals and/or groups, not necessarily residing in the locality of a site assessment, who may have an interest in the assessment.

2. PURPOSE AND APPLICATION

This Guideline provides a systematic approach to effective community consultation and risk communication in relation to the assessment of site contamination. It is not intended to be prescriptive but is intended to be used as a tool for effective consultation by consultants and regulators and should also provide a useful reference for all stakeholders including industry, government, landholders and the wider community. It should be noted that, in addition to this Guideline, each State or Territory has its own regulatory requirements regarding notification of pollution to the appropriate regulatory agency.

There are three principles to the approach taken in the preparation of this Guideline:

1. That no assessment of site contamination should commence until an evaluation has been made regarding the probable need, nature and extent of consultation for the project.
2. That interaction with the community cannot simply be a technical process, it requires skills in listening and communicating and should be a two-way process.
3. That for sites with contentious issues, consultation with the community is considered to be essential. This is particularly the case when the contamination at the site has the potential (or the **perceived** potential) to have an impact on any stakeholder.

As an indication, consultation with the community would be required in the following situations:

- **Amenity/Nuisance:** when the assessment or remediation of the site may affect the amenity of the locality, by way of temporary noise and odour emissions and dust.
- **Significant Contamination:** where high level of contamination has the potential to impact on the adjacent community, or where the contaminant types are controversial.
- **Controversial Sites:** where the site or locality has a controversial history that may be related to the site contamination, or the development of the site is controversial for political, economic or social reasons.

3. GOALS OF THE CONSULTATION PLAN

A consultation and communication plan is obviously an integral part of the wider goal of successful assessment and management of the site contamination. Consultation and communication goals should be quite specific, must be well understood by the consultant and should be communicated to the wider community at the beginning of and during any consultation plan.

The four major goals are:

1. Information Goals

To inform the wider community about what information regarding the site is available, what the organisation has done, is doing and plans to do about the problem, and what it cannot do and why.

2. Organisation Goals

To build and maintain the credibility of the organisation in the minds of the wider community.

3. Legal Goals

To meet the requirements of an agency or regulation in respect of notices and consultation.

4. Process Goals

To provide maximum opportunity for community input including, where appropriate, a chance to help make and carry out key decisions.

It should be recognised that successful consultation and communication does not necessarily mean that the wider community will always be satisfied with the decisions. Rather, it means that they will have greater trust in the organisation's commitment to protect the environment and public health and a greater acceptance of limitations which may prevent organisations and agencies from addressing all the concerns.

3.1 BENEFITS OF CONSULTATION

Consultation and risk communication can benefit the assessment and management of site contamination by helping managers to:

- understand public perceptions and anticipate more easily community response to actions and decisions;
- increase the effectiveness of risk management decisions and empower the community by involving them;
- improve communication and reduce unwarranted tension between the wider community and government agencies;
- explain risk more effectively; and
- inform the wider community of the risks in constructive ways.

Simply distributing information without regard for the complexities and uncertainties of the issues does not ensure effective risk consultation and

communication. A well planned consultation plan will help ensure that messages and actions are constructively formulated, communicated and received.

Two-way community consultation, that provides for community based, site related information and community participation in the decision making process, can provide significant cost savings and improved credibility for organisations involved in site assessment. The community also benefits by contributing to improved risk assessment inputs, increased ownership of negotiated decision processes and more acceptable site management options.

3.2 WHEN TO CONSULT

Consultation should start as early as possible and continue throughout the site assessment. The community should be informed of possible risks as soon as an issue is identified that may pose a risk to health or the environment or raise public concern. This can mean starting the consultation process before all the information is known and before all options for managing the risk have been identified and considered.

The early initiation of the consultation process is often difficult for those responsible for the site as they may be unused and unwilling to publicise possible risks associated with the site until they are sure what those risks may be and how they will be managed. However, by consulting early, the community is allowed to actively participate in the decision-making process and members will feel that they have some control over and involvement in the risk assessment and management process. When the community participates in a risk management decision it is more likely to accept it.

For more complex or contentious sites a better outcome is often achieved if the consultation and communication role is undertaken by a third party such as a consultant or professional facilitator. This can help to ensure a more open exchange of information and reduce tension if the community is already mistrustful of those responsible for the site assessment.

4. PERCEPTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

4.1 RISK PERCEPTION

Risk is defined as the probability in a certain timeframe that an adverse effect will occur in a person, a group, or an ecological system that is exposed to a particular dose or concentration of a hazardous agent and it is usually measured in terms of consequences (or hazard/s) and likelihood. However, the matter of risk perception is not so readily defined. For the scientist or engineer, with 'the facts' at hand, it can be quite difficult to appreciate that a 'negligible risk' can give rise to anger and resentment during the consultation process. The key issue is for acceptance of the community perceptions of risk as valid in the context of the consultation process and therefore as valid as the numerical calculation which may show that the risk is

negligible. Thus it may be just as important to address the community perceptions of risk as it is to address problems represented by the numerical calculations. Community perceptions of the risk of a hazardous situation have been described by Dr Peter Sandman of Rutgers University using two factors, "hazard" and "outrage", characterised by the following equation:

Perception of Risk = Hazard + Outrage

Where: Hazard is the likelihood that a chemical release or situation presents a danger to the environment or to the community's health.

Outrage is a factor that includes the personal inequities, emotions or concerns that the hazard, situation or the responsible party may evoke. Outrage may also be determined by people's perceptions of the organisation and people who are working on solving the problem, ie trust and credibility issues can also drive outrage and perceptions of risks. Outrage may also determine what people see as important technical issues which the consultant or regulator may not have included eg noise problems, smell, appearances affecting property values etc. These may be seen by the community to be personal inequities.

Determining what is an acceptable risk is a social decision influenced by different competing factors such as:

- the magnitude of the risk and the uncertainties associated with this estimate;
- community perceptions of risk;
- the control, or lack of control of the management of the site felt by the wider community; and
- political and economic factors.

4.2 STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

The area of relevance to assessment of site contamination typically contains a variety of stakeholders, overlapping and interrelating in complex ways. To consult effectively, it is necessary to be aware of the various stakeholders who live or work in the area, or who might otherwise be affected by the site contamination. The various stakeholders include people of different interest groups such as industry, government, residents, non-government organisations, employees/unions and associations and the media.

Even within these groups there are people having different perspectives, expectations and goals and people of different race, ethnicity and socio-economic background. It is necessary to be aware of the various stakeholders and to ensure that they all have the opportunity to be involved. A general outline of the various stakeholders that may be involved in risk communication and consultation in relation to site contamination and assessment is discussed below.

4.3 INDUSTRY

Industry's aim is to improve community confidence in its operations. Some companies are successful in achieving this and are good environmental citizens, adopting an "open door" approach to the scrutiny of their operations, such as holding open days and inviting complainants to visit the site to attempt to pin point particular problems. Conversely, some companies may view the community as "the enemy" and will avoid interaction with the community at all costs, commonly holding the view that as their activities have not impacted on the community they have no need to consult.

It should also be noted that companies can be constrained by commercial confidentiality in terms of undertaking consultation and risk communication, or may not be able to fund or meet all the expectations of the community. In general, 'industry' is moving towards a more open stance in regard to communicating with the wider community and it is likely that this trend will continue.

4.3.1 Government Agencies and Departments

The actions of government agencies and departments are dictated by their statutory responsibilities with different agencies having different roles and functions. For example, some will have the role of overall managers of an assessment and remediation program, whilst others will have responsibility for a specific aspect of assessment such as public health or occupational health and safety. However, most are involved in balancing a range of expectations from the wider community.

4.3.2 Local Government

Conscious of the increasing environmental awareness of communities, local government has been instrumental in responding to the need for more community participation, greater accountability and better communication between all stakeholders.

Both local and state government organisations are coming under increased pressure from reduced budgets and may find it difficult to resource fully the range of expertise and involvement required to manage a wide range of site assessment responsibilities.

4.3.3 Residents

No residential community of any size is a homogeneous entity. It is not possible to generalise about the role or attitude of the residential community. For example, not all the residents will be involved, even though they may be concerned, or want to be involved in community consultation, others will have an intense interest and some residents who are not involved initially may change their minds later. Moreover, some act and think autonomously, whilst others represent the views of an organisation or group.

4.4 NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Non-Government Organisations include environment groups, specialist interest groups and committees and associations that comprise various representatives from industry, Council, non-government agencies and departments, and residents. To those managing the site contamination assessment, the 'activists' (who may either support or oppose the situation) within the non-government organisations are often seen as a threat because of the scientific skills couched within the agenda of a pseudo-political organisation. However, to local residents, the advice and assistance from such organisations can be instrumental in understanding the issues and learning how to frame their concerns.

4.4.1 Employees/Unions/Associations

Employees, unions and associations are generally concerned that, in undertaking a site assessment or site remediation, adequate health protection measures are in place. Accordingly, health risks associated with site contamination should be communicated to employees and all other persons working on the site. Briefing on risk management and safety precautions is essential and should form part of the consultation plan.

4.4.2 Media

Media coverage can focus either on the negative or positive aspects of the issues involved, which can then determine whether the community feels threatened and defensive or confident and co-operative. Accordingly, it is important to ensure that the material available to the media is framed in a rational, consistent and non-inflammatory manner. A good working relationship with media personnel can provide the opportunity for information dissemination outlets to the community. For consultants who deal with the media, it is sensible to nominate one person within the organisation to liaise with the media and provide the main point of contact (this helps to avoid conflicting or confused messages being disseminated).

4.5 COMMON QUESTIONS

In developing the consultation plan, it is worthwhile to consider the types of questions that may arise during a consultation process. It should be noted that these are generalisations and these questions are NOT provided as a substitute for identifying the community concerns.

4.5.1 Health and Lifestyle Concerns

- What is the danger to my health and that of my family?
- Can I drink the water, eat vegetables in my garden etc.?
- What can I do to find out if my health has already been affected?
- What can I do to reduce the damage already done?
- What can I do to prevent further damage?

- What about my children?
- We are already at risk because of X. Will Y increase our risk?
- How will this affect our quality of life / property values, the stigma of X attached to our community, trucks on our roads etc.?
- How will we be protected in an accident?
- How will we be compensated for the loss of value in our homes?

4.5.2 Data and Information Concerns

- How sure are you?
- What is the worst case scenario?
- What do these numbers mean and how did you get them?
- How do we know your studies are correct?
- What about other opinions on this issue?
- How do our exposures compare to the standards?
- You say X can't happen, why not?

4.5.3 Process Concerns

- How will we be involved in the decision making?
- How will you communicate with us?
- Why should we trust you?
- How and when can we reach you?
- Who else are you talking to?
- When will we hear from you?

4.6 Risk Management Concerns

- When will the problem be corrected?
- Why did you let this happen and what are you going to do about it?
- What are the other opinions? Why do you favour option X?
- Why are you moving so slowly to correct the problem?
- What other agencies are involved and in what roles?
- What kind of oversight will we have?

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To provide a framework for consultation and risk communication the following Guiding Principles have been developed. The use of these principles should provide for beneficial and worthwhile outcomes for consultants involved in the assessment or management of site contamination.

The Guiding Principles are an expansion of the 'Seven Cardinal Rules of Risk Communication' by Covello & Allen, 1988. They are designed as action items or tools for implementing the two-way consultation and risk communication plan. Applying these rules means giving community concerns as much weight as meeting regulations and project plan commitments. In these situations, the government and other organisations with responsibility for assessment and management of site contamination have as much to learn from the community as the community has to learn from these organisations. The Guiding Principles are:

1. Accept and involve the community as a legitimate partner

- The goal is to produce an informed community, not to diffuse community concerns or replace actions.
- Involve the community early to give them more control, which may thereby reduce some perceptions of risks.
- Involve all parties that have an interest in the issue.
- Accept that the community may have important technical points to contribute as well as non-technical points that deserve serious consideration.
- Invite the community to become involved in the design and evaluation of the public consultation process.

2. Plan carefully

- Different goals, audiences and media require different actions.
- Begin with clear, explicit objectives or goals that take into account addressing the needs of the community.
- Identify all stakeholders and address the particular interests of different groups.
- Practice and test your message.

3. Allow sufficient time for the consultation process

- Develop a timeline for the consultation process.
- Recognise realistic times for each part of the consultation process.
- Reflect, as much as possible, sensitivity to the resources available to individuals and groups concerned.
- Include allowances for new developments or changes - be flexible and responsive.

4. Listen to the community's specific concerns

- The community often cares more about trust, credibility, competence, fairness and empathy than about statistics and details.
- Do not make assumptions about what people know, think or want done; take time to find out what people are thinking.
- Let all parties with an interest in the issue be heard.
- Identify with your audience; put yourself in their place and recognise their emotions.

- Develop a consultation plan that has the involvement and support of the community.

5. Be honest, open and frank

- Trust and credibility are difficult to obtain; once lost they are almost impossible to regain.
- Disclose information; the earlier the better.
- Don't minimise or exaggerate the level of risk.

6. Collaborate and co-ordinate with other credible sources

- Conflicts and disagreements among organisations make communication with the community much more difficult.
- Take time to co-ordinate and collaborate with other organisations or groups who are knowledgeable or share responsibility on the issue.
- Try to issue communications jointly with other credible sources.

7. Meet the needs of the community

- Consider opportunities to assist the community in responding to your consultation process, for example, by providing assistance with travel to meetings, access to office facilities, free methods to respond to published material, (free phone numbers, return envelopes).
- Ensure that information is readable, credible and publicly accessible, and written in a style and format, (including site maps and diagrams) to encourage the community to comment about general and specific issues, especially where technical detail is involved.
- In regards to the media, they are usually more interested in politics than risk, simplicity than complexity, danger than safety.

8. Communicate clearly and with compassion, kindness and respect

- Acknowledge and respond (both in words and with actions) to emotions that people express such as anxiety, fear, anger, outrage and helplessness.
- Respectfully, restate a person's questions or statements in your own words to make sure you understand their question before answering.
- Use language that would be helpful and understandable to your audience.
- People can understand risk information, but they may still not agree with you; some people will not be satisfied.

9. Evaluate your performance

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the risk communication and consultation program during and at the end of each stage of the process.
- Record accurately and comprehensively the nature and detail of community contributions throughout the consultation program.

- Establish and provide feedback processes to contributors after the development of recommendations and monitor and review the effectiveness of the consultation.
- Learn from your mistakes.

5.1 CONSULTATION PLAN

The key to successful communication is an effective consultation and communication plan, which enables the consultant to:

- integrate the consultation and communication efforts with the risk assessment and management process;
- increase the effectiveness of the consultation and communication;
- allocate appropriate resources to consultation and communication efforts; and
- increase dialogue and mutual understanding, and reduce unwarranted tension with the wider community.

Experience suggests that the formulation of some of the best consultation and communication plans come from a team effort involving persons from differing perspectives. The following information is not exhaustive or sequential, but rather provides an indication of the type of research and preparation involved in planning and formulating a Consultation and Communication Plan.

5.2 PLANNING AND FORMULATING A PLAN

1. Research the Demographic Profile

- Identify the need for language other than English in the community.
- Obtain information on the socioeconomic profile of the community.

2. Research Past Media Reports

- Obtain information about issues, media interpretation of issues and key stakeholders.

3. Collect Data and Review

- Collate maps, diagrams and reports relevant to the project.
- Identify data which may be useful in providing information, explaining decisions etc.

4. Identify Issues and Concerns

Successful consultation and communication often hinges on knowing what the wider community's issues and concerns are. Effective two-way communication will be determined by whether you communicate about what is important to the wider community.

5. Identify the Various Stakeholders

- Identify those stakeholders who may be affected or want to have a say.

6. Establish the Project's Area of Impact

- Establish how far interest extends, and
- Determine the location of geographic boundaries and communities of interest.

7. Contact Key Community Leaders

- Include Council staff and local politicians to brief them about the impending project; and
- Obtain expert advice about the local community and any outstanding issues which may have an impact on the Plan.

8. Determine Requirements for Consultation and Stakeholder Involvement

- Determine what stage(s) of the project will require consultation;
- Establish statutory requirements in relation to consultation;
- Identify with the project team any potential impacts and events that may require communication and consultation with affected stakeholders; and
- Determine the role the community and its representatives will have in the process.

9. Determine Appropriate Notices

- Include media and public involvement techniques and existing communication avenues such as Council newsletters, local newspapers etc.

10. Incorporate an Evaluation Process

- Plan for evaluation and feedback from all parties on the effectiveness of the consultation and communication so that midcourse corrections can be made, if necessary.

11. Develop a Consultation and Communication Protocol

Include the following information within a public document (Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for the Assessment and Management of Contaminated Sites; ANZECC/NHMRC, 1992):

- a brief clear statement of the issues and background information;
- a clear statement of issues which are not negotiable within the consultation;
- a broad description of who is affected;
- a statement of what kind of information is being sought and how it will, or won't, be used.
- a time line for the consultation program which allows sufficient time for stakeholders to discuss and form opinions on the issues;
- a list of consultation techniques to be used;
- identity of author, accessible point of contact, phone number, e-mail address and web site link (if available); and

- a list of staff and funding resources available for consultation.

12. Document the Plan

- Ensure that the project team understands and is committed to the communication and consultation process and program, that their understanding of consultation is consistent with the Plan for stakeholder involvement and that the Plan is integrated into the overall project program. The Plan should include:
- goals and objectives (to help clarify how to get there);
- consultation and communication program (when the action should take place) providing for a realistic and flexible time frame; and
- action plan (techniques to be used) and timeframes.

6. CONSULTATION TECHNIQUES

An effective consultation plan includes all affected stakeholders and uses techniques that ensure that those who wish to participate in the consultation are able to do so. Achieving effective consultation and communication with stakeholders relies on selecting methods of communication that will reach the target groups.

Determining the extent of consultation depends upon the nature and impact of the contaminants, the proximity of the community and the particular stage of the assessment process. As a general guide, the more significant the impact of the contamination on the community, the greater the level of community participation expected. It is also important to recognise that there is no single stakeholder and that different techniques need to be used to reach different stakeholders. Moreover, consultation is most likely to be effective if it builds on or creates an ongoing relationship between various stakeholders.

The choice of techniques will depend on a number of factors including:

- the purpose of involving the wider community;
- the stage of the process;
- the nature of the wider community and their willingness to participate;
- the likely impact of the contaminants and the assessment process;
- timelines; and
- the skills and resources that are available.

A description of a range of consultation techniques and the advantages and disadvantages of each is provided in Table 6-A.

6.1 RISK COMMUNICATION

The United States Environment Protection Agency defines risk communication as a two way process used by project managers and the affected community to help decide how an environmental hazard should be addressed. Informing the wider

community about the results of the assessment of site contamination, hearing their reactions and concerns, acting on the concerns and involving them in the decision making process are risk communication activities.

When consulting with the wider community there is usually a diversity of concerns and opinions on risk issues. It is important that the different perceptions of risk are understood and accepted. By accepting the wider community's views and concerns, there is a recognition that their issues are being acknowledged and communication barriers can be broken down. This helps to establish a two way process and commences the important process of building mutual trust, credibility and respect. Conversely, not being able to accept the different perceptions is likely to create distrust and hinder communication and impede future actions.

For a professional facilitator and community consultation expert 'listening' is a well-developed skill. However, for many consultants who become involved in consultation, the failure to master this skill can undermine their entire involvement in the consultation. In this arena, 'listening' encompasses the ability to empathise with people's emotions and being able to accept and acknowledge people's feelings about the issue, regardless of how different they are. The phrase 'active listening' has been applied to the behaviour of listening carefully, demonstrating understanding and showing patience. Without a receptive attitude and good listening skills an attempt to communicate may be ineffective, misunderstood and perceived with suspicion and hostility. Ultimately, poor communication may result in significant or unexpected delays or modifications to the project in question.

Some risk communication DOs and DON'Ts are outlined in Table 6-B.

Table 6-A

Consultation Techniques: summary of advantages and disadvantages

Group Techniques – Summary of advantages and disadvantages

GROUP TECHNIQUE			
TECHNIQUE	**DESCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES**	**ADVANTAGES**	**DISADVANTAGES**
Public Meetings	Usually more than 20 people; self selection by advertised invitation; formalised proceedings aimed at presenting information to large audience; conducted at a time and location to suit most people; needs to be widely publicised.	Provides a forum for information dissemination and exchange with large numbers; may incorporate other techniques such as workshops; brings a wide range of people together.	Focused discussion on one issue is difficult; more articulate and better prepared members of the community may dominate; less vocal sections of the community may not express their views.
On Site Meetings	Open air community meetings held on site or adjacent to the affected site to provide information, gauge interest and explain process and procedures.	Enables interested individuals to gain an understanding of the issues involved. Useful for site contamination as 'standing' on the site can remove some aura of the unknown.	Accessibility to site not always possible (aged and disabled) or convenient. Obviously, all necessary safety precautions should be addressed.
Search Conference	Usually 20-30 participants selected to be heterogeneous but sharing an interest; staged discussion aimed at identifying broad cross section of views on a variety of issues; lasting day, weekend or longer.	Can assist in the early stages of consultation process to identify community characteristics and relevant issues; program devised with participants; future orientated; allows lengthy discussion to develop and refine ideas.	Large time commitment; may appear to be an elite group; participants may not have necessary information; may tend to result in 'wish list' of unrealistic future requirements.
Design Meeting	Community members meet to work on maps, scale representations and photographs to gain better idea of the effect on their community of proposals and options; expert presenters may be required.	Allows community members to better express their views and visualise the impact of changes; enables consultant to understand how a proposal appears to the community.	Numbers of participants limited; limited technique if complete socio-economic and environmental impact to be determined.

Group Techniques – Summary of advantages and disadvantages

TECHNIQUE	DESCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Workshops	Participants are usually homogeneous in terms of skills and concerns; structured sessions aimed at encouraging open discussion between participants, and producing proposals for solutions.	Provides for all stakeholders to contribute; a flexible technique which can be used at all stages of consultation process; can provide a forum for testing alternatives, training opportunities, information gathering and dissemination, receiving feedback and refining input.	If the participants are specifically selected then the nature of this technique can result in it appearing exclusive; the specific workshops may restrict discussion and debate.
Seminars	A meeting where a particular subject is explored in depth for some length of time under expert guidance.	Opportunity for learning and information sharing; detailed discussion and inquiry can take place; all participants can question or contribute.	The 'right' expert may not be available; participants may not be adequately prepared; experts may dominate and inhibit discussion.
Consultative Liaison Committee	Committees vary in size but rarely involve more than 15 members; members could be elected or appointed by initiating agency; may be set up to provide on-going advice and monitor stakeholder views or specialist issues; a specified 'life' is advised, the initiating agency is vital in continuing to support the Committee.	Provides on-going advice and communication on developing policies or proposals; provides an excellent liaison and public relations tool; stakeholders can contribute to and monitor planning process; concerned community members can identify and seek measures to resolve problems; community representatives can become familiar with the consultation and planning process; builds trust between the stakeholders.	Has little accountability to the community at large; meetings can be time consuming and dominated by members; knowledge and experience may be non-representative of the community unless great care is taken in selecting members.
Public Forum	A meeting where participants can express their views and share information following a speaker etc.; attended by individual representatives nominated by existing groups and associations; set up for exchange of views between the community and consultants.	Brings a range of people together; allows for people to respond to the proposals or options; helps develop opinions by testing ideas; can contribute to development of consensus before action taken.	Ability of facilitator is critical to success; controversy and debate may become entrenched and reduce opportunity for consensus; 'glossy' presentations can mislead an ill-informed audience.

Individual Techniques – Summary of advantages and disadvantages

INDIVIDUAL TECHNIQUE			
TECHNIQUE	**DESCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES**	**ADVANTAGES**	**DISADVANTAGES**
Individual Discussion	Selected individuals consulted by telephone, meetings and door knocking an area.	Provides a quick and efficient means of disseminating information and identifying a range of issues and views.	Provides limited opportunities for large numbers of community members to participate in the process; does not allow for broad-scale exchange of ideas.
Submission	Oral or written submissions to enable people to register their ideas and concerns; open to the general community and usually undertaken in the early or later stages of a consultation.	Political and institutional demonstration of commitment to open consultation; provides focus for groups to organise a basis from which to lobby; provides consultant with some information on viewpoints of key stakeholders.	Limited role as submissions are unlikely to draw response from minority groups in the community; only 'organised' and articulate stakeholders are likely to respond; the formality of hearings may intimidate some.
Survey	Structured questioning of community sample which statistically represents the whole population or sector; used to gather information about objective characteristics or attitudes of a community.	Provides data for analysis of characteristics of a community; provides data to document probable effects of a proposal; satisfies a political need to gauge likely public reaction to a proposal.	Minimal discussion and no interaction between members of the community; respondents may be indifferent to the subject matter and require persuasion.
Open Houses	Informal arrangement where tables or booths are manned by knowledgeable government staff or consultants who are able to discuss what individuals in the community want.	Sets up a comfortable discussion situation for staff and members of the public. Especially useful early in the process to establish rapport and explain complex processes.	May be seen as a "conquer and divide" technique if distrust of the consultants and government by the public is already high.
Display and Exhibitions	Means of disseminating information to the community; mobile or permanent exhibition; may be staffed for seeking response and giving detailed explanation.	Opportunity to inform and meet with the wider community who can speak directly to the consultants; opportunity to demonstrate commitment to consultation.	May be costly and ineffective, particularly if the community does not perceive the issues as being of high importance.

Individual Techniques – Summary of advantages and disadvantages

TECHNIQUE	DESCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Observations	Means of gathering information and establishing contacts in a community.	Provides a thorough understanding of the community in preparation for consultation.	This technique is generally only suitable in the early information collection stage of a consultation.
Information Bulletins and Brochures	Regular information bulletins and brochures distributed to households and/or made available to the community at key public outlets.	Provides ongoing information on the project.	Information needs to be multi-lingual and distribution needs to ensure that the all those interested receive the information.
Site Office	Temporary accommodation for consultants in the area; provides information for the wider community; needs to be suitably located and staffed.	Provides consultants with a convenient base from which to work and establish contact in the area; satisfies some community needs for individual attention to their issues and concerns.	Does not involve interaction between members of the community and may be costly; has limited value in the overall consultation process if used alone.
Open Door	Conducting periodic open days to invite interested people and complainants to visit the site.	Can shift community confidence in current and proposed operations; pin point particular problems and result in problems being address and resolved.	May not be possible given commercial confidentiality.
Hot line	A telephone service to provide information and to record comments, concerns and suggestions.	Ensures that information is available; provides the opportunity for the wider community with mobility problems.	Would not reach all people from non English speaking backgrounds unless hot line is available in different languages.
Web Sites	Information dissemination through an interactive web page; aimed at informing and generating interest	Keeps the public and other interested parties informed. Can be updated quickly and easily. Allows people to access large amounts of information and provide feedback.	Can only be accessed by those with access to a computer with Web connection. Tends not to be available to minority groups such as the elderly, poor, people with non-English speaking backgrounds. Can contribute to information overload if not managed effectively.

Individual Techniques – Summary of advantages and disadvantages

TECHNIQUE	DESCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Use of Media	Information dissemination through printed and electronic media; can be aimed at informing or generating interest and feedback.	Political and institutional advantages of ensuring that information is provided; keeps the community informed; provides opportunity for all the community to contribute.	Would not reach all groups unless special attention was given to minority groups by the use of ethnic media and other avenues to reach other target groups.

Sourced and adapted from:
Department of Housing and Urban Development, SA *The Human Services Planning Kit,* February 1994

Table 6-B

Risk Communication DOs and DON'Ts

	✔ Do	✖ Don't
ABSTRACTIONS	Use examples, anecdotes and analogies to establish a common understanding	generalise too much or use hypothetical situations
ATTACKS	Attack the issue	attack the person or organisation
BLAME	Take responsibility for your share of the problem	try to shift blame or responsibility to others
CLARITY	Ask whether you have made yourself clear	assume you have been understood
GUARANTEES	Emphasise achievements made and ongoing efforts and explain any limitations on the guarantee and why they exist	say there are no guarantees
HUMOUR	If used, direct it at yourself	use it in relation to safety, health or environmental issues
JARGON	Define all technical terms and acronyms (eg. ie. NATA)	use language that may not be understood by your audience
LENGTH OF PRESENTATION	Limit presentation to 15 min to allow for longer question & answer periods	ramble or fail to plan the time well
MONEY	Refer to the importance you attach to health, safety and environmental issues; your moral obligation to public health outweighs financial considerations	refer to the amount of money spent as if it proved your concern
NEGATIVE ALLEGATIONS	Refute allegations	repeat or refer to them
NEGATIVE WORDS & PHRASES	Use positive or neutral terms	minimise or trivialise the risk
NON-VERBAL MESSAGES	Be sensitive to non-verbal messages you are communicating. Make them consistent with what you are saying	allow your body language, your position in the room, or your dress to be inconsistent with your message
"OFF THE RECORD"	Assume everything you say and do is part of the public record	make side comments or "confidential" remarks
ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY	Use personal pronouns (ie. I, we)	take on the identity of a large organisation
PROMISES	Promise only what you can deliver. Set and follow strict orders	make promises you can't keep or fail to follow up
RELIANCE ON WORDS	Use visuals to emphasise key points	rely entirely on words

Risk Communication DOs and DON'Ts

	✔ Do	✖ Don't
RISK COMPARISONS	use them when people ask for comparisons to help put risks in perspective	compare unrelated risks
SPECULATIONS	provide information on what is being done	speculate about worst cases
TECHNICAL DETAILS AND DEBATES	base your remarks on empathy, competence, honesty and dedication	provide too much detail or take part in protracted technical debates or sound condescending
TEMPER	remain calm. Use a question or allegation as a springboard to say something positive	let your feelings interfere with your ability to communicate positively

7. CASE STUDIES

7.1 CASE STUDY 1: RADIOACTIVE SITE IN METROPOLITAN AREA

7.1.1 Background

In 1997, a relatively undeveloped site in a metropolitan area was alleged to contain radioactive contamination. A site history and a radioactive survey were undertaken to assess the level of any immediate risks to public health. Following this, a consultation plan was developed prior to conducting a detailed site contamination assessment.

7.1.2 Consultation Plan

The following broad plan was formulated with the assistance of local government officers and elected members:

a consultation process initially to inform targeted key members of the wider community prior to the detailed site assessment, and

following the site assessment, a wider consultation program with the local community to enable the community to contribute to decisions that may affect them.

7.1.3 Consultation and Communication

The initial consultation involved informing and conducting meetings with:

- identified community representatives;
- peak trade unions;
- elected members of local government; and
- relevant government authorities and organisations.

7.1.4 Outcomes

The main outcomes of the initial consultation:

- key members of the wider community were well informed about the contamination and the consultation process to be undertaken;
- these key stakeholders responded well and appeared satisfied that the issue was being managed in a logical and comprehensive manner; and
- a level of trust and confidence in the consultants was established in the minds of the key stakeholders at the outset, which assisted further consultation with the community during the site assessment and remediation phases

7.2 CASE STUDY 2: ARDEER, VICTORIA

7.2.1 Background

In 1989 severe lead contamination was confirmed in soil of a residential area in the Melbourne suburb of Ardeer. The site was previously used for secondary lead smelting and lead acid battery manufacture. Measures were put in place to relocate residents of the severely affected properties and to assess contamination in the surrounding area. Accordingly, 19 properties had their soil remediated and ceiling dust was removed from 65 properties. The site assessment and the clean up necessitated consultation and communication with the residents.

7.2.2 Consultation Plan

Following the establishment of a broad snap shot of the local Ardeer community, the EPA developed a consultation plan. The consultation process extended over a three and a half years, from initial assessment to completion of the remediation. The plan was based upon the following principles:

- identifying the affected community;
- being clear about the purpose of conveying information, and
- accepting the rights of the residents and groups to contribute to decisions that may affect them.

7.2.3 Consultation Techniques

The EPA utilised various consultation techniques including:

- door knocking residents;
- discussions with principles and teachers of education establishments in proximity to the site;
- production and dissemination of ongoing multi-lingual information bulletins to the community in the area and the action group;
- intensive contact and personal visits were undertaken with those with contaminated properties;
- residents were advised of sampling results; and
- media releases were periodically used.

7.2.4 Outcomes

The main outcomes of the process:

- the community was well informed about the contamination and the remediation process;
- it enable the local community to contribute to decisions that affected them; and
- overall the consultation plan was successful as the residents generally appeared satisfied that their safety was not comprised.

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