Site contamination practitioners certification scheme development

Background

Environmental contamination is a major threat to the health of our communities, the environment and more broadly to our economies. Australia alone has more than 160,000 contaminated sites, and Asia an estimated 5 million.

Over the past decade, better policies, legislation, technologies and practices have improved the way we assess and remediate contaminated sites. However, there is still much to be done to remedy the legacy of contaminated sites in Australia, to prevent new contamination and establish new industry standards.

The effective assessment and remediation of contaminated sites is a complex and challenging task. Planning, executing and managing a remediation project requires specialised skills and advanced knowledge. Globally, there is a growing realisation that only appropriately qualified personnel should undertake this complex task. Accordingly, a number of countries are developing certification schemes to provide increased assurance for site owners, regulators and communities.

Developments in Australia

In the late 2000s, CRC CARE began discussions with the Australian Contaminated Land Consultants Association (ACLCA) on the need for a certification scheme for site contamination practitioners.

Following comprehensive consultation with planning authorities, environmental regulators, government departments, councils, industry and contaminated site owners, ACLCA conducted a review on the level of support for such a scheme in Australia. This review identified strong backing for the idea, and in 2013 ACLCA joined CRC CARE and other key stakeholders to work on the scheme’s design.

Australian states have established accreditation processes for site contamination auditors. The site contamination practitioners’ certification scheme is intended to complement the role of accredited auditors.
Site contamination practitioners  
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**Scheme benefits**

In establishing the certification scheme, we aim to satisfy the following objectives:

- Establishing the framework for promoting best practice standards for service excellence
- Ensuring uniformity across the sector
- Ensuring a high level of practitioner competency and performance
- A nationally consistent standard
- Providing end-user assurance
- Establishing training resources to support practitioner development

The scheme aims to provide improved outcomes for all stakeholders and will also provide appropriate recognition for the profession, for the expertise of practitioners working in a complex environment, and for the profession's contribution to society.

The scheme will be established as a not-for-profit activity.

**Key requirements of the scheme**

The requirements for a practitioner to be certified under the proposed scheme are:

- Education – a degree level qualification in a related engineering or science discipline
- Professional practice – a minimum 5 years' practical experience in assessing and remediating contaminated sites
- Competencies – demonstration of a defined set of competencies either through an assessment of prior learning or completion of appropriate training courses
- Professional development – commitment to 50 hours per year of relevant activities
- Ethical and professional conduct – commitment to the scheme's policies.

**What next?**

The details of the scheme are being further developed under the guidance of an advisory board comprising representatives of ACLCA, regulators, major clients and CRC CARE. The board will consult more broadly with a range of stakeholders, refine the competencies to be achieved, and develop training resources to support attainment of the competencies.

The scheme is scheduled to be launched in mid-2014. Further information will be provided as the scheme is developed.

Feedback is welcome and can be provided via admin@crccare.com. Please send your email contact details if you would like to be included on the distribution list of future communications as the scheme develops.