CRC for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment

National Remediation Framework

Guideline on stakeholder engagement

Version 0.1: August 2018

National Remediation Framework

The following guideline is one component of the National Remediation Framework (NRF). The NRF was developed by the Cooperative Research Centre for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment (CRC CARE) to enable a nationally consistent approach to the remediation and management of contaminated sites. The NRF is compatible with the *National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure* (ASC NEPM).

The NRF has been designed to assist the contaminated land practitioner undertaking a remediation project, and assumes the reader has a basic understanding of site contamination assessment and remediation principles. The NRF provides the underlying context, philosophy and principles for the remediation and management of contaminated sites in Australia. Importantly it provides general guidance based on best practice, as well as links to further information to assist with remediation planning, implementation, review, and long-term management.

This guidance is intended to be utilised by stakeholders within the contaminated sites industry, including site owners, proponents of works, contaminated land professionals, local councils, regulators, and the community.

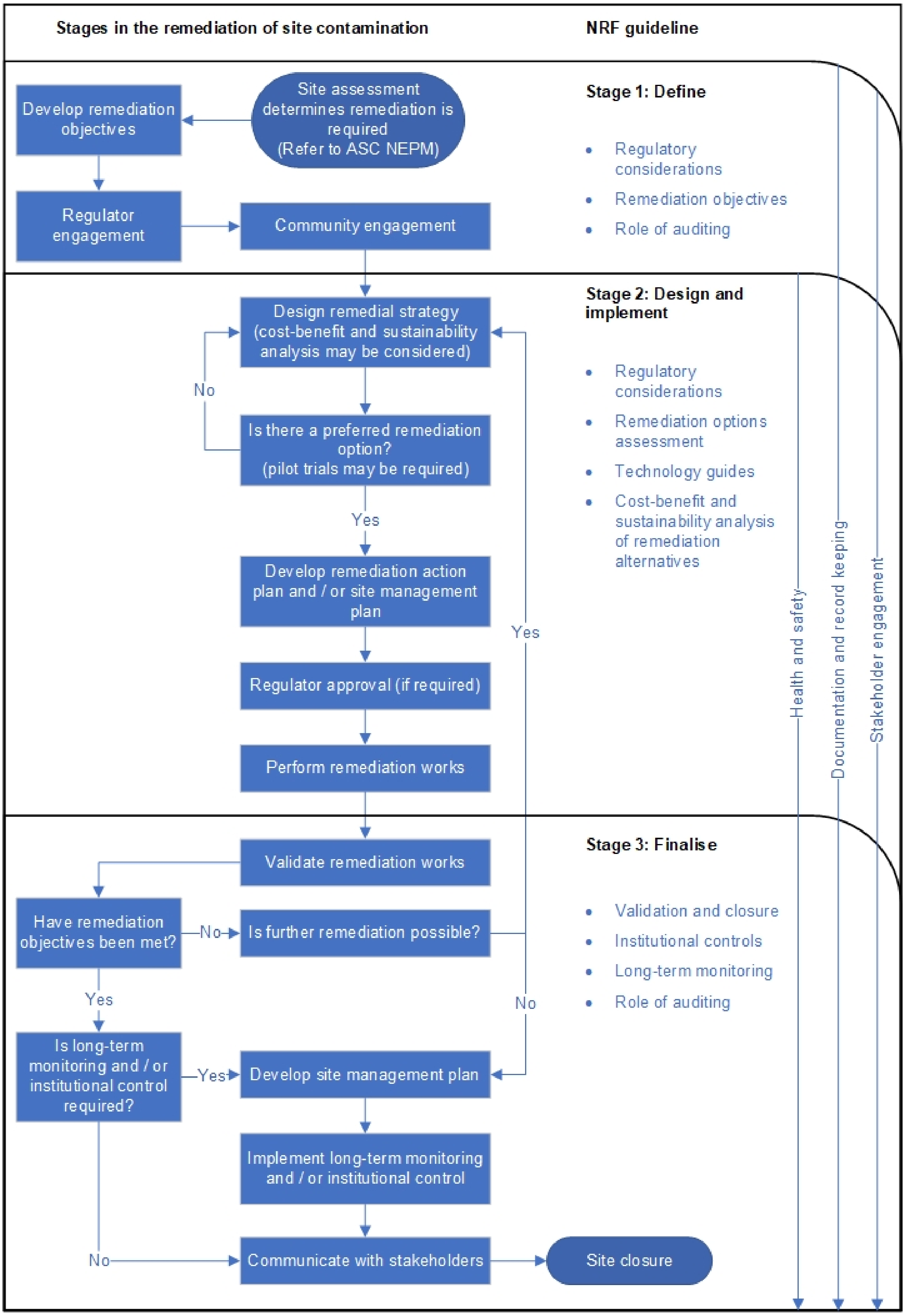
The NRF is intended to be consistent with local jurisdictional requirements, including State, Territory and Commonwealth legislation and existing guidance. To this end, the NRF is not prescriptive. It is important that practitioners are familiar with local legislation and regulations and note that **the NRF does not supersede regulatory requirements**.

The NRF has three main components that represent the general stages of a remediation project, noting that the remediation steps may often require an iterative approach. The stages are:

- Define;
- Design and implement; and
- Finalise.

The flowchart overleaf provides an indication of how the various NRF guidelines fit within the stages outlined above, and also indicates that some guidelines are relevant throughout the remediation and management process.

It is assumed that the reader is familiar with the ASC NEPM and will consult other CRC CARE guidelines included within the NRF. This guideline is not intended to provide the sole or primary source of information.


Stages in the remediation of site contamination
NRF guideline
Site assessment determines remediation is required (Refer to ASC NEPM)
Develop remediation objectives
Regulator engagement
Community engagement
Stage 1: Define
Regulatory considerations
Remediation objectives
Role of auditing
Design remedial strategy (cost-benefit and sustainability analysis may be considered)
No
Is there a preferred remediation option? (pilot trials may be required)
Yes
Develop remediation action plan and / or site management plan
Regulator approval (if required)
Perform remediation works
Yes
Stage 2: Design and implement
Regulatory considerations
Remediation options assessment
Technology guides
Cost-benefit and sustainability analysis of remediation alternatives
Health and safety
Documentation and record keeping
Stakeholder engagement
Validate remediation works
Have remediation objectives been met?
No
Is further remediation possible?
Yes
No
Is long-term monitoring and / or institutional control required?
Yes
Develop site management plan
Implement long-term monitoring and / or institutional control
No
Communicate with stakeholders
Site closure
Stage 3: Finalise
Validation and closure
Institutional controls
Long-term monitoring
Role of auditing

Executive summary

Stakeholder engagement, as it relates to the remediation and management of site contamination, refers to deliberate action taken to involve any combination of stakeholders in the risk management process occurring on site. The aim of stakeholder engagement is to improve the quality of the decisions made for the project, while also improving the decision-making process itself.

While stakeholder engagement is an important part of any remediation and management project, it is likely to be particularly beneficial when the:

- Remediation may affect the amenity of the locality;
- Development of the site is contentious for political, economic or social reasons;
- Contamination:
  - Has the potential to affect the adjacent community;
  - Has potentially alarming characteristics or toxicity;
  - Has moved outside of the site boundaries.
- Site:
  - Is near to residential areas or particularly sensitive ecological receptors and/or vulnerable sub-populations, such as childcare centres, schools or nursing homes;
  - Has a complex history that may be related to the site contamination.

The term ‘stakeholder’ is commonly used as a synonym for ‘community’, particularly within the site contamination industry. However, within the NRF the term ‘stakeholder’ refers to anyone with who has an interest in, or may be affected by, remediation of site contamination. Stakeholders can be individuals, groups, businesses, or entities. The term includes:

- Site owners;
- Proponents of works;
- Contaminated land practitioners;
- Subject matter experts;
- Contractors;
- Regulators;
- Government departments;
- Environmental interest groups;
- Industry; and
- Community.

This guideline provides information on the identification and engagement of stakeholders, with focus on the community.

Abbreviations

IAP2	International Association for Public Participation Australasia
NEPM	National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site contamination) Measure 1999 (amended 2013)
NRF	National Remediation Framework

Glossary

Community	The group of people interested in the site remediation for personal reasons, usually as they live, work or recreate in proximity to the site.
Concentration	The amount of material or agent dissolved or contained in unit quantity in a given medium or system.
Conceptual site model	A representation of site-related information including the environmental setting, geological, hydrogeological and soil characteristics together with the nature and distribution of contaminants. Contamination sources, exposure pathways and potentially affected receptors are identified. Presentation is usually graphical or tabular with accompanying explanatory text.
Contaminant	Any chemical existing in the environment above background levels and representing, or potentially representing, an adverse health or environment risk.
Contaminated site	A site that is affected by substances that occur at concentrations above background or local levels and which are likely to pose an immediate or long-term risk to human health and/or the environment. It is not necessary for the boundaries of the contaminated site to correspond to the legal ownership boundaries.
Contamination	The presence of a substance at a concentration above background or local levels that represents, or potentially represents, a risk to human health and/or the environment.
Decision-maker	A specific person who has decision making power for one or more aspects of the remediation project. For example a financial manager who approves the budget, a regulator who approves a particular methodology, or a community representative that accepts a risk mitigation strategy. All decision makers are stakeholders, but not all stakeholders are decision makers.
Environment(al) protection authority / agency	The government agency in each state or territory that has responsibility for the enforcement of various jurisdictional environmental legislation, including some regulation of contaminated land.
Exposure	The concentration or amount of a particular chemical that reaches a target organism, or system, or population in a specific frequency for a defined duration.

Practitioner	Those in the private sector professionally engaged in the assessment, remediation or management of site contamination.
Proponent	A person who is legally authorised to make decisions about a site. The proponent may be a site owner or occupier or their representative.
Remediation	An action designed to deliberately break the source-pathway-receptor linkage in order to reduce the risk to human health and/or the environment to an acceptable level.
Risk	The probability that in a certain timeframe an adverse outcome will occur in a person, a group of people, plants, animals and/or the ecology of a specified area that is exposed to a particular dose or concentration of a specified substance, i.e. it depends on both the level of toxicity of the substance and the level of exposure. 'Risk' differs from 'hazard' primarily because risk considers probability.
Risk assessment	A process intended to calculate or estimate the risk to a given target organism, system, or sub-population, including the identification of attendant uncertainties, following exposure to a particular contaminant, taking into account the inherent characteristics of the agent of concern as well as the characteristics of the specific target system (ASC NEPM 1999, Sch B6).
Risk communication	An interactive process involving the exchange among individuals, groups and institutions of information and expert opinion about the nature, severity and acceptability of risks and the decisions to be taken to mitigate them.
Risk management	A decision-making process involving consideration of political, social, economic, and technical factors with relevant risk assessment information relating to a hazard to determine an appropriate course of action.
Risk perception	The subjective judgement that people make about the characteristics and severity of a risk.
Site	A parcel of land (including ground and surface water) being assessed for contamination, as identified on a map by parameters including Lot and Plan number(s) and street address. It is not necessary for the site boundary to correspond to the Lot and Plan boundary, however it commonly does.
Stakeholder	An individual, group, organisation or other entity that may be interested in, or affected by, the remediation and management of a contaminated site. Depending on specific site circumstances, stakeholders may include

	residents, site owners, public health officials, government regulatory authorities, media, businesses working on site, and environmental or other action/interest groups, as well as site owners and people working on the project. Stakeholders may or may not be directly involved in the project but do include all those who may have knowledge of or views about the project. Not all stakeholders are necessarily decision makers.
Stakeholder engagement	The process of engaging and communicating with people (individuals and groups) who have an interest, or 'stake' in the remediation and management of a contaminated site, to achieve accepted outcomes.

Table of contents

1. Introduction

The objective of this guideline is to provide national guidance for stakeholder engagement during the remediation of site contamination.

The term 'stakeholder' is commonly used as a synonym for 'community', particularly within the site contamination industry. However, within the NRF the term 'stakeholder' refers to anyone with who has an interest in, or may be affected by, remediation of site contamination. Stakeholders can be individuals, groups, businesses, or entities. The term includes:

- Site owners;
- Proponents of works;
- Contaminated land practitioners;
- Subject matter experts;
- Contractors;
- Regulators;
- Government departments;
- Environmental interest groups;
- Industry; and
- Community.

This guideline is intended to be utilised by any of the stakeholders within the contaminated sites remediation industry identified above.

Stakeholder engagement, as it relates to the remediation and management of site contamination, refers to deliberate action taken to involve any combination of stakeholders in the risk management process occurring on site. The aim of stakeholder engagement is to improve the quality of the decisions made for the project, while also improving the decision-making process itself.

While stakeholder engagement is an important part of any remediation and management project, it is likely to be particularly beneficial when the:

- Remediation may affect the amenity of the locality;
- Development of the site is contentious for political, economic or social reasons;
- Contamination:
  - Has the potential to affect the adjacent community;
  - Has potentially alarming characteristics or toxicity;
  - Has moved outside of the site boundaries.
- Site:
  - Is near to residential areas or particularly sensitive ecological receptors and/or vulnerable sub-populations, such as childcare centres, schools or nursing homes;

- Has a complex history that may be related to the site contamination

The potential benefits of a well-managed stakeholder engagement program are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Potential benefits of a well-managed stakeholder engagement program.

Stakeholder	Potential benefits
Practitioner	• Understand stakeholder perceptions and concerns; • More accurately anticipate stakeholder response to actions and decisions; • Increase the effectiveness of risk management decisions; • Improve communication and trust; and • Reduce tension between stakeholders and decision-makers;
Decision-maker	• Can provide cost savings; • Improve the organisations' credibility; • Better decision-making and sustainable outcomes; • Development of an open and trusting relationship; • Demonstrated commitment to accountability and transparency and • Shared understanding of problems and dilemmas.
Community	• Improved risk management decisions; • More acceptable site management options; • Sense of empowerment and ownership of the locality; • Health benefits of remediation of the site contamination; and • Wider community pride in organisations that work collaboratively with stakeholders.

The risks of not conducting an effective stakeholder program include:

- Delays for a project;
- Requiring additional investigations or consultation to be undertaken;
- Jeopardising the social licence to operate;
- Unwanted media coverage;
- Damage to a company's reputation; and
- Potential litigation.

2. Identification of stakeholders

When beginning the remediation process, it is likely that there will be a series of stakeholders already engaged in the project from the assessment phase. However, it is common that the stakeholders relevant to that overall remediation project may be different from those engaged within the assessment phase. For example, community groups may not have been involved previously, but may be a key stakeholder within the remediation process. With that in mind, the list of stakeholders should be refined for the remediation project.

It is important to differentiate between stakeholders and decision-makers. While decision-makers are also stakeholders, they have the additional responsibility of having decision-making power for one or more aspects of the remediation project. Not all stakeholders will also be decision-makers, and this is important to establish at the beginning of the relationship to avoid unmet expectations or misunderstandings.

The stakeholder identification process should have the following components:

- Document the history and status of stakeholder engagement on the project. This need not be an exhaustive task, but should include interviewing key staff to obtain information related to the following:
    - A policy, strategy, or statement by the company or agency leading the remediation project;
    - A list of key stakeholders;
    - The role of each stakeholder to date; and
    - Documents that describe the stakeholder engagement process to date.
- Conduct a brainstorming exercise to identify and analyse key stakeholders. This can be as simple as getting the project team members together to brainstorm the names of people and organisations that may influence or be influenced by site activities. The practitioner may also want to conduct interviews with representatives from organisations known to have a stake in the project; and
- Once identified, stakeholders should be analysed to assess the extent to which the project may impact them, or they may impact the outcomes of the project.

On more complex and/or contentious projects, more in-depth analysis may be required. This could include developing a greater understanding of the specific issues of importance, recent history, objectives, alliances, available resources, and cultural characteristics of each stakeholder.

It is important to remember that the identification and inclusion of stakeholders in any engagement program is an ongoing process. New and different stakeholders, whether individuals or groups, may need to be included at any stage, particularly if the project is extensive in size or time.

The following questions can be useful in identifying community stakeholders:

- What is the project's geographical area of impact?
- Who is affected by the issues (negatively or positively)?

- Who are the representatives of those likely to be affected?
- Who are the 'voiceless' for whom special efforts may have to be made?
- Who is likely to mobilise for or against the issue?
- Whose absence from participation would detract from the results?
- Are there any key groups or individuals with the ability to block the project?

There are many sources of information that may be useful in building a picture of the local community, identifying stakeholders within that community, and finding out how to contact them. These sources include:

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics;
- Local council - holds information, including contact details, about schools, community organisations, and interest groups within the area;
- Local politicians and political groups - may be able to help with identifying key community leaders;
- Local community or religious groups;
- Websites - many communities and interest groups have websites, usually written in the language and style preferred in the area
- Local newspapers - articles and letters to the editor in local newspapers and/or magazines can provide a good indication of the issues that are of most concern to the community and which groups are most vocal;
- Environmental impact statements – likely to contain information about the local communities and economy and can often be viewed online.

Generally, stakeholders during the remediation and management of a contaminated site will include some or all of those presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Stakeholders to consider during remediation and management.

Stakeholder	Considerations
Site owners or occupiers	The site owner and occupier may be the same or may be different companies There may be more than one person involved in decision making, such as an environmental officer and a finance manager The company may have its own stakeholder engagement process that needs to be used or integrated The company may have its own media team that are stakeholders Site occupiers includes the workers and visitors to a site.

Stakeholder	Considerations
Proponents of works	The proponent may not be the owner or the occupier of the site. For example, they may be the occupier of the adjacent property which is the source of the contamination.
Contaminated land practitioners	For example: • Project manager; or • Technical specialists.
Subject matter experts	For example: • Remediation technology specialists; • Risk assessor; • Engineer; • Ecologists or arborists; • Heritage consultants; • Communications experts; or • Occupational hygienist.
Traditional custodians	Aboriginal and Torres Straight Island communities
Contractors	For example: • Principle contractor; • Analytical laboratories; • Equipment suppliers; or • Specialist remediation technology contractors.
Government agencies	For example: • Work place safety office; or • Road or maritime office.
Regulators	For example: • EPA staff; • Local council planning staff; or • Auditors.
Community	For example: • Residents; • Site users (if the site is a public space); • Community groups; • Environmental interest groups;

3. Stakeholder engagement strategy

The purpose of engagement should be made clear to stakeholders, along with information about issues that are open for discussion before a decision is made, and issues that are non-negotiable.

Early explanations about the negotiable and non-negotiable aspects of stakeholder engagement during the project will help to clarify the boundaries and limitations of the engagement program as a whole as well as for individual stakeholder engagement activities. Negotiable items are those choices and options and outcomes that can be changed to reflect or incorporate stakeholder input. Non-negotiable items are those things already set that cannot be changed or negotiated and might include standards and policies that must be adhered to, or the time and resources available.

It may be that early research identifies that stakeholders are satisfied that the project (or elements of the project) should proceed promptly. In this case, it may not be necessary to undertake wide and comprehensive engagement activities, although there will remain a need for stakeholders to be kept informed of progress.

Practitioner Tip

Stakeholder engagement is not necessarily involved or complex. On small or simple sites, stakeholder engagement may take the form of a phone call or meeting with the client to 'flesh out' the key drivers for the project. Or, for larger projects it could involve a short presentation on the contamination issues, followed by a guided discussion with several parties, right up to externally-facilitated conferences (for large or complex sites).

It is important to have an objective for stakeholder engagement, to both guide the engagement strategy and to assist voluntary stakeholders decide if they want to be involved.

The objectives of the stakeholder engagement will be related to the remediation project and depend on whether the stakeholders are decision makers or not. Some examples include:

- Provide information about a decision that has already been made;
- Gather data in the form of statistics or opinions to guide future decisions;
- Obtain mutually acceptable outcomes on the project;
- Identify additional project objectives or constraints;
- Identify additional remediation options, or amendments to the identified remediation options;
- Eliminate previously considered remediation options; or
- Land use priorities not previously considered;

The general components of a stakeholder engagement strategy are:

- **Think strategically**. Identify your reasons for stakeholder engagement and the key stakeholder groups and issues that relate to your project.
- **Analyse and plan**. Collect information and develop a plan of action based on your strategic engagement priorities and current abilities.
- **Strengthen engagement capacities**. Give your team the skills and systems to engage with the stakeholders successfully. Look for ways to overcome barriers that may hinder stakeholders from engaging.
- **Design the process and engage**. Design and implement an engagement processes which meet stakeholder expectations and your objectives.
- **Act, review, and report**. Translate new learning, insights and agreements into action, and inform your stakeholders how this is done.

Questions to help guide the formulation of a strategy include:

- Who are your stakeholders?
- What is your message?
- What methods and tools will you use to engage your stakeholders?
- How will you use the information you gather?
- What are the risks associated with engagement?
- What are the risks associated with not engaging?
- What are the risks associated with engaging poorly?

3.1 Stakeholder engagement plan

The stakeholder engagement strategy should be documented in a stakeholder engagement plan. The stakeholder engagement plan can take many forms and should be tailored to the scale and complexity of the project and the relative importance of stakeholder engagement for the project. It may be incorporated into an existing plan such as the remediation action plan, or it may be provided as a separate and specific plan.

The stakeholder engagement plan should provide a degree of flexibility and be responsive to changing circumstances and stakeholder input. A good plan should help the practitioner to:

- Integrate the engagement and communication efforts with the risk assessment and management process;
- Increase the effectiveness of the engagement and communication;
- Allocate appropriate resources to engagement and communication efforts; and
- Increase dialogue and mutual understanding.

A stakeholder engagement plan will generally contain the following information:

- A clear description of the overall project, the technical solution proposed, and where the stakeholder engagement aspect fits in;

- The purpose and objectives of the engagement process;
- A description of the major issues likely to emerge;
- The negotiable and non-negotiable aspects/decisions/issues in the project;
- A list of stakeholders involved;
- The proposed engagement process and key elements/techniques/tools;
- The decision-making process which will be followed;
- A commitment on how the information from the process will be used;
- A commitment on how feedback will be given to participants on how their input was used, and the reasons for final decisions;
- Timeframe and key milestones; and
- Budget.

An example of the possible structure and content of a stakeholder engagement plan is provided as **Appendix A**.

3.2 Engagement approaches

Stakeholder engagement processes are increasingly used across several industries and in a variety of settings. As a result, there is a growing body of general guidance to support these processes. A widely used source of guidance is the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

The IAP2 developed a ‘Spectrum of Public Participation’, outlining the different approaches that are possible in any engagement program in any industry:

- Inform;
- Consult;
- Involve;
- Collaborate with; and
- Empower.

While this spectrum is specifically targeted at public participation, the same principles apply to every stakeholder in the project. Identifying which approach is relevant to each stakeholder is an important step in planning the communication.

Table 3 overleaf describes the different circumstances that warrant each approach.

Table 3: Stakeholder engagement strategies and the circumstances that warrant each approach.

Approach	Characteristic	When the approach may be used	The promise being made
Inform	One-way engagement	• A decision has already been made or there is no opportunity to influence the outcome; or • The issue is relatively simple.	We will keep you informed.
Consult	Limited engagement; ask questions of stakeholder	• Decisions are still being shaped; or • There may not be a firm commitment to do anything with the views collected, but this is clearly communicated.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns, and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influenced the decision.
Involve	Two- or multi-way engagement; learning by all; Project/agency retains decision authority	• There is a need for discussion amongst, and with, stakeholders; or • There is a real opportunity to influence the outcome.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influenced the decision.
Collaborate	Two- or multi-way engagement; joint decision making and actions	• There is a need for stakeholders to communicate regarding complex, value-laden issues; or • There is capacity for stakeholders to shape decisions.	We will support you to provide direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations to the maximum extent possible.
Empower	Decisions delegated to stakeholder; stakeholder plays a role in governance	• Stakeholders are decision-makers; or • There is an agreement from decision makers to implement solutions generated by the stakeholders.	We will implement what you decide.

3.3 Facilitators

Depending on the size and complexity of the remediation and management project, the stakeholder engagement program may be run by the practitioner, a team from within the organisation undertaking the remediation and management project, an external consultant, or a combination of all of these.

For more complex or contentious sites, or where extensive community consultation is required, a better outcome is often achieved if the stakeholder engagement role is undertaken by a third party such as a consultant, a professional facilitator or a peer who has not previously been involved in the project.

It is important that whoever is involved in the planning, developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of a stakeholder engagement plan has the skills and experience to do so. Training and information about external assistance with stakeholder engagement is widely available through a variety of sources, including the IAP2, as well as government and private training and facilitation service providers.

3.4 Budget

The budget required for stakeholder engagement will depend on the size and complexity of the remediation and management project and the number and type of stakeholders.

While it is possible to carry out an effective stakeholder engagement program with limited funds, keep in mind that the inclusion of third-party costs, such as fees for an external consultant to undertake the engagement program, will make a significant impact on the overall budget.

Some of the expenses that should be accounted for in a larger stakeholder engagement program includes such things as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Possible expense considerations for stakeholder consultation.

Consultant	Public meeting	Written material
Fees	Venue hire	Printing
Travel	Public address systems	Advertising
Accommodation	Audio-visual equipment	Postage/freight
	Child or respite care	stationery
	Catering.	translation/interpreting services
	Participation payments or honorariums	
	Parking	
	translation/interpreting services	
	Minute keeping and distributing outcomes.	

3.5 Evaluation process

Evaluation of processes and outcomes is a crucial part of the stakeholder engagement program. A well-designed evaluation process can help to:

- Identify if stakeholders are satisfied that the process you have followed is fair, even if they would have preferred a different outcome. If people are satisfied with the process they may be more willing to live with the outcome;
- Improve future stakeholder engagement activities and programs;
- Establish if there is a need for ongoing engagement activities;
- Give stakeholders a broad picture of how others view your project by sharing the outcome of your evaluations with them; and
- Improve the cost-effectiveness of future processes.

Plan to involve all stakeholders in evaluation and feedback on the effectiveness of the program throughout implementation of the stakeholder engagement plan, as well as after the conclusion of the process. This will allow for midcourse improvements to be made, where necessary.

When designing an evaluation strategy for inclusion in the stakeholder engagement plan, the practitioner might find it useful to follow these steps:

- Identify the purpose of your engagement evaluation. Understanding the purpose of an evaluation helps clarify how it should be conducted and how the results should be used. Examples of common purposes for conducting an evaluation include:
    - to demonstrate how well goals and objectives have been met
    - to improve how stakeholder engagement is done
    - to gain insight into what is effective stakeholder engagement in different situations.
- Identify the parties with an interest in the evaluation. Who wants to know what? There may be several people who will use the findings of your evaluation to make decisions, for example, about future directions for the engagement program. The best way to determine people’s interests in the evaluation is to ask them directly:
    - What constitutes success from their perspective?
    - What questions would they like answered by the evaluation?
- Consider evidence needed to undertake the evaluation. What information will be collected and how? Collecting evidence in the field of stakeholder engagement can be more complicated than for other aspects of project evaluation, for the following reasons:
    - engagement is a relatively new field of expertise, so has not been tested and measured as extensively as other fields
    - results are often exhibited through better relationships, trust and connectedness—all of which are difficult to observe or articulate in tangible terms

- the effects of engagement activities are often not obvious for some time after the completion of the activity or project.

Consider the resources that are required to undertake the evaluation. When deciding who will be responsible for collecting evidence and when they will undertake these tasks, you should also consider what, if any, evaluation tasks would be better allocated to outside consultants or other members of the site management team.

4. Community engagement

Factors to consider when determining the extent of community engagement that may be required include:

- The degree of involvement desired by the community;
- The remediation project affects the rights and entitlements of any stakeholders;
- The remediation project is likely to affect people's quality of life (positively or negatively);
- The contamination affects the natural environment;
- A significant number of people, or groups, are likely to have strong and/or competing views on the remediation (both negative and positive);
- Insufficient information is available on which to decide;
- The contamination or the remediation solution is technically complex;
- The organisation undertaking the remediation genuinely wants to find out the views of stakeholders; or
- Agreement and acceptance by stakeholders will be critical to the long-term success of the project.

In addition, the community should be engaged whenever a new issue is identified that may pose a risk to health or the environment or raise public concern. This can mean than an engagement activity is started before pertinent information is known and before all options for managing risks have been identified and considered.

Starting an engagement activity early can be difficult for the practitioner who may be unused and/or unwilling to publicise possible risks associated with the site until they are sure what those risks may be and how they will be managed. Early engagement ensures, however, that the community will have some control over and involvement in the risk management process. This is more likely than not to lead to community acceptance of the decisions that are made.

It is not always appropriate, effective, or possible to involve the community in engagement activities that have a decision-making or decision-influencing aspect. Ineffective or inappropriate engagement is counterproductive and increases apathy and cynicism on the part of the community—not only towards future engagement activities, but also towards the practitioner and their organisation.

It is neither effective nor appropriate to involve the community in decision-making or decision-influencing processes if:

- A final decision has already been made;
- The community cannot influence a final decision due to site or project-specific factors;
- There is insufficient time and/or resources available;

- The scope of the engagement is not clearly understood, including an understanding of who will make final decisions, and how community engagement outcomes will be used;
- A decision is required immediately.

While stakeholders have a right to information about environmental factors that affect their lives, there are some legislative issues that may have an impact on the type and/or amount of information that can be provided. For example:

- Commercial-in-confidence materials should not be disclosed;
- Privacy legislation restrains the giving out of personal information to any other person without the permission of the person named in the material in question; and
- Freedom of information legislation means that written material held by government agencies can be requested and viewed by any citizen with an interest in that particular information (including all forms of writing, including emails and sticky notes).

The practitioner should consult with relevant Commonwealth, state or territory authorities regarding specific requirements around stakeholder engagement. For example, in some situations and in some states or territories, more extensive community engagement is required for sites which pose an environmental or human health risk and where the contamination has the potential to move off-site or affect off-site receptors, than for sites distant from sensitive receptors where risks to the environment and human health are minimal.

4.1 Key elements to engaging the community

There are some elements that are key to successfully engaging the community in a remediation project., including:

- Accept and involve community as legitimate partners
- Plan carefully
- Listen to the community's specific concerns
- Be honest, frank and open
- Talk about positives as well as negatives
- Coordinate and collaborate with other credible sources
- Meet the needs of stakeholders
- Meet the needs of the media

Appendix B provides a description and tips on how to implement them effectively.

4.2 Understanding potential community concerns

The concerns that the community may have during a remediation project are likely to fall into one of the following four categories:

- Health and lifestyle concerns
- Data and information concerns

- Process concerns
- Risk management concerns

Examples of the types of questions that may be asked are provided in **Appendix C**.

A computer-based tool known as 'message mapping' may help to clarify the situations that will be addressed during stakeholder engagement relating to the contaminated site. Message maps have three main goals relevant to the communication of risk, being to:

- Organise information in an easily understood and accessible framework;
- Express the current organisational viewpoint on important situations, questions, concerns; and
- Promote open dialogue among and between stakeholders.

The process of creating a message map includes:

- Establishing a message mapping team with expert knowledge;
- Identification of stakeholders;
- listing the specific stakeholder concerns or perceptions, and placing them into categories of concerns;
- Developing up to three key messages from each category of concern;
- Resourcing supporting facts, information or evidence for each key message; and
- validating the accuracy of the message map information with experts in the field who were not part of the message mapping team.

A well-constructed message map can help the practitioner to develop their own understanding of the situations that need to be addressed in any stakeholder engagement activity. The material within the completed message map can also provide a basis for the creation of fact sheets, newsletters, education resources, and public presentations. This will ensure that the message delivered throughout the engagement process is clear, concise and consistent.

4.3 Risk perception and communication

The remediation and management of contaminated sites in Australia generally takes place within a risk management context. Risk management describes a decision-making process to analyse and compare the range of options for site management and the selection of appropriate responses to potential health or environmental hazards. As part of this process, a practitioner is likely to consider a range of influences, including political, social, economic, engineering, environmental and sustainability factors, to inform the decisions they make about activities on a contaminated site.

Underlying any effective risk management process is an appreciation of the concept of risk perception. The term generally refers to the perceptions of those members of the stakeholder group who are outside the regulatory, scientific research and risk assessment spheres. It is important to remember, however, that every person involved in the process, both expert and non-expert, will have perceptions of risks that are influenced by individual beliefs, emotions, and views of the world. It is also important to remember that risks are not only focused on health, they can also be social or economic.

Perception of risk can be influenced by numerous factors beyond scientific data. It is for this reason that what may scientifically constitute a ‘negligible risk’ can still give rise to anger and resentment among the community. People see risk as multidimensional and not as being represented by a numerical value alone, judging risk according to its characteristics and context. For example, trauma and death as the result of an involuntary catastrophic reaction is likely to be dreaded more than if those outcomes arise from a situation where the risk is assumed voluntarily, and the person feels some degree of control over it (for example, motor vehicle crashes).

Risk perception is largely influenced by age, gender, education, and prior experiences of the hazard, as well as by other factors including ethnicity and cultural background. Certain kinds of risks tend to arouse heightened levels of concern, for example, where risks are:

- Involuntary or imposed;
- Man-made rather than natural;
- Inescapable;
- Controlled by parties outside the relevant community;
- Likely to have little or no benefit to the community;
- Subject to media attention;
- Unfairly distributed;
- Related to a distrusted source;
- Exotic or unfamiliar;
- Likely to affect children or pregnant people;
- Likely to affect identifiable rather than anonymous people;
- The cause of insidious and irreversible damage;
- The cause of dreaded health effects such as cancer;
- Poorly understood by science
- Subject to contradictory statements from responsible sources (or, even worse, from the same source); or
- Related to situations where the risk makers are not the risk takers.

In contrast, concerns about risk tend to be lessened when the risk:

- Is voluntarily assumed;
- Has a natural origin
- Can be controlled to a certain extent by individuals or groups;
- Provides a clear benefit;
- Is distributed fairly;
- Is associated with a trusted source;

- Is familiar;
- Only affects adults;
- Is understood; or
- Assessment process is understood.

Many approaches to risk communication in the past have been mistakenly directed towards getting the public to accept the risk estimates of experts. Technically orientated risk professionals have attempted to ‘fix’ the public’s ‘misperception’ of risk rather than recognise that there are valid reasons for differing views. When people who are frightened or angry about a hazard are told that their perception is wrong, that the hazard is insignificant, or that they should ‘calm down’, the development of trust and mutual respect is immediately undermined.

At its best, risk communication is an interactive process involving the exchange among individuals, groups and institutions of information and expert opinion about the nature, severity and acceptability of risks and the decisions to be taken to combat them. Risk communication is delivered most efficiently in the context of a well-structured stakeholder engagement process.

While the practitioner will need to focus on the site-specific concerns of the community, it may be helpful to keep in mind that, in general, people will want to know:

- More than just technical descriptions of the risk. Risk should also be conveyed in ways that people with non-technical backgrounds can relate to, perhaps through analogies that are familiar, and which can assist understanding;
- About risk consequences, including effects and the level of danger associated with the risk;
- What they should do, and what organisations and agencies are doing, about the risk and its consequences. This should include timeframes for actions to be taken;
- What is currently known, and what is unknown, including what is being investigated or what may never be fully understood; and
- Exposure information for contamination, including risk intensity, duration, acceptable risk levels and how they are measured, how long the contaminant is dangerous, how long it persists, whether a contaminant bio-accumulates and to what degree.

4.4 Engagement techniques

There are a variety of techniques and tools to engage with the community, that can be used in isolation or in combination. When choosing the most appropriate method for engaging stakeholders, the following factors should be considered:

- The purpose of the engagement activity, e.g. to inform or to involve in decision-making;
- Available time and resources; and
- Legal requirements relating to the type or extent of engagement that should take place.

There is a significant amount of guidance available around engagement methods and techniques. While most have not been developed specifically to suit a contaminated site context, the material focuses on the techniques themselves, meaning that the practitioner should be able to adapt the guidance to suit their own purposes.

The most common engagement techniques, along with their advantages and disadvantages, are presented in **Appendix D**.

Additionally, the NRF *Guideline on performing cost-benefit and sustainability analysis of remediation options* provides detailed information on one method for considering a variety of perspectives and attitudes during decision making.

4.5 Presenting information

Individuals involved in community engagement activities comprise people from a range of different backgrounds and circumstances. Their knowledge and experience of environmental matters in general, and contaminated sites, will also vary. The practitioner needs to be aware that they can, however unintentionally, introduce a barrier to participation if they deliver environmental data and technical information without careful consideration of their audience.

Simplifying the language used to convey scientific or technical information can be a challenge for practitioners who may be experts in the complexity of scientific language. The following tips may be useful to practitioners who need to explain data to a lay audience:

The principles of 'information delivery', commonly used in computer software development, can be applied to this circumstance.

Table 5 below outlines some of the common elements of presentations and provides some tips on how to deliver information effectively to the community.

Table 5: Tips on presenting common elements to the community effectively.

Element of presentation	Tip
Language	• Do not try to impress people with words they do not understand; • If a word needs defining, define it, e.g. "potable water is water suitable for drinking". Then, if the concept is addressed again, avoid using the word 'potable' and instead refer to 'drinking water'; • If you must use complex technical language, introduce the concept before the word, i.e. "Science has a term for this and it is 'potable water'"; • Ask your audience to stop you immediately if you use scientific language they aren't familiar with; and • Be especially careful about words that have different technical meanings than their common meaning, e.g. 'significance', 'conservative' and 'bias'.

Element of presentation	**Tip**
Technical information	• Don't skimp on the use of non-technical information that your audience already knows; • Demonstrating that you know and share the same issues and concerns as the stakeholder gives credibility to the technical information; • Your knowledge of the history of the site and its conditions (including showing slides or other visual information) will help your audience to develop trust regarding any new information you provide and • Keep messages consistent.
Talking about risk and uncertainty	• Acknowledge uncertainty by talking about it upfront, not waiting until you are confronted; • Clarify those issues you are certain about • Explain where the greatest uncertainties lie • Review expert judgement and the assumptions recorded • look for comparable situations elsewhere within Australia if possible • if clear scientific and technical information does not exist, say so. • Be conscious of making risk comparisons—they can undermine trust and credibility. • Be aware of risk messages that are culturally sensitive;
Honesty and transparency	• Introduce yourself and your colleagues; • Talk about your background to provide a picture of you and a context for the work you are doing; • Give as much information as you are able; • Explain when you are not able to give more information, and why (such as commercial confidentiality, legal reasons or uncertainty). • Allow your emotions (excluding anger) to show.

Element of presentation	Tip
Engaging the audience	• Be aware of your audience members' body language, e.g. glazed eyes, restlessness, excessive writing may suggest they don't understand what you are saying • Clarify that your audience is following you. Ask a question like "Am I making this complicated?", rather than "Do you understand?" People are more likely to be honest in their response knowing that the focus is on the way you are presenting the information, and that their level of knowledge or understanding of the topic is not being judged. • Ask for questions and seek feedback.

4.6 Statement of intent

A statement of intent is a clear and concise summary of the stakeholder engagement plan that can be easily provided to the public, to provide enough information to enable everybody involved to have a shared understanding of the engagement program and how it will proceed. While it is similar in general content and structure to a stakeholder engagement plan, it has less detail, for example, while it may describe resources available for the program, it will not contain a detailed budget.

A statement of intent should include the following:

- Background information about the site, incorporating a brief, clear statement about the project itself, and the purpose and objectives of the engagement process;
- Description of the major issues likely to be addressed;
- Clear statement about the negotiable and non-negotiable aspects/decision/issues within the program;
- Broad description of stakeholders;
- Statement about the kind of involvement that is being sought;
- List of key engagement techniques and tools that will be used;
- Commitment on how the information from the process will be used;
- Commitment on how feedback will be given to stakeholders on how their input was used, and the reasons for final decisions;
- Timeline for the engagement program that allows sufficient time for stakeholders to discuss and form opinions on the issues;
- List of staff and funding resources available for the engagement program; and
- Sources of further information, including website links, email and phone contact details for relevant people.

4.7 Community stakeholders

When conducting community engagement, it is important to remember that the 'community' is not a cohesive whole, with only one opinion or idea. The community is comprised of many different groups of people, and each group of people is made up of diverse individuals.

The following sections provide information on different community stakeholder groups, along with recommendations on how to most effectively engage.

4.7.1 *Indigenous people*

- There is often more than one group with traditional links to, or interests in, an area. Rarely does one person or group speak for all the groups affected, so it is important to take all views into account as one would in any type of community. If more than one group is affected, meetings will need to be organised with representatives from each group. Otherwise, discuss compatible arrangements separately. Different groups may be in conflict and this needs to be factored into the engagement process.
- Approach relevant bodies, for example, government departments with responsibility for Indigenous matters, Indigenous land councils, and local Indigenous groups, to determine the relevant communities' preferred approaches and the appropriate people to meet with initially. It is important to consult with all relevant Indigenous community representatives if practicable, since this reduces the possibility of information on the existence of Aboriginal sites being 'missed' during the process. It is preferable to relocate any proposed works to avoid disturbance to a site. However, if that is not possible, formal approval to alter a site may need to be sought from the relevant authority.
- Establish contact early with recognised Elders in the community. Engagement with Aboriginal groups may become complex and prolonged so start the consultation (and also investigate legal obligations) early in the planning process. It is important to develop and maintain long-term relationships, and to provide an adequate lead-time in order to have successful involvement.
- There may be several people within a particular community that speak for different country and sites, all of which may need to be consulted. Be aware that within a region, there may be a number of different communities.
- It is unlikely to be sufficient to simply send a group a letter and expect people to turn up when requested. Telephone invitations or personal written invitations are preferable to formal letters. Different approaches may be necessary to engage relevant groups.
- Several different engagement techniques and tools may need to be used. Elders should be asked about their preference. Be prepared for engagement processes ranging from one-on-one discussions to community meetings, depending on the circumstances encountered (e.g. older knowledgeable people may be too frail to be involved in anything more than short, one-on-one conversations). The type of meeting place should also be considered (e.g. groups may not want to come to an office to meet; consider meeting on site and providing some food). If a meeting has been scheduled, ring and confirm the meeting one or two days in advance. Consider the format and medium of

any information that will be provided, consider verbal presentations rather than expecting people to read technical documents.

- Timing of significant cultural events may mean that groups are unavailable for consultation at certain times. Aboriginal community events, Native Title case hearing schedules, law business and more family-oriented business (e.g. bereavement) may affect people's availability, at both a community and personal level. Timelines should therefore be set with this in mind.
- Some Aboriginal group representatives will require payment of a consultation fee, or at least reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses. Where payment is required, be sure to sign the invoice on the day the consultation is done. Practitioners may be required to assist with administrative matters (e.g. drawing up an invoice on behalf of the people(s) consulted).
- It is important to note that each Aboriginal community has an individual and special connection to country. This should be taken into consideration when approaching a local Aboriginal community, as what may be acceptable to one group might not necessarily be acceptable to another. Each community needs to be addressed on an individual basis. For example, some communities may require a fee, others not; some work through a Land Council, some prefer direct contact; some are happy to endorse projects, while others do not want an area to change or works to be undertaken on sites.
- Different Aboriginal groups may have conflicting views regarding who should be consulted about what and in what manner. There may be numerous competing claims about who are the 'true' custodians of sites and who has the right to speak for them. The cause of these conflicts and the various views should be documented.

4.7.2 *People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds*

When working with culturally and linguistically diverse stakeholders, consider the following:

- Researching and respecting cultural norms that may be important when communicating with individuals and groups, for example, the use of eye contact, or appropriate dress;
- Working face-to-face in the early stages of relationship building is extremely important, so you will need to allocate sufficient time in planning your engagement activity;
- Including a social component in a presentation or event can help break down any barriers or fears that people may have about participating;
- Different communication styles may be required, depending on the group and underlying influences such as:
  - Sensitivities to discussing personal topics and making decisions on behalf of their community
  - Proficiency in English (written and verbal). Some people from non-English speaking backgrounds may, understandably, lack the confidence to use their English in a public speaking situation;

  - Literacy in a first language. Remember that for many refugees, their schooling may have been repeatedly interrupted or ceased altogether due to war, political upheaval or having no access to formal education services;
  - Preferred methods to receive and communicate information, such as local papers, radio, word-of-mouth, organisations, and the internet.
- Consider early in the engagement program the possibility of using interpreters to assist with the translation of written material or to interpret during workshops or meetings; and
- Local councils may have good contacts and networks with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in their area.

4.7.3 *Volunteers and community interest groups*

When working with volunteer and community interest groups, and the individuals within them, consider the following:

- Members of these groups often volunteer their time and may have other work responsibilities during the day. Determine on your first contact whether the person would prefer you to contact them during business or personal hours;
- Be mindful of the timing of events, given people's work commitments or the fact that parents may need to pick up and drop off their children from school at set times. Be mindful of key social, community and sporting events that may affect attendance levels;
- Consider providing resources for travel or covering other costs for volunteers;
- Take into consideration the potential for 'over-engagement' and 'burnout'; do your homework and find out what else is going on that volunteers might be involved in; don't just meet for meetings' sake, have a clear objective in mind and inform your stakeholders of the objective. Meet with the right people and be clear what it is you want from them. Ensure you stick to the timeframe;
- Groups will differ in the way they run meetings; some are very formal, some informal. Know this in advance;
- Try something innovative, e.g. a BBQ, music, as many volunteers go to many meetings and workshops;
- Be aware of the usual meeting times of the groups you are engaging with, and provide a generous timeframe for engagement activities, including any correspondence that needs to be discussed at their regular meetings;
- Go and visit volunteers and catchment groups on their 'turf'. Sometimes, groups hold meetings in the homes of volunteer members. In these situations, if your presentation requires any special resources (e.g. projector screen), hiring a local venue is an option. If meetings fall at mealtimes, make sure you provide food and refreshments;
- Some volunteers do not regularly attend meetings so make sure you recap on what it is you want to discuss, why and how it came about, so everyone understands the issue;
- Make sure you allow lots of time for questions/comments;

- Arrive early and stay late so you can mingle with the volunteers;
- Remember these people are volunteers and have other commitments that may take priority over your event. Expect a percentage to not turn up at the last minute;
- If you don't know the answer, say so! Offer to find out and provide the answer;
- If you would like a group to vote on an issue, make sure the group will have a quorum at the meeting;
- Some volunteers have a lot of knowledge and skills that they are willing to share. Value their contribution;
- Keep people in the loop with updates. Let them know the outcome of their input. If you say you are going to do something, do it. If you can't, make sure you inform people of why you can no longer fulfil your commitment and suggest an alternative if relevant, otherwise you will lose their trust; and
- If you are planning a site visit or event which may involve a health or safety risk, be aware of your duties under work health and safety legislation and manage the risk appropriately.

4.7.4 *Gender*

When working with any group, it is important to create opportunities for everyone to participate in your engagement process. Things to keep in mind as you plan your engagement program:

- Try to involve a gender balance in your engagement activity to ensure that participation reflects community diversity;
- Be mindful of the multiple responsibilities of parents. Consider working with this situation in creative ways, e.g. provide children with creative learning activities under their parents' supervision while the engagement activity is taking place;
- For some women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, you may need to provide women-only opportunities for engagement; and
- Rural women can face additional barriers to participation such as distance, access to alternative forms of transport and access to childcare, particularly to cover the long hours that may be taken up by travel.

4.7.5 *Youth*

When working with young people, consider the following:

- Do not consider all young people as one homogenous group. Characteristics such as gender and cultural background also need to be considered;
- Young people are often well informed and engaged, and can be a wonderful source of energy and enthusiasm for a project they consider worthwhile;
- Building trust with young people is a fundamental basis for effective engagement;
- Consider whether organisations and agencies who work with young people could assist with your engagement;

- Intergenerational equality is often of greater importance than financial matters so avoid making assumptions about what may be important to a young person; let them define what is important from their perspective.

4.7.6 *Seniors*

When working with older people, consider the following:

- Many seniors are fit, healthy and mobile, but it is important to be aware of the changing mobility of seniors and the impact it can have on their ability to participate. Two significant changes that may have an impact are when people stop driving and when they can no longer walk unaided;
- When selecting and using engagement techniques and tools, be aware of the difficulties some seniors may have with vision and hearing;
- Seniors may have time to participate in engagement activities but remember that they are increasingly taking on additional family roles such as childcare for grandchildren; and
- Be aware of possible intergenerational differences between facilitators and seniors that may block clear communication, such as language, values and the use of technology to provide information or responses.

4.7.7 *People with a disability*

The main types of disabilities are:

- Intellectual disability, e.g. a person who has significantly below average intelligence (based on an IQ test), or who may have difficulty with everyday life skills;
- Physical disability, e.g. a person who uses a wheelchair or has difficulties with communication;
- Sensory disability, e.g. deaf people, people who are blind or vision impaired;
- Psychiatric disability, e.g. a person who has bipolar disorder;
- Acquired brain injury, e.g. a person who was not born with a disability, but acquired their disability through a life event; and
- Neurological impairment, e.g. a person who has a degenerative condition such as multiple sclerosis, Huntington’s Disease or motor neurone disease.

Some people may have more than one type of disability. For example, a person who has a vision impairment may also have an intellectual disability.

When working with people with a disability, consider the following:

- Ask the people you are planning to engage what their needs are. They will be in the best position to tell you how you can best assist them to contribute to the engagement processes;
- Use organisations or community groups that support people with disabilities to help arrange and conduct the engagement activity;
- Put the person first, not their disability. Describe ‘a person with a disability’ rather than ‘a disabled person’. Remember that you are engaging with the person, not with the disability they may have;

- Some people with disabilities have carers. It is important to address any communication to the person with the disability and not to their carer or friend. It is also important to be mindful of the carer's needs in organising any engagement activities;
- In general, all engagement activities should be inclusive so that people with disabilities can participate in the same ways as others in the community. However, some people with disabilities may have difficulties, for example, being heard or understood in a large public forum, and it may be necessary to organise smaller forums that better suit their needs; and
- In choosing venues for engagement activities, consider whether the site is accessible (public transport, ramps), whether the building is internally accessible (suitable door widths, accessible toilets) and whether it meets the specific requirements of the people you are engaging (Braille and tactile signage, hearing augmentation system).

4.7.8 *Local council*

When working with Councils and council staff, consider the following:

- Council meetings are regular (often once a month), as are subcommittee meetings. Agenda deadlines are tight and normally non-negotiable. A response from local government may take several months. For this reason, always provide a generous timeframe for consultation and, in setting deadlines for submissions, always consider local government needs;
- If a matter is complex and would benefit from personal contact with councillors and/or council staff, offer a presentation to Council. Council briefings occur with most local governments and provide an opportunity for direct contact with the decision-makers. Don't expect discussion or debate at these presentations, they are for briefings only;
- When communicating with local government, think of the subject from their point of view. What would the Council expect of a remediation and management project? What do you expect from the Council? What will it cost, and what benefits would their involvement bring?
- Local government is a major player at a local level. In communicating with local government, understand whether they are a decision-making authority in the matter you are raising. In all cases, the view of local authorities is important and should be treated as such. Involve them as early as possible in the engagement process;
- At a local level, local government provides a single measurement of community opinion that is often impractical to gather from engagement with other interests. Input from local government can provide consensus and direction, which submissions from more focused interest groups cannot provide;
- No-one is better qualified to represent the local community than local government, because they are elected by and accountable to the local community. Local government is therefore a strong ally in engagement activities;

- Local government is sent lots of information, and things can get lost. Send requests to specific officers and speak to those officers first to forewarn of the request. Any written correspondence must be specific about what is required, and by what date; and
- Be sure to keep good records of your engagement with local government, or any other stakeholder, as people may query the process and their opportunity to be involved.

4.8 Reporting back

Providing feedback to the community regarding their involvement in an engagement program is a vital aspect of the engagement. Feedback should be provided at each stage of the engagement process, and following engagement activities, as well as at the completion of the program.

Timely reporting back to the community both validates information as it is gathered and encourages continued involvement. It provides evidence that individuals' views, comments and suggestions have been recorded accurately and taken seriously, contributing to the level of trust between all participants in the engagement program.

When reporting back to the community, feedback should include details about:

- The rationale for, and extent of, the engagement process undertaken;
- The potential stakeholders who were identified and invited to participate, the names of stakeholders who actually participated (subject to compliance with privacy legislation);
- How, when and where engagement activities were carried out, including methods and techniques that were used;
- The information that was provided;
- The input provided by individuals;
- What decision was made;
- How the community's' input was considered and incorporated into the decision-making process;
- What other factors influenced the decision that was made, e.g. legislation or policy; and
- The availability of documentation for viewing by individuals.

Appendix A – Community stakeholder engagement plan

This appendix provides an example of the content that may be covered in a community stakeholder engagement plan, presented in Table 6. Environment protection authorities and other appropriate Commonwealth, state or territory government agencies should always be consulted regarding any specific requirements. This may involve referral to other relevant regulatory agencies.

Table 6: Example community stakeholder engagement plan.

Section	Suggested content
Administrative and management aspects	• Personnel who will be undertaking the community engagement program, including any external consultants who may be contracted to conduct all or any aspects of the program • Budget • Timeline, including identification of factors that may influence the timing of engagement activities, e.g. the meeting cycles of organisations and the need to allow ample time for participants to receive and reflect on information provided to them.
Background	• Description of the overall remediation and management project • Key issues and stakeholder concerns that will be addressed through the community engagement program • Summary of the outcome of any stakeholder engagement that may have already taken place, e.g. during preliminary investigations at the site.
Identification of stakeholders	• Names of potential community stakeholders (individuals and groups) • How these stakeholders have been/will be invited to participate in the engagement program.
Purpose and objectives of the stakeholder engagement program	• Purpose of the overall community engagement program • Specific objectives relating to the engagement activities being planned • The limitations of community engagement for the project, i.e. negotiable and non-negotiable aspects of the program • How the community will be included in the setting of objectives for the engagement plan.

Section	**Suggested content**
Evaluation strategy	• The purpose of the evaluation strategy—for both the program, and for individual engagement activities • The evidence that will be used—the what and how of information collection • The resources required to undertake the evaluation • The process and tools that will be used to undertake the evaluation • What will be done with the results of the evaluation.
Stakeholder engagement techniques	• Different engagement techniques and tools that will be used to address specific issues identified earlier in the plan • Rationale and justification for the methods and techniques chosen • Strategies in place to remove or lower barriers to participation that may be experienced by different community members.
Use of stakeholder input	• Plans to incorporate stakeholders' input into the decision-making process.
Statement of intent	• Clear and concise summary of information set out in the stakeholder engagement plan.
Reporting requirements	• Feedback that will be provided to the community regarding their involvement in the engagement program, including the content and timing of the feedback • Information that will be provided to relevant state and territory environment protection authorities and other regulatory bodies regarding the stakeholder engagement program, including the content and timing of any reports.

Appendix B – Engaging the community

This appendix provides further detail on how each key element of community engagement can be implemented, presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Implementing community engagement.

Key element	Implementation
Accept and involve community as legitimate partners	• Involve community early • Involve all groups that have an interest in or are potentially affected by the issue • Focus on informing community to enable their participation • Never underestimate the level of technical knowledge of the community • Invite the community to become involved in the design and evaluation of the engagement process
Plan carefully	• Clearly define the objectives of the community engagement program • Identify and address the concerns of specific community members • Ensure relevant staff are trained in risk communication • Develop a timeline that allows sufficient time for the engagement process • Include allowance for new developments or changes—be flexible and responsive
Listen to the community's specific concerns	• Do not make assumptions about what people know, think or feel—take time to find out • Allow all interested parties the opportunity to be heard • Be empathetic; put yourself in the place of the stakeholders and try to understand their concerns • Trust, credibility, competence, fairness and empathy can be of as equal or greater importance to the community as facts and figures • Develop a stakeholder engagement plan that has the involvement and support of the decision makers

Key element	Implementation
Be honest, frank and open	• Do not expect to be trusted, and remember that once trust is lost, it is very difficult to regain • Acknowledge when you do not have all the answers, and commit to getting back to people with the answers in a given timeframe • Disclose information, including ‘bad news’ as soon as it comes to hand • Do not exaggerate or minimise the level of risk; be honest • Share more, not less, information
Talk about positives as well as negatives	• Be prepared to talk about the possible community benefits of remediation, such as the anticipation of relief, renewed public space, improved environmental conditions or resolution to an ongoing source of tension.
Coordinate and collaborate with other credible sources	• Build bridges with other organisations and groups that can provide reliable, credible information and advice • Try to issue communications jointly with other credible sources—conflict and disagreement between organisations makes communication difficult and results in loss of credibility
Meet the needs of stakeholders	• Consider opportunities to assist individuals in participating in the engagement process, e.g. by aiding with travel to meetings, access to office facilities, free methods to respond to published material (e.g. free phone numbers, return envelopes), information in languages other than English, if appropriate • Be aware of and sensitive to different cultural behaviours and preferred methods of communication • Ensure that information is readable, credible and publicly accessible, and written in a style and format (including site maps and diagrams) that encourages individuals to comment about general and specific issues, especially where technical detail is involved

Key element	**Implementation**
Meet the needs of the media	• Be accessible to the media, be open with information and respect deadlines • Provide information tailored to the needs of each type of media • Prepare in advance and provide background information to issues • Provide feedback (praise or criticism) to the media when appropriate • Where possible, establish a good working relationship with media personnel • Nominate one person to liaise with the media and provide the main point of contact; this helps to avoid conflicting or confused messages • Remember that the media will want to report danger rather than safety, simplicity rather than complexity, and politics rather than risk
Speak clearly and with compassion, kindness and respect	• Always use clear, plain language • Simplify language, not content • Acknowledge and respond to emotions expressed by individuals, including anger, fear, outrage and helplessness • Do not be patronising or condescending; show respect for individuals' intelligence • Respectfully re-state a person's questions or statements in your own words to make sure you understand the question before answering it • Discuss what you can do and what you will do • Do what you promise • Remember to tell people what you can't do, and why • People can understand risk information, but they may not agree with you; some people will not be satisfied

Key element	Implementation
Evaluate effectiveness	• Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the stakeholder engagement program during and at the end of each stage of the process • Record accurately and comprehensively the nature and detail of community contributions and responses made throughout the stakeholder engagement program • Establish feedback processes and monitor and review the effectiveness of each engagement activity as well as the program overall • Learn from your mistakes

Appendix C – Common questions from the community

The appendix provides some common questions from the community that arise during remediation projects, presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Common questions from the community.

Concern	Example questions
Health and lifestyle concerns	• What is the danger to my health and that of my family? • Can I drink our water and eat vegetables from my garden? • 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? • We are already at risk because of X. Will Y increase our risk? • How will this affect our quality of life/property values? • How will we be affected by the stigma of X being attached to our community? • How will we be protected in an accident?
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 situation? • How do our exposures compare to the standards? • You say X can't happen. Why not?

Concern	Example questions
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?
Risk management concerns	• When will the problem be corrected? • Why did you let this happen and what are you going to do about it? • Why do you favour option X? What are the other options? • 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?

Appendix D – Community engagement techniques

This appendix provides detail on a variety of community engagement techniques. Table 9 presents common group engagement techniques.

Table 9: Engagement techniques for a group.

Technique	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Public meetings	Usually more than 20 participants, 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, requires good, fair and unbiased facilitation.	• Provides a forum for information dissemination and exchange with large numbers of people • 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 participants may dominate • Less vocal participants may not express their views.
On-site meetings	Open-air 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 • Demystifies the project • Provides an opportunity to develop rapport with key stakeholders. • Artefacts are a key way to engage with individuals	• Number of participants is limited by logistics • Accessibility to the site not always possible, e.g. for aged or disabled participants, or because of safety concerns.
Search conference	Usually 20-30 participants selected to be heterogeneous but sharing an interest, discussion is conducted in stages, lasting a day, weekend, or longer, aimed at	• Can assist in the early stages of the engagement process to identify stakeholder characteristics and relevant issues	• Large time commitment • May appear to be an elite group • May result in the development of unrealistic expectations.

Technique	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
	identifying a broad cross-section of views on a variety of issues.	• Program is devised with participants • Future-oriented • Allows lengthy discussion to develop and refine ideas.	
Design meeting	Participants 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 participants to better express their views and visualise the impact of changes • enables the practitioner/consultant to understand how a proposal appears to stakeholders.	• Number of participants limited • Will not enable complete socio-economic and environmental impact to be determined.
Workshops	Participants usually share concerns and skills, structured sessions aimed at encouraging open discussion between participants and producing proposals for solutions.	• Provides opportunity for all participants to contribute • Is a flexible technique that can be used at all stages of the engagement program • Can provide a forum for testing alternatives, training opportunities, information gathering and dissemination, receiving feedback and refining input.	• The ‘right’ expert may not be available • Participants may not be adequately prepared • Experts may dominate and inhibit discussion.
Morning/afternoon “tea and chat” sessions	Small meetings within the local community, usually at a person’s home.	• Relaxed setting is conducive to effective dialogue • Provides for maximum communication.	Requires a lot of labour to reach many people.

Technique	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Small format meetings	Small meetings with existing groups or stakeholders with similar interests.	• Provides opportunity for an in-depth information exchange in a non-threatening forum.	• May be too selective • Can leave out important stakeholders.

Table 10 provides individual community engagement techniques.

Table 10: Engagement techniques for an individual.

Technique	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Individual discussion	Selected individuals consulted by telephone, meetings, and doorknocking an area. Home visits should be preceded by a safety/risk analysis.	• Provides a quick and efficient means of disseminating information and identifying a range of issues and views • Provides an opportunity for the practitioner/consultant to learn how best to communicate with a particular stakeholder group • Appropriate when confidentiality is essential.	• Provides limited opportunities for large numbers of stakeholders to participate in the process • Does not allow for broad-scale exchange of ideas • Multiple individual discussions can be very time consuming.
Observations	Means of gathering information and establishing contacts in a community.	• Provides a thorough understanding of the community in preparation for engagement of stakeholders.	• This technique is generally only suitable in the early information collection stage of engagement.

Technique	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Survey	Structured questioning of a stakeholder sample that statistically represents the whole population or sector, used to gather information about objective characteristics or attitudes.	• Provides data for: • analysis of characteristics of a particular community • to document probable effects of a proposal • for gauging likely public reaction to a proposal • provides opportunity for input from individuals who would otherwise be unlikely to participate • statistically valid results can satisfy a political need and are generally more persuasive.	• Minimal discussion and no interaction between participants • Respondents may be indifferent to the subject matter and require persuasion • Can be labour-intensive and expensive to generate statistically valid results • May be perceived as a public relations/marketing tool. • For mailed surveys, the response rate is generally very low.
Display and exhibitions	Means of disseminating information to stakeholders, mobile or permanent exhibition, may be staffed if seeking response and/or giving detailed explanation.	• Opportunity to inform and meet with members of the wider community who can speak directly to the practitioner/consultant • Opportunity to demonstrate commitment to engagement.	• May be costly and ineffective, particularly if the stakeholders do not perceive the issues as being of high importance.
Open houses	Informal arrangement where tables or booths are manned by knowledgeable staff/consultants who are able to discuss what stakeholders want.	• Sets up a comfortable discussion situation for staff and stakeholders • Especially useful early in the process to establish rapport and explain complex processes • Stakeholders can drop in at any time that suits them.	• Attendances may be low if distrust of the organisation or process is already high.

Technique	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Printed information	Information bulletins, fact sheets, newsletters and brochures distributed regularly to households and/or made available to stakeholders at key public outlets.	• Provides ongoing information on the project • Can reach large audience Facilitates written responses if comment form is enclosed.	• A good mailing list or distribution network is required to ensure that information reaches all interested parties • Difficult to communicate information about complex concepts in brief newsletters • The level of literacy and English-language proficiency of recipients will limit effectiveness • Generic flyers may be perceived as junk mail and may be ignored.
Site office	Temporary on-site accommodation for any consultants brought in to conduct any or all aspects of the engagement program, 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 the need of some stakeholders for individual attention to their issues and concerns.	• oes not involve interaction between stakeholders • May be costly • Has limited value in the overall engagement process if used alone.

Technique	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Open door	Periodic open days to invite interested people and complainants to visit the site.	• Fosters small group or one-on-one communications, creating a comfortable atmosphere for discussion • May meet the information and interaction needs of stakeholders who are not served by typical public meetings • Useful to explain complex issues or processes • Can shift stakeholder confidence in current and proposed operations, pinpoint particular problems and result in problems being addressed and resolved.	• Generally more staff-intensive than a meeting • Difficult to document stakeholder input • Protesters may try to disrupt the event/s • May not provide some stakeholders with a preferred ‘public’ forum to express their opinion • May not be possible for reasons of commercial confidentiality or work health and safety.
Hotline	A telephone service to provide information and to record comments, concerns and suggestions.	• Information is easily and directly accessible • Information flow is controlled and consistent • Easy to ensure up-to-date information is provided • Provides access to information for stakeholders with mobility concerns.	• Would not be accessible for people from non-English speaking backgrounds unless the hotline is available in different languages, or a translation service is provided • The designated contact person must be committed to and prepared for prompt and accurate responses.

Technique	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Websites	Information dissemination through an interactive web page, aimed at informing and generating interest among stakeholders.	• Capable of reaching large audiences • Keeps stakeholders informed • Site can be updated quickly and easily • Allows people to access large amounts of information and provide feedback.	• Only available to people who have access to a computer with web connection • Tends not to be accessible to minority groups such as the elderly, poor, people with non-English speaking backgrounds • Can contribute to selective retention of information if not managed effectively.
Submission	Oral or written submissions to enable people to register their ideas and concerns, including through a complaint register, open to all stakeholders.	• Demonstration of organisational commitment to open engagement • provides focus for groups to organise a basis from which to lobby • provides the practitioner/consultant with 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 • If oral submissions are organised, the formality of hearings may intimidate some people.

Technique	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Media	Information through social media, or traditional printed and electronic media, aimed at informing or generating interest and feedback. May also include use of paid advertisements. Must be robust and proactive.	• Demonstration of organisational commitment to provision of information • Keeps stakeholders informed • Provides opportunity for all stakeholders to participate in the engagement process • May satisfy any legal notification requirements.	• Will not reach all groups unless special attention is given to minority groups by the use of ethnic media, and other avenues to reach other target groups • If paying for advertisements, can be expensive, especially in urban areas. • Likely that only a limited amount of information will be conveyed.

Appendix E – References

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