



THE GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

Further testing confirms “negligible health risks” in soil and sediment samples from the Headstone area

Norfolk Island Minister for the Environment, Education and Social Welfare, the Hon Vicky Jack MLA, has released details of the professional analysis of laboratory tests on samples of soil and sediment taken from the area surrounding the Headstone waste disposal site. The Minister made public a letter from Toxicos Toxicology Consultants, who conducted the analysis after being recommended as an appropriate professional body by Prof Brian Priestly, Director of the Australian Centre for Human Health Risk Assessment at Monash University. The results of the latest analysis of soil and sediment reach similar conclusions to those of Prof Priestly in relation to water samples from the area analysed in 2008.

Mrs Jack said that Toxicos had concluded that the very low levels of dioxins detected in the samples “...present a **negligible health risk** to people because the dioxin concentrations are within the background concentrations for Australian soils and less than the soil guideline values intended to be protective of human health”.

Toxicos had pointed out that the sampling method for sediments had resulted in the collection of specimens which included both water and sludge. They indicated that more testing might be required if separate results were to be obtained for water and sludge. However, Toxicos advised that “There are no health based guideline values for sludge”. The Minister said that since the water samples have already been shown not to contain measurable levels of dioxin and the combined water/sediment sample results were well below levels of concern, it is not proposed to conduct further testing.

“The Administration has spent in excess of \$32,000 on the testing of water, soil and sediment in the past two years, of which around \$27,000 was for samples from the Headstone area”, Mrs Jack said. “None of the tests have shown any levels of dioxins which would pose a risk to public health. The latest results will alleviate any fears in the community about potential public health risks. In these circumstances, the

Norfolk Island Government sees no need to commit additional public funds to any further testing at this stage”.

The Minister said that any resident in the Headstone area still wanting to obtain a qualitative risk assessment would be free to do so, at their own expense. The Administration would make available the relevant laboratory results without charge to any such person, upon application to the Chief Executive Officer.

Stephanie V Jack

Minister for the Environment, Education and Social Welfare

9 January 2009

Attachments: - Opinion letter from Toxicos dated 17 December 2008; and
 - Table prepared by Toxicos summarising sample locations,
 samples and analytical results. (Note: Names identifying
 individual landholders have been blacked out.)