

TO: State and Territory Environmental Health Managers  
Australian Institute of Environmental Health (AIEH)  
Australian Local Government Association

**REPORT: EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE AND TRAINING OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PARAPROFESSIONALS**

The Environmental Health Committee (enHealth) of the Australian Health Protection Committee has identified the environmental health workforce as a priority issue for health agencies and local governments across Australia.

As an identified strategy to address environmental health workforce requirements, in early 2006 enHealth commissioned a project to examine the use of environmental health paraprofessionals (technicians) to supplement the work of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) in local government and, potentially, in other areas.

At the project's inception it was envisaged that it would be conducted in 2 stages, with phase 1 focused on the development of an agreed policy framework regarding the role of technicians and the context in which they would operate, and phase 2, which is dependent on the outcomes of phase 1. Phase 2 would concentrate on the development of more detailed competencies for the specified areas in which environmental health technicians may be permitted to work in local government and other settings, and this information would be used to help inform a review of training packages (such as the Local Government Training Package, scheduled for review in 2007).

The project is being overseen by an advisory committee, comprising representatives from each State and Territory, the National President of the Australian Institute of Environmental Health and a representative of the Australian Local Government Association.

Brian Wall, the Health Policy Consultant contracted to undertake phase 1 of the project, has now completed his work in this area and presented his final report to enHealth.

At its meeting on 21 November 2006, enHealth accepted the report, with the caveat that the recommendations are not yet accepted or endorsed. This enabled the consultant's contract to be completed, but will allow enHealth to undertake further consultation and consideration, before any of the recommendations are adopted or phase 2 of the project is commenced.

I would like to assure you that enHealth will be consulting widely with key stakeholders, including local government and the environmental health profession, on how the findings from Mr Wall's report might best be addressed. enHealth is seeking input on the key implications for State and Territory jurisdictions and a comprehensive response from local government as well as the profession, on whether the recommended approaches will assist in building environmental health capacity and improve the support for EHOs on the ground.

I herewith present the final report *Examination of the role and training of Environmental Health Paraprofessionals* (November 2006) for your consideration and invite you to use it as the basis of consultation and discussion with the appropriate stakeholders in your organisation or jurisdiction.

Feedback would be most appropriately channelled through your jurisdiction or organisation's enHealth representative, and you could also direct any written comments to myself (c/o the enHealth address) by the end of January 2007, if you wish.

EnHealth recognises that Australia's present and future environmental health officer workforce problems will not be solved by the concept of Environmental Health Technicians and this report alone, and is also working in partnership with the AIEH to support other strategies that enhance the environmental health officer workforce in Australia.

On behalf of enHealth, I look forward to working with you on helping to determine the best way forward for the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr Roscoe Taylor', written in a cursive style.

Dr Roscoe Taylor  
Chair, Environmental Health Committee (enHealth)

21 December 2006