

International Conference on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, Decommissioning, Environmental Protection and Remediation: Ensuring Safety and Enabling Sustainability



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CONSENT-BASED SITING: FOSTERING COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR AUSTRALIA'S FIRST DEEP GEOLOGICAL REPOSITORY PROJECT

Gaining community support is crucial for the successful implementation of a deep geological repository (DGR) project, particularly in the context of Australia's first venture into this domain –The Chandler Project. The Chandler Project will be licensed to accept international low level radioactive waste and also international chemical wastes and Tellus is approaching the signing of an indigenous land use agreement for this project. The paper highlights the significance of adopting a consent-based siting approach to secure community involvement and acceptance in the development of Australia's DGR. It outlines the key principles and strategies of the consent-based siting approach and emphasises its potential to build trust, foster transparency, and ensure the long-term viability of the project. The consent-based siting approach emphasises the involvement of local communities in the decision-making process, recognising their rights, concerns, and knowledge. It acknowledges that the selection and establishment of a DGR site require the support and cooperation of the affected communities, who play a crucial role in shaping the project's future. The paper presents a practical framework for implementing the consent-based siting approach, encompassing various stages, from site identification to project approval and implementation. The framework emphasises early engagement and transparent communication as fundamental pillars. It advocates for open dialogues, public consultations, and active participation of stakeholders to ensure their voices are heard and considered. The paper also highlights the importance of providing accurate information about DGR technology, safety measures, and the long-term benefits it offers, thereby addressing concerns and dispelling misconceptions. Furthermore, the paper emphasises the significance of incorporating indigenous knowledge and perspectives in the development process, respecting the cultural, spiritual, and environmental values of indigenous communities. By integrating indigenous knowledge systems and engaging in meaningful consultation, the consent-based siting approach promotes a mutually beneficial partnership with indigenous communities, fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration. The adoption of a consent-based siting approach in Australia's first DGR project offers numerous advantages. It ensures that the project aligns with the values, aspirations, and expectations of the local communities, promoting social acceptance and minimising opposition. By actively involving the affected communities, the approach enables the identification of potential site-related issues and facilitates their integration into decision-making processes and mitigation strategies. Tellus' framework, centered around community engagement, transparency, and inclusivity, provides a roadmap for building trust, securing community support, and ensuring the long-term success of the project. By embracing this approach, Australia can foster meaningful collaboration, address concerns, and create a shared vision for the safe and sustainable management of radioactive waste, establishing a solid foundation for future radioactive waste initiatives in the country.

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