



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 27 November 2002

New Technology Tackles Toxic Contamination

Breakthrough world-leading technology, developed in Newcastle, will help tackle land contamination on thousands of former industrial sites around Australia.

Launching the new system, Dr John Lucas, Managing Director of Innova Soil Technology, said the system - known as Direct-heated Fast-quenched Thermal Desorption (DFTD) - is cheaper than all other systems of treatment for contaminated soils.

"The cost of using Innova DFTD technology will rival the cost of capping contaminated sites, or removing the toxic material to a hazardous waste dump. For the first time there is a realistic and cost-effective alternative which provides clear benefits to the environment."

A significant advantage of the Innova solution is that it is fully mobile. Innova establishes its plant on the site, treats the problem and then moves on. There is no need for off-site transportation of hazardous wastes on public roads.

John Lucas explained that while treating soils by heating to separate contaminants was not new, the Innova solution uses innovative methods to recover energy, reducing costs and simultaneously eliminating the potential for gas pollution.

"The Innova breakthrough is two-fold... energy recovery through patented heat exchange and the rapid quench of hot gas - from 600 degrees Celsius to 175 degrees - in less than 30 one-thousandths of a second. This eliminates the potential for contaminant reformation in the off-gases. The only by-products of the process are carbon dioxide and water."

In June this year Innova temporarily located its first processing plant on the former BHP steelworks site. The plant is capable of treating 40 tonnes of contaminated soil per hour.

John Lucas said the results of independent tests, completed last week, show the unit has passed all performance standards.

"These results will now be submitted to the Environment Protection Authority in support of our application for a licence to operate a DFTD plant on a commercial basis. We will then seek Development Approval for the plant on the BHP site, as well as developing other markets across Australia."

Estimates of the number of industrial sites in Australia contaminated by materials such as organic sludges, chlorinated solvents, tars, PCBs etc is in excess of 20,000. John Lucas says one 1993 survey

claimed over 7,000 sites in New South Wales alone, with an estimated clean-up cost of more than \$2-billion.

A recent survey by the Auditor-General in Western Australia stated that the State Government could not afford to clean up the "thousands of contaminated sites", even if it knew where they all were!

Innova Soil Technology was founded in 1995 following research supported at the University of Newcastle. The company has been supported by a \$1.1-million grant from AusIndustry as well as assistance from the New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development.

Innova Soil Technology is part-owned by TUNRA, the commercial arm of The University of Newcastle, and private investors.

Company Chairman Ron Robson explained that the Innova developments have concentrated on energy efficiency and operational stability.

"That's how we have been able to reduce the cost of remediating contaminated sites so that it is now a cost-effective alternative to containment on-site, or dumping off-site."

Another advantage of the Innova solution is that the clean soil can be re-used for any purpose.

The company's innovation was recognised last week at the national awards for outstanding achievement in collaborative research and redevelopment.

On behalf of Innova, Dr Lucas received an award from the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, at a gala function in Melbourne.

**For further information at any time please contact
Chris Ford or Jai McDermott at FordComm on (02) 4929 2063**