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16 April 2010

Letter to MfE

To whom it may concern

Re: ESR Submission on the Proposed National Environmental Standard for Assessing and Managing Contaminants in Soil Discussion Document

ESR welcomes the opportunity to make this submission. ESR employs staff who are internationally recognised experts in soil contamination and its effects. They have a strong track record in this area as a result of long term investment by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology in research on the environmental fate and effects of biosolids applied to land. The focus of the research has been on maximising the benefits of the nutrients and minimising the adverse effects of contaminants on productive land.

ESR does not support the proposal in its current form. We believe that it has the potential to mislead and provide communities with a false sense of security. The policy objective restricts the NES 'to make the land safe for human use' (2.3) and ESR would argue that the NES should also take account of environmental toxicity. The contaminant levels are set far too high to protect the soil ecosystem and while this is acknowledged (8.1.1) it is nowhere near prominent enough in the document as a whole. Essentially the NES proposes a means of dealing with historical contamination, we would not want to see the SCV's used by industry to sanction ongoing contamination practices today.

The attached document has been written by ESR Principal Scientist Dr Tom Speir and sets out our concerns in more detail. ESR would be very pleased to assist MfE with the next phase of development of this important NES.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'V. Orchard', is written in dark ink.

Dr Val Orchard
General Manager Research