



Australian & New Zealand
Biosolids Partnership

ANZBP Media Toolkit & Recommended Hierarchy of Response

Managed by



The Australian and New Zealand Biosolids Partnership

The Mission of the Australian and New Zealand Biosolids Partnership (ANZBP) is to support sustainable biosolids management.

The Australian Water Association (AWA) is facilitator and administrator for the ANZBP, using a subscription model to raise supporting funds. ANZBP Members are the water utilities in Australia and New Zealand which produce and have to manage biosolids; practitioners (consultants and contractors); and the agencies responsible for regulating the management and use of biosolids and research houses.

The objectives of the ANZBP are to:

- Maintain a viable membership of interested parties to enable the ANZBP to deliver its objectives.
- Support engagement with the public and other stakeholders with respect to the sustainable management of biosolids in Australia and New Zealand.
- Support the Australian and New Zealand biosolids industry on technical and regulatory matters.
- Provide support services and information for Members, the public and stakeholders.
- Participate in an international network of parties interested in the sustainable management of biosolids.

The intent of the ANZBP is to create resources by which the risks associated with biosolids can be identified, assessed, and managed or avoided, and that biosolids managers can respond effectively to the changing social and regulatory environment.

For further information

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Important note

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June 2014

Purpose and scope

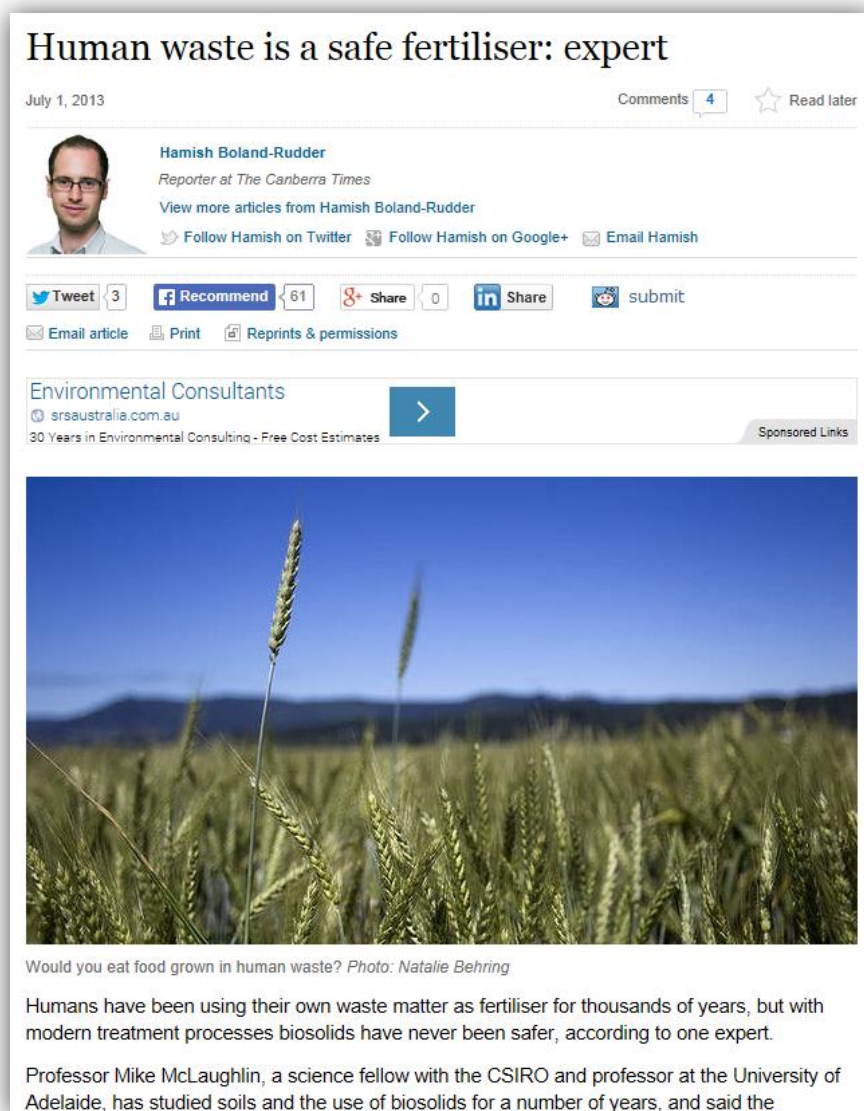
ANZBP members have identified a risk in negative media coverage impacting on the ability to undertake use of biosolids products (esp. land application). Recent threats in Australia include extensive media coverage in New South Wales in 2011 and some minor reports across other jurisdictions since that time.

While the larger members of the ANZBP have extensive media and communications resources at their fingertips, other members have approached the ANZBP for advice and support in the development of response. The ANZBP has therefore developed this reference tool which members

can consult to inform the process and possible content of responding to media coverage or enquiries regarding biosolids matters.

As media issues commonly arise from an “event” or an issue in time, this product has been developed to guide users through the process of preparation, addressing issues during an event and the follow-up that may be required post-event.

A secondary role of this product is addressing the confusion that may arise when there is a biosolids incident or media coverage that reaches across a



number of biosolids management bodies. This document lays out an agreed hierarchy for responding to media enquiries.

The ANZBP intends to work with its members to develop testimonials from biosolids users (farmers etc), reflecting their experiences. While these are initially likely to take the form of documented statements and comments, more techniques such as sound bites and videos may be developed. Already included in this document are a number of ‘good news’ media articles.

In this sense this document will be a living document and will continue to be updated as resources are developed or new information comes to light.

Date: 01.07.2013

Waste turns barren paddocks into a success

Author: Sarah Clarry

The odour might be off-putting, but the use of biosoil, or biosolids – treated, dewatered human sewage sludge – has helped New South Wales grower Danny Flanery to vastly increase the productivity of his soils, doubling their organic carbon content over the past five years.

The soil restoration is part of an overall strategy to lift the fertility and productivity of his property 'Boorowa Flats', at Galong, NSW, after an aerial photograph a decade ago revealed a devastating picture of degraded paddocks, large salt outbreaks and bare, eroded creek gullies.

Danny runs a mixed cropping/livestock operation with his father John and their families. The Galong area is characterised by acidic (pH <4.8), weathered granite soils – predominantly red and brown clay loams and some lighter soils, low in native phosphorus and organic matter. Rising saline groundwater has also been recognised federally as an urgent threat to the region's productivity.

Danny has received assistance through the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) for extensive tree planting, which has helped to address salinity and erosion issues. The Murrumbidgee CMA also sponsored his attendance at the 2008 Soil Science Australia Conference in Brisbane, where he was introduced to a range of new ideas for soil management, including the use of biosoil as a soil ameliorant.

Biosoil is cheaper than pig or poultry manure and is rich in nitrogen, phosphorus, trace elements and organic matter, which has allowed Danny to cut back on his fertiliser inputs. His organic carbon levels have increased from 1 to 1.5 per cent to 2.7 per cent on treated paddocks.

His crop yields have jumped from a low of 0.25 tonnes per



Preparation

Being prepared and having resources available if an incident occurs, or an approach is made by a media body, will not only save time and resources but will demonstrate that an organisation is equipped to respond to matters when they arise.

While unexpected issues may arise, the time spent in preparing these resources will undoubtedly assist in responding to queries, and will provide a strong basis of information from which to start.

Media Management Policies

Most organisations will have an existing media policy in place guiding the process of managing and responding to media enquiries. Often these policies require employees to delegate to Communications and Media Staff, and will nominate the level of employee with delegated responsibility to provide comment to the media or the public.

It is recommended that biosolids managers meet with their Communications Staff brief them on potential issues and make them aware of resources available to assist (e.g. the ANZBP website) when a media issues arises.

Media Questions and Answers (Holding lines)

One of the most common communications tools to support communications activities is the development of Media Holding Lines, a prepared set of questions and answers providing core information and addressing potential issues of interest/concern.

Media Formats are usually produced in five formats:

1. News stories—these generally run on the front pages of newspapers and at the beginning of television/radio news shows. For daily papers or shows, they will normally be about events that have taken place in the last 24 hours. They may also be about emerging developments on a story that has been in the public limelight.
2. Investigative reports - which break into the news cycle with information that may not be about 'new' events. They may create news by uncovering developments the public should know about—corruption scandals, an environmental hazard and so on. The launch of a report could generate news stories if the report contains new and different information that will grab public attention.
3. Features—these stories are generally longer and not bound by a time frame, although they must be topical and connect to public interest. Feature stories have more time for preparation and more space for detail and analysis. An ongoing program that has clear results and a demonstrable impact on people's lives could be the subject of a feature story.
4. Interviews—the staple of television and radio talk shows, interviews also appear in some print publications. They will generally have some kind of a news angle, although, as for feature stories, the criteria are less rigorous. Some interviews rest solely on the prominence or celebrity of their subject.
5. Op-eds—in newspapers, these traditionally run on the page opposite a newspaper's own editorials. They convey different perspectives, normally on issues that are in the news, or offer opinions that may themselves be new or controversial. These will often be sourced from field 'experts'

A final format which is generally a community contribution also occurs, Letters to the Editor—letters run in many print publications; electronic media offer space for different forms of reader feedback as well.
(Source: UNDP)

The template over page was developed by an ANZBP member. A range of stakeholders were involved in developing this document – skilled media and communications staff, technical minded employees with detailed knowledge of biosolids management processes, and the senior staff ultimately responsible for the issues addressed in the document.

Possible issues of interest

Common issues to arise in dealing with the media

- Agricultural use of biosolids
- Environmental improvement
- Odour concerns from biosolids
- A biosolids spill or environment contamination concerns
- Waste management
- A public health concern
- General media interest

[WATER AUTHORITY NAME]

[DATE ACTIVE]

Biosolids – Holding Lines

[water authority] treats biosolids in line with the stringent regulatory requirements set by the EPA and additionally follows a robust set of Environmental Management Systems and Quality Management Systems to further reinforce the strong level of safety and risk minimisation in place.

Testing of biosolids treated by [water authority] is conducted by an independent laboratory certified by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA).

Questions & Answers

What are biosolids?

- Biosolids are a byproduct of the sewage treatment process that are further treated to significantly reduce pathogens and volatile organic matter.
- Biosolids comprise dead microorganisms, a small portion of active microorganisms and inert solids, such as sand, which have entered the sewer.
- Biosolids can only be used and applied in accordance with strict regulatory requirements.

How are biosolids produced?

- Biosolids are produced as a normal process within sewage treatment plants.
- During sewage treatment, microorganisms digest the sewage, breaking down organic solids discharged into the sewerage system. This produces a wastewater and a solids component. The water content of the solids is reduced through mechanical processes and the resulting product is biosolids.
- [water authority] carefully treats biosolids using some of the most advanced wastewater treatment and biosolids production technology in the world. A robust quality assurance program is used to ensure the quality of the final product.

How are biosolids used?

- Biosolids produced by [water authority] are used in accordance with the applicable biosolids guidelines including the following practices [application to agricultural land/composted etc].

Does [water authority] test biosolids for pathogens including [Pathogen A/Pathogen B]?

- There are a significant number of different organisms that can cause disease in humans and it is not practical to test for each. [water authority] tests for pathogen indicators (E. coli and Salmonella) to determine if treatment has been effective, in line with international practice and EPA guidelines.

Is [water authority] aware of any cases of illnesses directly caused by biosolids?

- There is no evidence that biosolids treated by [water authority] in line with EPA requirements have had negative human health impacts.

Can pathogens be transferred from biosolids to humans and therefore pose a public health risk?

- Biosolids that are treated and used in accordance with EPA requirements do not pose a risk to human health.

How is the use of biosolids regulated?

- EPA sets strict guidelines for the use and application of biosolids which [water authority] adheres to at all times. Australia has one of the strictest regulatory regimes for biosolids application and use in the world.
- In line with EPA requirements, [water authority] prepares and follows a comprehensive Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) for each biosolids land application. This plan prescribes specific measures to be taken for each application to ensure there is no human health risk or environmental impact.

What industry protocols are in place to manage biosolid use?

- [water authority] utilises a quality management system for all practices such as handling, storage and use of biosolids.
- A key aspect of this management system is that biosolids are stored for a minimum of three years prior to use to ensure that pathogens are destroyed.

Are food and ingredients fertilised by biosolids safe for human consumption?

- Biosolids treated and used as fertiliser in accordance with EPA guidelines would pose no greater risk than other organic fertilisers to human health.

How many tonnes of biosolids does [water authority] recycle yearly?

- In XXX–YY [water authority] recycled x,xxx tonnes of biosolids.

Responding to the Media

Print Enquiries

Below are some tips to support individuals when dealing with print enquiries.

- *Clarify the questions.*

When a journalist contacts you, ask them to provide the questions in an email to you and that you will get back to them. This will ensure there is no confusion in the questions being asked and you can understand the intent of the interview. It is preferable to not verbally respond in the first instance without taking time to consider issues.

- *Anticipate issues.*

If it's a matter in which you might anticipate a press inquiry, your position should be drawn beforehand. Some issues can be found on the ANZBP Media Tools web page.

- *Be well briefed.*

This may mean rereading past information, or, in the case of a major interview, building a briefing book with the help of others and learning its contents.

- *Anticipate questions.*

Not just the easy ones, but the tough ones, too. In an in-depth interview, you're not likely to anticipate all the questions, but the more the better.

- *List the key points you want to make, in order of importance.*

You may not get to make them all, nor will you be assured that they all get printed, but that list of points is the spine of the successful interview.

- *Don't say 'no comment'.*

There is nothing more challenging to a reporter than to hear someone say "no comment", so avoid if possible.



Fronting the Media – Audi and Visual Interviews

Below are some pointers from an experience water industry professional to assist in managing successful media engagements:

1. Know the detail -facts, figures – but choose which ones are the important ones to use. Don't overuse them, it will only confuse the audience and the journalist will lose interest. It's a balancing act between sounding knowledgeable and sounding like a geek.
2. If it's a 'technical' subject, you must simplify it into normal everyday speak – no jargon, no acronyms, just plain English – convert technical terms as far as possible.
3. Prepare your Key Messages – what is the 'Take Home' message – it must be simple and repeated. Limit them to a couple – one is even better.
4. Prepare for tough questions - try to anticipate where the journalist may go with the interview – what else is in the media that is topical and may relate to your interview. Prepare a 'politically correct' answer with your Communications team. But don't try to blame/pass responsibility to another organisation. There are a number of standard responses that can be used.
5. Practice your answers before the interview – try not to 'Um' or 'Ah' too much, nor hesitate – you will lose credibility.
6. Develop a rapport with the journalists – especially TV interviewers – you can control these interviews and suggest content and presentation and location. If you can come up with an 'angle' or 'hook' they will love you!
7. Make sure you have a great relationship with your Comms team – absolutely critical. They are the first point of contact with the Media. Hopefully they'll establish a "can do" and "no trouble" relationship with the journalist. This puts the TV/Radio station and the journalists in a good frame of mind to start with – meaning your experience should not be unpleasant. Shock Jocks however are a different story!
8. Learn the tricks of doing different interviews: tape v's live, TV v's Radio.
9. For radio interviews (taped or live): lay out your paperwork (Q&As, Fact Sheets, Media releases, Data, etc) in front of you – know where everything is – you can then easily refer and read your response BUT as if you are simply responding – don't make it sound as if you are reading a predetermined answer.
10. For taped radio interviews – if you don't like the sound of something you just said (you phrased it poorly or it was wrong) simply stop and ask to start again. They don't mind.
11. For TV recordings, same thing. But you can control the interview and take the journalist on a 'journey' – tell them the whole story. They'll decide what makes it to air. Use props (like large scale maps, photos, etc). On site is better for the story/message impact, so suggest going to site.
12. Remember – you know more about the subject than the media.
13. You'll be lucky to get more than 10 seconds on Radio and 30 seconds on TV – make it count with a 'Key Message'
14. Relax and be natural.

Proactive communication: Education Programs

The Media is entitled to objective, reliable and relevant information about biosolids activities and to open communication on environmental, social and economic issues associated with biosolids use.

Detailed communications plans need to be developed for all relevant projects that are part of the program.

Stakeholder Liaison

Media Forums

Media forums are a useful way to disseminate information and listen to Media concerns, value and aspirations. The format of forums may vary and be adapted, depending on requirements. They could include a combination of focus groups or workshop format.

Media group presentations and briefings

Provide presentations and briefings on biosolids generally, or specific projects, to the Media and business groups.

Reference Groups

Media input to help guide its decisions and, where appropriate, establish Media reference groups, which meet regularly with stakeholder and Corporation representatives.

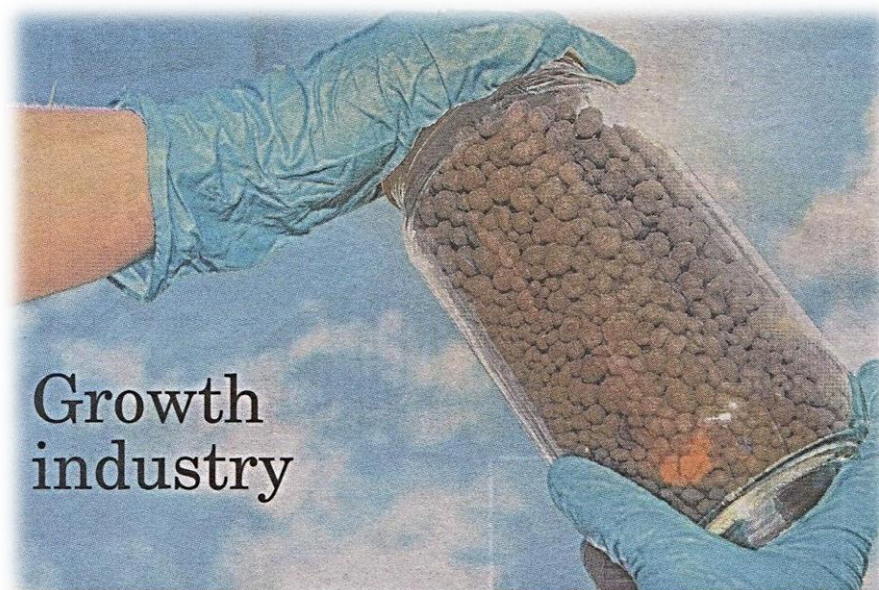
Media tours

Tours of biosolids-related areas such as land application sites, wastewater treatment plants, compost facilities or the biosolids storage facility could be offered to interested Media members. These tours will allow a 'first hand' experience of biosolids production and use for Media members and stakeholders, which may enhance understanding.

Supporting Materials

Websites/pages

In the current environment the first place a media body will approach for information



Nutritive boost: Pelletised sewage sludge shows good potential as a fertiliser.

by LYNDAL READING

A NEW pelletised fertiliser made from dried sewage is "showing promise" according to Southern Farming Systems.

SFS research and trials co-ordinator Annieka Paridaen said preliminary results showed it improved yield and the plants were well established and vigorous early in the season.

"We just put it down the cone with the seed and the plants were

able to use the nutrients straight away, so they came up pretty well," Ms Paridaen said.

She said the product had only been trialled for one season but was "showing promise."

The fertiliser is produced at Barwon Water's plant at Connewarre near Torquay and made from dewatered sludge from sewage.

The plant, the biggest in the southern hemisphere, was officially opened by Water Minister

Peter Walsh last month. Project co-ordinator Michael Naughton said the plant could produce 8000-9000 tonnes of fertiliser initially and could scale up to 12,000 tonnes in future.

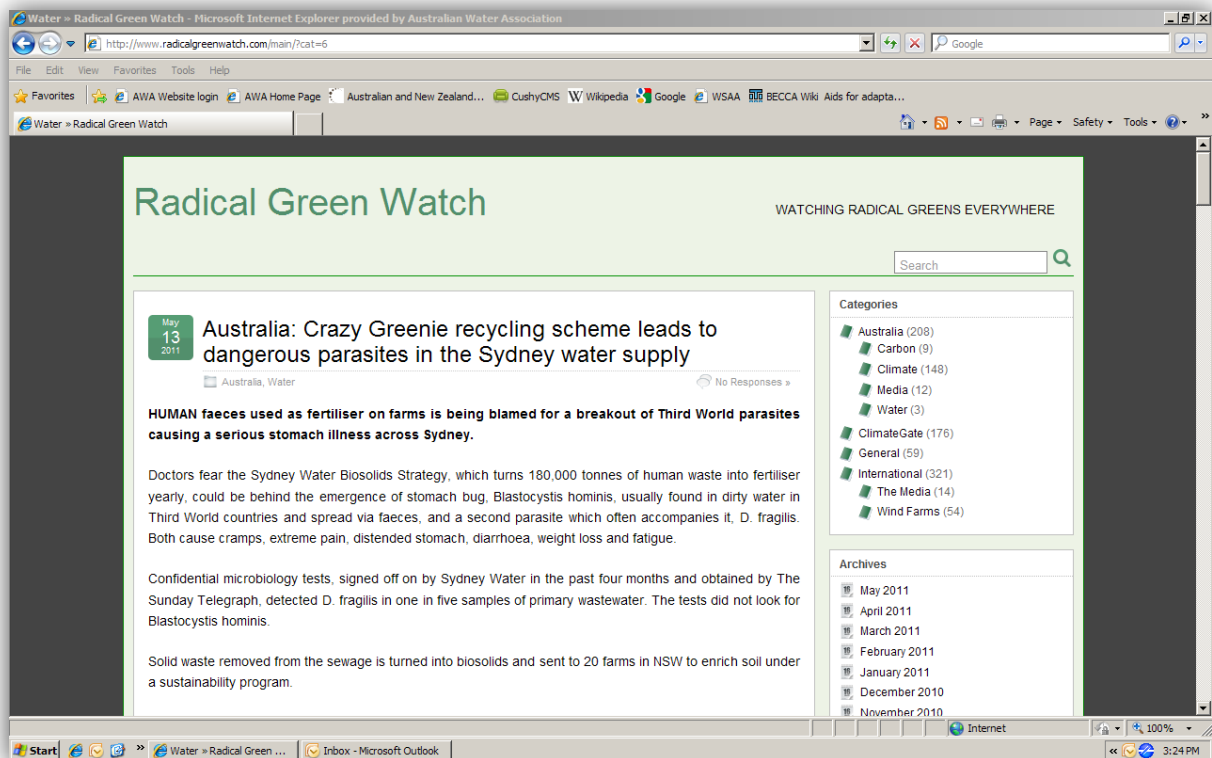
A typical breakdown of the pellets is elemental phosphorus about 2.2 per cent, nitrogen is about 6.7 per cent and carbon about 38 per cent.

He said in some cases the pellets could replace traditional fertilisers, depending on the require-

is an organisations website. It is therefore critical that any information provided on public access pages is clear and accurate. If there is concern a statement may be misquoted it may be appropriate to not publish on a webpage. A webpage may seek to direct visitors to trusted sites for additional information.

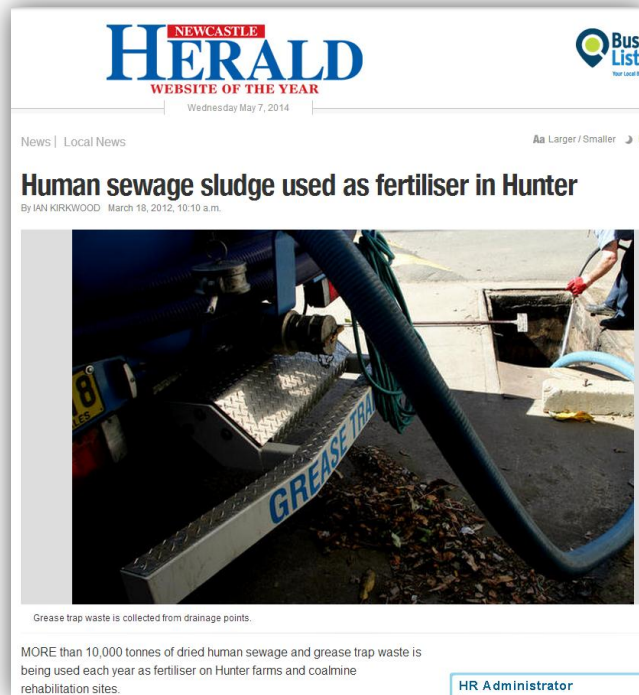
Brochures/ Video/ Flyers etc

Educational materials such as those enclosed in the Appendices may be developed and employed for community education and further developed for media information tools.



Review and improvement

Once an event or period of media focus is under control it is an opportune time to assess the situation, the response and the outcome. This information should be used to document the lessons learned. There may be a need to change processes, roles and responsibilities going forward and these outcomes should be fed back into business as usual activities.



Some questions project teams may wish to consider include:

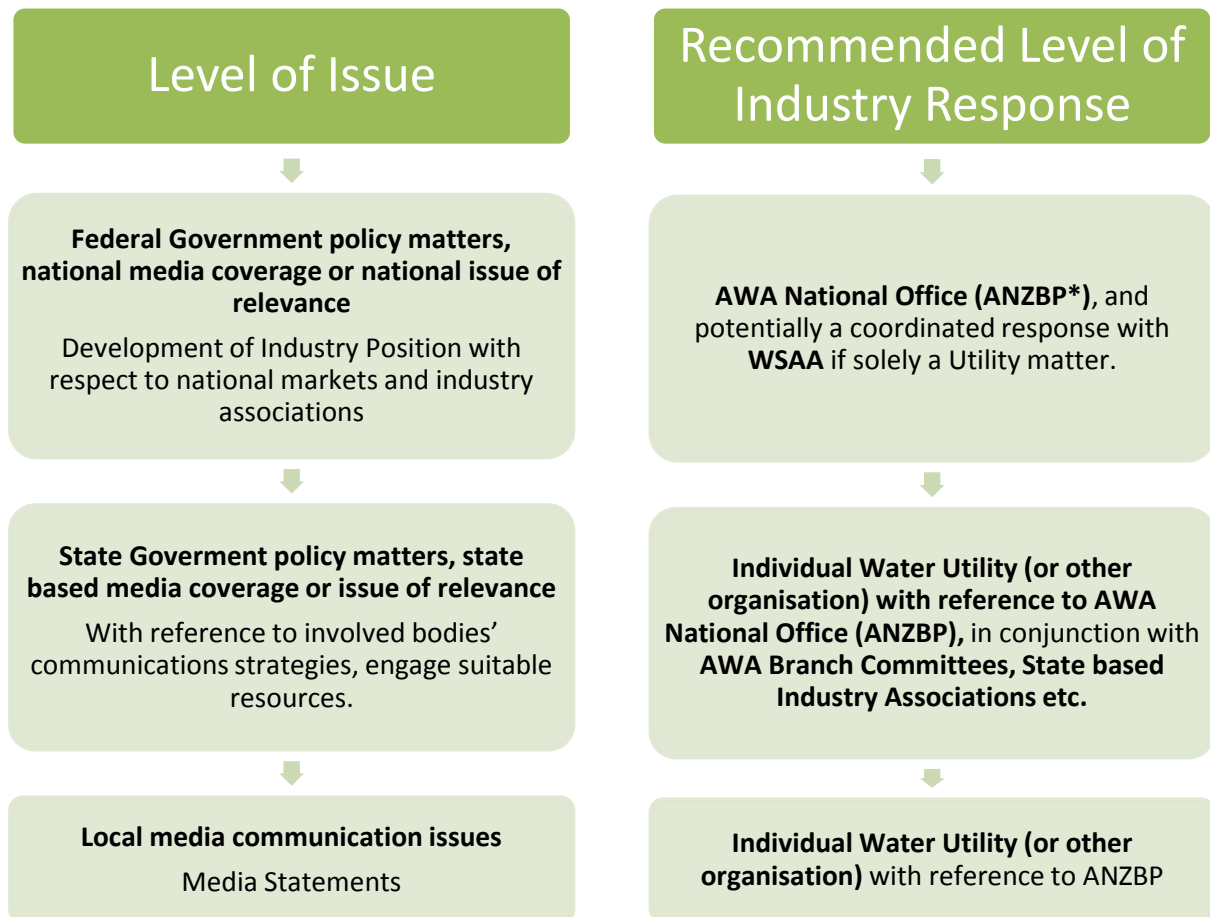
- Was the outcome satisfactory?
- Were the correct procedures followed?
- Were the right people involved? If not, who else should be involved in future?
- What procedures do we need to put into place for next time?

How can we do better next time?

Recommended Hierarchy of Response

A recommended hierarchy of response is necessary due to the risk of misleading or conflicting messages being delivered by different bodies. The framework is based on an overarching hierarchy of different levels within the Australian water industry needing to address communications to various stakeholders.

A brief outline of the hierarchy is:



*The ANZBP provides a supporting communications role to the biosolids industry, but does not lead communication. Each organisation needs to tailor its messages and should therefore be responsible for delivery of their own specific messages.

Adapted from Victorian Water Association Community Engagement Framework (2006)

Appendices

[General information](#)

[ANZBP & Member Factsheets](#)

[Detailed Land Application information and media](#)

