



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Health and Ageing**  
**NICNAS**

Sodium cyanide is currently being assessed by NICNAS as a Priority Existing Chemical (PEC) to determine the potential for environmental exposure in Australia and the hazards of sodium cyanide so that the risk of adverse effects to the environment can be determined. As part of the assessment process NICNAS held seminars in March 2004 to present the preliminary findings of the review to interested parties in Brisbane, Perth and Sydney. At these public seminars it became apparent that additional information was available that had not been submitted to NICNAS. A second data gathering exercise is currently underway to fill these data gaps. The information collected during this exercise will enable a more comprehensive assessment of sodium cyanide use in the Australian gold mining industry and allow the default assumptions presently in the draft report to be replaced with factual data. Default assumptions represent a conservative approach.

As part of this data collation, the State and Territory Agencies regulating mines were approached initially for data relating to environmental risk issues and risk management aspects of sodium cyanide. Most of the information has been provided by the Agencies however a few data gaps still remain. NICNAS has now approached the gold mining industry associations to obtain this information. The information presently being sought relates to: groundwater and tailings dam monitoring data, and contamination issues; wildlife protocol; and incidents involving cyanide. The Australian Gold Council and the Minerals Council of Australia are facilitating the collection of this data with NICNAS and its members.

Due to this extended data-gathering phase, which will be beneficial to the PEC report, the timeline for the sodium cyanide PEC report has been re-scheduled. A provisional date of January 2006 has been set for completion of the draft PEC report.

If you have any further questions do not hesitate to contact Paul Harvey, on (02) 8577 8892 or at [paul.harvey@nicnas.gov.au](mailto:paul.harvey@nicnas.gov.au).