

Former landfill get a clean bill of health

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EXTENSIVE testing at the former Wentworth Park tip site on Hobart's eastern Shore has shown contaminant levels do not pose a risk to public health.

Environment Minister Judy Jackson and Clarence City Mayor Cathy Edwards yesterday released an independent consultant's report on contaminant levels at the former landfill site at Howrah.

Ms Jackson said the health risk assessment in the report included the risk to park users' health was low to essentially negligible.

"The \$100,000 study was very thorough, with 74 soil samples collected and seven groundwater bores and six oil-vapour bores put down and sampled," she said.

"There is nothing in the results of the study to suggest that users or neighbours of Wentworth Park should be concerned for their health."

The testing, conducted by environmental consultants URS, started in July in response to community concerns about Wentworth Park.

Howrah resident Poppy Lopatniuk went public with her fears about the site in April.

Mrs Lopatniuk, who lived near the tip when it was in use in the '60s, compiled a list of 21 people who she feared might have been victims of contamination from living close to the site.

All 21 people on the list, including her son Peter Lopatniuk, had died from cancer or other serious illnesses.

She said she had been calling for testing at Wentworth Park for five years, but the Government had "turned a blind eye to it".



RISK-FREE: Enjoying a swing at Howrah's Wentworth Park yesterday with his grandfather Rod Bennett is Tate Harman, 4, of Lauderdale. The former landfill site was yesterday declared safe for park users by Environment Minister Judy Jackson, right. Pictures: TONY PALMER

Even after Mrs Lopatniuk took her story to the media, Ms Jackson initially refused to order tests on the site.

"You can't keep on investigating something forever," Ms Jackson said during an interview in April.

URS senior principal Jeff Bazelmans yesterday declared Wentworth Park "safe for users".

However, asked whether contaminant levels could have decreased over time and

might once have posed a risk to public health, he replied:

"The values we found are extremely low. I can't speculate what happened in the past so I can't give you a definitive answer to that."

Testing was done for chemical contaminants including metals, hydrocarbons, pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls.

URS said soil and gas concentrations were below national guidelines and were

at levels that did not pose a risk to human health.

Concentrations of ammonia, manganese and chloride in groundwater beneath the site were above guidelines for primary-contact recreation — that is, swimming and/or bathing.

However, based on the assumption that groundwater was not being used in or around the park, the risk to the health of park users was low to essentially negligible.

