

Journal

Comment

Tailings management for a sustainable future



The prominence of the role that tailings management plays in mining company agendas has risen to a new level in the aftermath of the failure of the Feijoa tailings facility at Brumadinho in Brazil in early 2019. The mining industry now understands that if it is to be allowed to co-exist with other human activity it must regain public trust that it will no longer have a right to place lives of people living within the zone of influence of its facilities at risk. To the credit of the industry, it has taken broad-ranging action to impose self-regulation, which will improve safety. Risk will, however, always be present where there are unknowns that influence safety margins. These unknowns are related to weaknesses in the engineering of tailings facilities, which arise from poor understanding of the characteristics and behaviour of the foundations of the facilities and of the tailings itself. It is therefore appropriate that research and development interest in tailings has surged. The output of this R&D will contribute towards improvements in the practise of tailings management. This edition of the Journal serves to make a significant contribution to the dissemination of information that will contribute significantly to improving the safety of tailings facilities around the world.

John Wates

Geotechnical and Tailings Engineer | John Wates Consulting