

4 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

4.1 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SCOPE

As part of the Wandoan Coal Project (the Project) feasibility and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, the Wandoan Joint Venture (the WJV) developed a program of community and stakeholder consultation and established a Project team to obtain feedback from property owners and stakeholders who are potentially affected by the southern coal seam methane (CSM) water supply pipeline (the proposed pipeline). This consultation program was developed to ensure that all issues and concerns raised by affected property owners and stakeholders were incorporated into technical studies and further planning for the Project's EIS.

The broad objectives of the consultation program were to increase awareness of the proposed pipeline, the alternative infrastructure options and the overarching Project.

The consultation program was designed to conduct an open and transparent public consultation process, allowing for community and stakeholder feedback in regards to pipeline design, proposed construction materials, project timing, staging and construction.

4.2 CONSULTATION APPROACH AND ACTIVITIES

4.2.1 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

In the lead-up to the property owner consultation, the representatives of the WJV met with two key stakeholders, the Dalby Regional Council and Queensland Gas Company. Individual meetings were held with both these stakeholders.

The purpose of these meetings was to provide these stakeholders with a Project overview, including information about the proposed pipeline design and construction materials, project timing, staging and construction. The proposed consultation process for the proposed pipeline was also discussed. The meetings provided the WJV with the opportunity to collate stakeholder feedback for inclusion in technical studies.

4.2.2 PROPERTY OWNER CONSULTATION

A letter was distributed to the six directly affected property owners in mid August 2008. These letters provided directly affected property owners with a Project overview, information about the proposed pipeline and Project water use and quality. In addition, the letter outlined that a member of the Project team would contact the property owner to arrange a one-to-one meeting to discuss the proposed pipeline.

Fifty-six indirectly affected property owners were also sent a letter in late August 2008. These letters provided indirectly affected property owners with the same information included in the letter mailed to directly affected property owners. The indirectly affected property owners were invited to contact the Project team to discuss the proposed pipeline or arrange a one-to-one meeting.

Of the 56 letters sent to indirectly affected property owners, 45 were sent to property owners whose property adjoins the Leichhardt Highway Road reserve and seven were sent to property owners whose property adjoins the gazetted easement which falls within the proposed corridor. Four letters were sent to property owners whose property adjoins the Peakes Road reserve.

The Project team contacted the six directly affected property owners by telephone. This provided the Project team with the opportunity to arrange one-to-one meetings with the property owners and answer any immediate questions.

One-to-one meetings were subsequently conducted with four property owners to discuss the proposed pipeline, general design, possible construction materials, timing, easement requirements, and potential impacts. These meetings also provided the Project team with detailed feedback about the consultation process and an opportunity to gather detailed information for the Project's Social Impact Assessment report.

4.2.3 COMMUNITY CONTACT POINTS

As the proposed pipeline was part of the overarching Project, no specific communication materials were developed. Property owner and stakeholders were directed to use the Project's existing freecall information number, Project email and postal address for direct communication and submission of correspondence to the Project team.

4.3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION FINDINGS

4.3.1 SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED AT PROPERTY OWNER MEETINGS

The Project team conducted two meetings with potentially directly affected property owners. The first property owner meeting was attended by three directly affected property owners, with representatives present for another two property owners who could not attend the meeting. No indirectly affected property owners requested one-to-one meetings. The main issues resulting from the one-to-one meetings are listed below in order of those most frequently raised.

All potentially affected property owners were advised that planning for the proposed pipeline was at a preliminary stage and that two other options for water supply to the Project were being investigated. Detailed information on the proposed pipeline was limited due to the preliminary stage of the Project. However, indicative pipeline dimensions, depth and the proposed corridor alignment and corridor area were provided by the Project team. The Project team advised all affected property owners that answers to their questions would be followed up by email or telephone contact.

Impact on properties and businesses

All property owners present at the first meeting identified potential impacts of the proposed pipeline on their properties and businesses. These impacts included the loss of grazing land and in turn the loss of business profits. Additional concerns were the potential impact on property values and the overall compensation process.

One property owner expressed an expectation for the WJV to pay them for further consultation meetings due to the hours lost from their working day. The Project team advised the property owner that this issue would be communicated to the WJV.

Proposed corridor location

The property owners indicated their opposition to the location of the proposed pipeline corridor. The main concerns identified were the potential fragmentation and alienation of agricultural land and the potential impact on existing property infrastructure. Further information on the proposed pipeline route selection process was requested by all property owners.

The Project team advised the property owners that due to the preliminary stage of the Project not all information was readily available. The Project team advised that property owner feedback about the location of the proposed pipeline and potential negative impacts on agricultural land would be communicated to the WJV and would be mitigated and addressed where possible.

Land contamination

A concern raised during both meetings was the possibility of land and creek contamination due to leakages from the proposed pipeline. Questions were asked regarding the quantity of salt in the CSM water, the detection process for proposed pipeline leakages and what steps would be taken to repair leakages. Given the concerns about land contamination the Project team explained that the CSM water salt content was not expected to contaminate the soil if a leakage occurred; however, if a significant leak were to occur, tests would be conducted to determine the impact of CSM water on the land.

The Project team also advised the property owners that the pipeline would be pressure tested before operation and that automated valves located along the pipeline would be turned off in event of a pipeline leakage.

All property owners expressed concerns regarding the spread of weeds during the construction phase, in particular parthenium weed. Questions were asked regarding weed management practices during construction and maintenance of the proposed pipeline. This concern was noted and property owners informed of the current weed control and management plans in place for works on the existing MLA which would also be adopted for the proposed pipeline construction and maintenance.

The Project team explained the WJV will continue to review weed control and management practices to mitigate the spread of weed during the construction and maintenance phase of the proposed pipeline should it be constructed.

Compensation

Property owners enquired about the compensation process and valuations for land required for the proposed easement. Questions were also raised regarding possible compensation packages for land contamination and who would facilitate the process. General information about the process was provided to property owners by the Project team along with details for the Project's land valuer.

Co-location use of corridor, road access and future uses of corridor

The property owners present at the first meeting questioned why the WJV did not plan to use the road reserve located near their properties and also asked about the co-location use aspect of the corridor. The property owners indicated confusion over the WJV's apparent decision to use the Peakes Road reserve which they consider to be quite narrow, yet required a larger corridor width through their properties.

The property owners requested a guarantee that the proposed corridor would not be used in the future for further infrastructure such as railways and powerlines. These concerns were compounded by the cumulative impacts of other infrastructure projects proposed for the area. The proposed Surat Basin Rail Project was of key concern for all property owners present at the first meeting.

Questions regarding easement ownership, co-location use arrangements and payment of rates for the land were raised during the second property owner meeting.

Issues regarding the easement's potential affects on road access were raised by all property owners.

Construction issue

The suggestion was raised for controlled access and use of vehicle washdown facilities during the construction and maintenance phases. The property owner present at the second meeting suggested washdown points should be located along the highway to mitigate the spread of weeds.

Need for fair representation

The lack of representation by an impartial independent body was a major concern for property owners.

The property owners indicated the need for an impartial independent body to represent them throughout the construction and operation of the proposed pipeline, in particular during the negotiation and compensation phase.

The property owners indicated they would like to be represented by local government. They advised the Project team that they had been in discussions with the Mayor of Dalby Regional Council.

Rehabilitation of land

All property owners questioned whether the final corridor would be fenced off. The property owners indicated a preference for the area to be fenced off during construction to protect stock. Property owners advised an expectation for fences and contour banks to be replaced once the construction phase was completed. The property owners also queried the placement of air valves along the proposed pipeline and requested these be fenced and maintained to ensure stock do not cause damage.

The Project team explained the process normally undertaken to ensure air valves are fenced along the pipeline to prevent injury of stock and damage to the air valves. The property owners were advised that it is too early to indicate how many air valves would be located on the pipeline and where these will be situated.

Environmental impacts

The property owners were concerned that government restrictions for remnant vegetation on their land could, apparently, be ignored by the WJV yet these restrictions had to be followed by the property owners. This was considered an inequitable practice by the property owners.

Permission was not granted for the WJV and field staff to enter all property owners' land to conduct further investigative studies for the EIS. Land access to undertake ecological studies was provided by one property owner.

Health and Safety issues

Health and safety issues were discussed in relation to fencing of the corridor area to safeguard cattle from injury during construction. Concerns were also raised regarding potential fire risks from workers smoking or machinery catching fire. The Project team communicated that specific health and safety procedures would be followed by the construction workers at all times due to it being a working site.

Southern CSM water supply pipeline depth

All property owners raised questions about the depth of the proposed pipeline and the impact it would have on their ability to conduct various agricultural activities such as blade-ploughing in those affected areas. In particular one property owner questioned the location of the proposed pipeline under a creek bed which is used for irrigation and drinking supplies. Questions were asked whether the creek bed and general farming land would be rehabilitated and maintained after construction was completed.

The Project team advised that the WJV would work with all property owners to ensure that the pipe would be laid at an appropriate depth to minimise impacts to their farming practices and that land would be rehabilitated and maintained to an acceptable standard.

4.3.2 SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED AT STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Issues discussed at both individual stakeholder meetings included the following issues and concerns:

- the proposed pipeline corridor
- potential impacts on property owners
- the proposed consultation process
- project timings.

Stakeholders were also provided with contact details for the Project team.

4.3.3 SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED VIA COMMUNITY CONTACT POINTS

During the consultation period, feedback received from the affected property owners, stakeholders and broader community was entered into the WJV's consultation database. This feedback included comments received via the information line.

Of the 10 contacts made to the Project's freecall information number, six calls were placed by indirectly affected property owners and four calls were placed by members of the broader community.

Concerns and questions raised in these phone calls are listed below in order of frequency raised:

- requests for further information on the southern CSM water supply pipeline
- project timing
- the proposed corridor location
- the proposed use of the Peakes Road reserve.

A representative of the first property owner meeting emailed a follow up letter to the Project team on 28 August 2008 regarding the issues, concerns and questions raised during the meeting. The letter included information confirmed and outstanding information yet to be confirmed by the Project team.

4.4 RESULTS

The general feedback received from directly affected property owner meetings was negative as many of the property owners indicated they would prefer the proposed pipeline to be constructed outside their properties. The property owners also indicated they did not have sufficient information to understand and comment on all the potential impacts of the proposed pipeline on their properties and businesses. Detailed information on the proposed pipeline was limited due to the preliminary stage of the assessment.

The property owner present at the second meeting was more receptive to the proposed pipeline. However, the property owner also communicated similar concerns to those raised by property owners present at the first meeting.

Overall feedback collated from the community consultation process indicated that the main areas of concern were the potential impacts of the proposed pipeline on agricultural land and in turn the operation of businesses. Another main area of concern was potential land contamination due to pipeline leakages. The majority of property owners were concerned with the proposed pipeline corridor location, and potential impacts on their amenities.

The potential spread of weed and in particular parthenium was a concern for all property owners. The importance of successful land rehabilitation to the property owner's standards following consultation was emphasised throughout the consultation process.

The possibility of the proposed pipeline corridor being used for other project infrastructure was a key concern for the property owners. This included the proposed Surat Basin Rail Project. The WJV recognises potential cumulative impacts that the pipeline may have on property owners, including the large number of other projects proposed for the area.

The WJV will consult with all affected property owners and stakeholders throughout each phase of the Project's development should the proposed pipeline be selected as the preferred option to support the Project. The WJV will also work with affected property owners on issues such as road and property access, fencing of the easement and relocation of cattle during the construction phase. The WJV recognises that the main focus for all property owners is to ensure that impacts on their day-to-day running of their businesses is minimised both in the construction and operation of the proposed pipeline.

Successful rehabilitation of the land must be implemented to meet or exceed the property owner's expectations. Mitigation methods need to be developed where possible to prevent land contamination, soil erosion and the spread of weeds.

The WJV will continue to provide detailed and frequent communications about the proposed pipeline with potentially affected property owners, stakeholders and the general community. Continued communications and consultation will ensure any impacts are recognised early and appropriately mitigated. As such, the WJV will maintain the existing community contact points for affected property owners, stakeholders and the broader community to ensure consistency.