

CONSULTATION REPORT 2008 - 2013

A.1	Purpose of this document	1
A.2	EIS Consultation (January-February 2008)	1
A.3	Post-EIS consultation (March 2008 - October 2013)	3
	Attachment A – Summary of issues raised in submissions to the EIS	7

CONSULTATION REPORT 2008 - 2013

A.1 Purpose of this document

This report provides an outline of consultation undertaken for the Emu Swamp Dam project between January 2008 and October 2013. It provides information on:

- consultation activities undertaken during the public exhibition period for the Emu Swamp Dam environmental impact statement (EIS);
- an overview of the consultation activities undertaken following the closure of the public exhibition period through until October 2013
- an analysis of the stakeholders and their participation during the consultation period; and
- a summary of the consultation outcomes.

A.1.1 Consultation objectives

The Emu Swamp Dam EIS was released for public comment from 12 January 2008 until 25 February 2008.

The key objectives of the public comment period were to:

- notify the community that the EIS had been lodged for assessment and invite community members, stakeholders and government agencies to make written comments on the EIS in accordance with the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* (SDPWO Act);
- provide information to stakeholders on the proposed Emu Swamp Dam project and the key findings of the EIS, to enable their review of the EIS; and
- provide opportunities for stakeholders to identify issues, benefits and impacts that may occur as a result of the project – including the facilitation of discussions on possible mitigation strategies.

Following the EIS exhibition period, consultation activities undertaken by the Stanthorpe Shire Council (SSC) and Southern Downs Regional Council (SDRC) have sought to keep community members, stakeholders and agencies updated about the Project, and provide on-going opportunities for these groups to provide input to the project development.

A.2 EIS Consultation (January-February 2008)

This section provides an overview of consultation undertaken in January and February 2008 for the EIS.

A.2.1 EIS Notification

The EIS was released for public review and comment for a period of about six weeks, between 12 January 2008 and 25 February 2008.

A public notice advising the EIS was available for public review and comment was placed in The Border Post newspaper on the 10 January 2008 and The Courier Mail and The Australian newspapers on 12 January 2008 providing information on:

- locations of where the EIS could be viewed;
- how it could be purchased (or obtained free of charge); and
- how written submissions could be made to the Coordinator-General about the EIS, including the date by which submissions must be made and the address for submissions.

Hardcopies of the EIS were available for review at two locations near the project, including:

- Stanthorpe Shire Council Stanthorpe Office; and
- Stanthorpe Library.

The EIS was also displayed on the SSC website as well as the Coordinator General's website.

Community members were able to obtain CD copies of the EIS (free of charge) from Engineering Services at SSC.

A.2.2 EIS Consultation activities

A number of consultation activities were undertaken by the Proponent during the EIS notification period.

Public information sessions were facilitated at the Stanthorpe Agricultural Show on 1-2 February 2008. This provided community members with the opportunity to discuss the project and the EIS findings with representatives of the SSC.

Whole of government briefings were held in Brisbane on 6 February 2008, Stanthorpe on 11 February 2008 and Toowoomba on 12 February 2008, involving representatives of Queensland Government agencies with an interest in the EIS. The purpose of the briefings was to provide agencies with information on the EIS, including key findings and the process for making written submissions.

A project specific web site and feedback information line were maintained by the SSC during the EIS notification period. These provided community members and other stakeholders with the opportunity to find out more about the project and the EIS.

A.2.3 Submissions to the EIS

A total of 33 written submissions were received by the Coordinator General during the public notification period. This included:

- 18 submissions made by community members, including property owners;
- One submission from an organisation; and
- 14 submissions received from State and Federal Government agencies, including:
 - *Department of Emergency Services;*
 - *Department of Communities;*
 - *Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries;*
 - *Department of Main Roads;*
 - *Environmental Protection Agency;*
 - *Queensland Health;*
 - *Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts;*
 - *Department of Natural Resources and Water;*
 - *Department of Housing;*
 - *Department of Environment and Heritage Protection;*
 - *Department of Energy and Water Supply;*
 - *Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry;*
 - *Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities; and*

– Murray Darling Basin Authority.

Commonly raised issues in submissions to the EIS included:

- property impacts, including land acquisition process and compensation;
- the need for reliable and secure water supply;
- potential impacts of the Project on fish movement in Severn River; and
- potential impacts on vegetation communities and requirements for vegetation offsets.

A summary of the issues raised in submissions to the EIS is provided in Attachment A.

A.2.4 EIS outcomes

In response to the submissions received from community members and agencies on the EIS, SDRC have:

- resolved to progress the Combined Urban and Irrigation option for Emu Swamp Dam as a result of broad community support and the potential economic benefits in the region;
- incorporated a fishlock into the dam design to facilitate fish passage;
- committed to minimise the potential impacts on vegetation and threatened flora through detailed design by undertaking further surveys, designing to avoid impacts where possible, constraining the clearing corridor, supervision of construction contractor and rehabilitation;
- developed a Biodiversity Offset Strategy to offset the residual impacts of the Project.

A.3 Post-EIS consultation (March 2008 - October 2013)

The Proponent has continued to consult with community members and key stakeholders about the Project following the EIS notification period. The following provides an overview of some of the key consultation and communication activities undertaken between March 2008 and October 2013.

A.3.1 Website

SDRC continues to maintain a website (www.southerndowns.qld.gov.au) that provides information for community members and other stakeholders about the proposed Emu Swamp Dam project including:

- the broader Granite Belt Water Planning initiative to address water supply security;
- SDRC's key objectives for the project;
- information on the planning process;
- a downloadable version of the EIS; and
- fact sheets to update the community on the status of the Project.

Information about the Project has been continuously available on the SSC/SDRC websites.

A.3.2 Media Coverage

There have been regular articles on the Project in the local newspapers and other media outlets from 2009 to 2013. Media coverage has included the following articles:

- ABC News – 3 May 2012, “Mayor up-beat about dam plan”
The Southern Downs Mayor-elect says the Emu Swamp dam project will continue to be a focus for the new council.
Peter Blundell held talks with Federal Opposition MPs about the council's plans to build a storage to supply local irrigators and the town of Stanthorpe.

He says the group's response and the recent change of state government bode well for the project.

"Projects that look at enhancing the ability to produce food in this region under that water use efficiency regime should be favourably viewed," he said.

"So while there are no guarantees at this stage of the game, certainly I feel there's a very positive attitude in relation to viewing this project.

- **Stanthorpe Border Post – 4th May 2012, "Emu Swamp dam plan scrutinised"**

AFTER two decades in limbo, the Emu Swamp Dam project was yesterday scrutinised by Senator Barnaby Joyce - and he was impressed.

The Coalition Dams and Water Management Task Group - of which Senator Joyce is the deputy chairman - visited the Granite Belt for a presentation given by Cr Vic Pennisi and a bus and fly-over tour of the site.

"This is the sharpest presentation we have had throughout the process," Senator Joyce said.

Group chairman Andrew Robb MP said he and other members travelled around the country for a couple of days at a time for the past 15 months to inspect potential sites for dam infrastructure.

Mr Robb said the Emu Swamp Dam project would be included in a draft report to be finalised in about six months and eventually end up as policy to be taken to the next election.

"This project has a lot going for it but it is in the mix with a lot of others," he said.

- **Warwick Star Community – 11 May 2012, "Emu Swamp Dam closer"**

Federal Member for Maranoa Bruce Scott visited Stanthorpe with the Coalition's Dams and Water Management Task Group, chaired by the Honourable Andrew Robb, to see how the proposed Emu Swamp Dam would benefit the region.

Mr Scott was impressed with the presentation during last week's tour and said he would continue to champion for the Granite Belt community.

"We met with growers and irrigators who expressed the importance of this project for greater water security," Mr Scott said.

"I submitted the proposal for a new Granite Belt dam and last week's tour was the next step in making the proposal a reality.

"I congratulate the Stanthorpe Community Reference Panel, Vic Pennisi and Member for Southern Downs the Honourable Lawrence Springborg who have shown great commitment to this project," Mr Scott said.

- **Stanthorpe Border Post – 22nd August 2013, "Proposed dam, market power on LNP agenda"**

MARANOA MP Bruce Scott has reassured Granite Belt residents Emu Swamp Dam is high on his priority list during a visit to Stanthorpe on Tuesday.

Mr Scott spoke with business owners, residents and local producers to gauge their concerns ahead of the September 7 election.

Following a meeting with Southern Downs councillor Vic Pennisi, Mr Scott said the Emu Swamp Dam proposal was still on his radar.

"It ranks highly because a lot of work has gone into the project, rather than it being just an idea, so that's one of the things that have made it a very strong contender for consideration," he said.

A.3.3 Community Feedback and Enquiries

A Community Management System has been maintained to support the consultation process. Information was received and recorded from telephone conversations, email, letters and stakeholder meetings.

A.3.4 Stanthorpe Community Reference Panel

The Stanthorpe Community Reference Panel (SCRP) was established by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM). A key role of the SCRP was to provide community feedback for the development of the Border Rivers (Resource Operations Plan).

The SCRP comprises representatives from a broad cross section of the community including growers across the Granite Belt (producing apple, stone fruit, vegetable, nurseries, beef, sheep, traprock wool, and strawberries), Landcare, Chamber of Commerce, Growcom, Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West, Granite Belt Wine and Tourism, DNRM and SSC/SDRC.

Since the release of the EIS, meetings of the SCRP were held on:

- 14 December 2009
- 29 April 2013
- 12 June 2013.

Throughout the period of its existence SSC/SDRC has formally and informally communicated with the SCRP and its members about regional water issues including the Emu Swamp Dam Project.

A.3.5 Public Meeting

A public meeting about the proposed Emu Swamp Dam project was held at the Stanthorpe Civic Centre on Tuesday, 11 October 2011 by the (then) Mayor, Ron Bellingham.

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- update residents on the options available under the broader Granite Belt Water Planning Initiative;
- provide information on why the Emu Swamp Dam was considered the preferred option to address the Council's future water issues; and
- provide information on the status of the project and challenges faced by the Project.

A number of Councillors also attended the meeting, to provide an opportunity for the residents to make comments or ask questions about the project.

All landholders directly affected by the Project and individuals who made a submission were sent a written invitation to the meeting.

A.3.6 Community Survey – The Economic Impact of the Emu Swamp Dam

A series of surveys were undertaken with community members in 2013 as part of an economic analysis of the Project undertaken for SDRC by T. Sargeant Services. Ninety individuals were surveyed either in-person or by telephone, representing a range of industry groups including agriculture, tourism and services, government and grazing.

Table A-1 provides a summary number of individuals with each group that were consulted.

Table A-1 Survey contributors

Contributors	Number of individuals surveyed
Agriculture (vegetable & fruit growers)	55
Tourism & services (e.g. hotel/retail/transport)	15
Local & State Govt. representatives (incl. former employees)	10
Consultants	5
Grazing (cattle)	2
Other (e.g. development, vinegar processing)	3
TOTAL	90

The key findings from the surveys were:

- the Project was strongly supported by a majority of growers because of potential economic opportunities;
- 83% of growers were seeking additional water for security or development purposes ;
- 17% of growers in Southern Downs region indicated they did not require additional water; and
- the construction of Project is expected to create future recreational opportunities.

A.3.7 Community Engagement Workshops

A community engagement workshop was held in Stanthorpe on 28 August 2008 as part of the consultation process for the SDRC Planning Scheme. The purpose of the workshop was to inform the community about the preparation of the SDRC Planning Scheme and to identify community concerns. Key concerns identified for water infrastructure in Stanthorpe include

- the provision of a reliable water supply is critical for future development;
- the need to promote efficient use of water; and
- the need to plan for future drought conditions.

Cavaye Community Development undertook community consultation on behalf of SSC for the development of the Stanthorpe 2020 Community Plan in 2008. This community engagement process identified the provision a sustainable water supply was a key challenge for the Stanthorpe community. The construction of Emu Swamp Dam was supported as a key action for the Stanthorpe community to support the town, tourism and primary industries sectors.

As a result of feedback from the community engagement activities, SDRC has adopted the following key objectives relating to water security in the Southern Downs Community Plan 2030:

- secure a sustainable, reliable water supply to support industry and population growth;
- ensure sustainable, long term use and access to natural resources including water, minerals and timber; and
- develop a reliable water supply for the southern end of the Southern Downs to support expected growth in population and industry.

Community engagement workshops have consistently identified the need for a reliable water supply for Stanthorpe. The development of the Emu Swamp Dam will meet the SDRC's corporate objective of providing reliable urban water supply for the community.

Attachment A – Summary of issues raised in submissions to the EIS

EIS Section	Issues raised in the submissions
Project Description	A range of issues were raised in the submissions about the Project Description. Most of the issues raised actually relate to other sections of the EIS.
Project Justification	Further consideration of alternative projects, demand management (urban and irrigation), economic evaluation of options, inadequate distribution of benefits, and non-committal irrigators. The water demand data (population projections, per capita and industrial demand volumes) and losses from the existing supply require further justification.
Topography, Geology, Soils and Geomorphology	Topography, geology, soils and geomorphology did not attract many comments in the submissions. Issues raised included evaporation, erosion and salinity.
Planning and Land Use	Issues raised included the loss and size of the proposed buffer land surrounding the dam; opposition to the acquisition of privately owned land; possible restrictions on land use in the upstream catchment; amalgamation of small residual land parcels and loss of good agricultural land.
Contaminated Land	There were no comments about contaminated land in the submissions.
Surface Water Resources	Issues raised in the submissions included the level of environmental flows; policing of existing licences and weirs; protecting downstream allocations; accurate information about existing weirs; inadequate stream flow data for the dam site; impact on downstream flow regime; validity of the Border Rivers WRP; climate change impacts; modelling accuracy; allocated / unallocated water descriptions; evaporation & seepage losses; critical period analysis;; technical clarifications and statistical presentations.
Water Quality	Water quality issues raised in the submissions included environmental flow release water quality; cumulative water quality impacts of urban, industrial and agricultural runoff; catchment management; herbicides and pesticides; sewage treatment plant releases; excess nitrogen and phosphorus; hydrocarbon contaminants from recreational activities on the dam; presentation of data statistics; water treatment and on-going water quality monitoring.
Groundwater	The only comment raised about groundwater was a proposal for pre and post construction monitoring.
Terrestrial ecology	A number of submissions commented on the potential impacts to threatened flora from the project. There were five species of threatened flora identified in the inundation area including <i>Melaleuca williamsii</i> . There are concerns relating to the regional significance of these threatened species. Fourteen fauna species of conservation significance were recorded in the Project areas. Further information was requested on how the project will maintain connectivity. Several submissions have requested more detail on the extent of potential downstream impacts of the project.
Vegetation Offsets	Further details on the proposed vegetation offset were required by State and Federal environmental agencies.
Aquatic Ecology	Fish passage is currently extremely limited along at least 12 km of river below Campbell's Weir (located within the inundation area of the proposed Emu Swamp Dam) and above the junction with Accommodation Creek. Additional aquatic ecology surveys will be required at a regional level to identify aquatic flora and fauna in non-drought conditions. Additional surveys required to determine the distribution of Bell's Turtle and identify if the species may be impacted by the Project. Submissions recommended Swamp Dam incorporate an adequate fishway to provide for fish passage.

EIS Section	Issues raised in the submissions
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas	Air quality issues raised included the picnic area impacts on neighbours (dust and tank water quality); construction activity dust; greenhouse gas emissions (construction and operational phases); greenhouse gas emissions for alternate options; greenhouse gas emissions from the dam water body; carbon neutrality and emissions reduction / trading.
Noise and Vibration	Noise and vibration issues raised in the submissions included picnic area noise; boating noise from the dam impoundment; construction noise; traffic noise; night time pump noise and noise monitoring. It is considered that a general update of the available information and simple responses will be adequate.
Transport and Infrastructure	The Fletcher Road / New England Highway intersection treatment requires further investigation. Pipelines along declared roads also require more detailed definition. Traffic management needs more detail.
Socio-Economic Development	Socio-economic issues raised in the submissions include picnic area safety impacts on neighbours; loss of income and impaired lifestyle from reduced land holdings; adequacy of compensation; devaluation of adjacent and affected lands; restriction on uses within the buffer zone; accommodation, social services, real estate prices, and rental price impacts of imported construction workers and families; recreational noise on the dam lake; increased development arising from the dam;
Landscape Character and Visual Amenity	The only specific landscape character and visual amenity impact issue raised was the impact due to inundation area clearing.
Waste Management	The only waste management issue raised by the respondents was a concern that cleared timber does not concentrate runoff and cause erosion.
Hazard and Risk	Hazard and risk issues raised in the submissions included the need for planning for emergency services access; pipeline rupture; vandalism and impact from vehicles.