



Department of
Environment

Interim Industry Guide to Community Involvement

December 2003

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- Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Chamber of Minerals and Energy
- Conservation Council
- Environmental Defenders Office
- Western Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet

How to comment on this document

This document is issued as an Interim Guide for a period of 12 months, ending December 2004. All comments on the guide are welcome and should be directed to:

Communications Branch
Department of Environment
PO Box K822 Perth WA 6842

Tel: (08) 9278 0655
Fax: (08) 9278 0639
Email: info@environment.wa.gov.au

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Foreword

This report is a joint publication of the Department of Environment (DoE) and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

The EPA is an independent statutory authority and is the key provider of independent environmental advice to government. The EPA's objectives are to protect the environment and to prevent, control and abate pollution. The EPA aims to achieve some of this through the development of Guidance Statements for the environmental impact assessment (EIA) of proposals.

The DoE is an amalgamation of the Water and Rivers Commission, Department of Environmental Protection and Keep Australia Beautiful Council. The DoE also provides ongoing support services to statutory bodies including Swan River Trust, Waste Management Board and the Natural Resource Management Council. The DoE's mission is to lead the protection and enhancement of the State's natural capital, working in partnership with the community. This is achieved through regulation, and managing and influencing people's attitudes and behaviours towards the environment and natural resources.

This guide has been issued by the EPA and DoE to inform proponents, consultants and the public generally about the EPA and DoE's thinking on how to design an effective and appropriate community involvement process. The guide is intended to assist proponents to achieve socially and environmentally sustainable proposals. It aims to do this by providing tools for use in planning and undertaking more effective community involvement processes, starting at the proposal planning stage and continuing throughout the life of the development.

This guide supports the EPA and DoE administrative procedures relating to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes and the Works Approval and Licensing approval processes.

Wally Cox
CHAIRMAN
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AUTHORITY

Derek Carew-Hopkins
A/CHIEF EXECUTIVE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to help build the capacity for industry in Western Australia to foster better relationships with their local communities and stakeholders. It aims to do this by providing tools for use in planning and undertaking more effective community involvement processes, starting at the proposal planning stage and continuing throughout the life of the development.

Whilst the tools and principles presented in this guide can improve the likelihood for successful community involvement, it should be recognised that community involvement does not necessarily produce solutions that are acceptable to all parties or resolve all differences of opinion. Successful community involvement relies on the quality and appropriateness of the engagement processes used. Ideally these should provide for a sound, fair and transparent process that the community can be satisfied with, regardless of the outcome.

The principles for effective community involvement presented in this guide accord with the Plastics and Chemicals Industries Association (PACIA) Responsible Care® program and the Australian Minerals Industry Code for Environmental Management. An effective ISO 14004 Environmental Management System should also be consistent with the principles presented in this guide.

Copies of this guide can be obtained by contacting (08) 9222 7000 or from the following websites:

DoE: www.environ.wa.gov.au or

EPA: www.epa.wa.gov.au

This guide is not Government Policy and has been developed to support both the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and Department of Environment (DoE) administrative procedures relating to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes and the Works Approval and Licensing approval processes.

This document provides a 'toolkit' to help develop consultation processes most appropriate for a given circumstance. It is unrealistic to present a single 'best practice' consultation process to fit all circumstances. The tools and templates presented here are provided as examples, they are not the only methods available to help design appropriate community involvement processes.

This guide will be issued as an interim guide until a review of the document has been made after 12 months of implementation. The review period closes on December 2004.

1.2 Why Involve the Community in Project Planning and Operation?

Involving the community in project planning can aid your progress through the DoE and EPA approvals processes because:

- The EPA considers the extent to which you have consulted with your stakeholders when they set a level of assessment for proposals.
- An effective community involvement process can affect the type and number of appeals received on your proposal. If your process has been well documented, then the Minister can be better informed on the issues surrounding the appeal(s), which can lead to improved decision-making.
- You maintain control of the communications and negotiations with your stakeholders. A poorly run community involvement process may require the DoE or EPA to act as an intermediary or manage the process with your stakeholders themselves.

Other pertinent reasons for undertaking community involvement include:

- It is good corporate citizenship.
- It represents best practice environmental management.

It has emerged that in addition to regulatory approvals, companies also require a community licence to operate, and that licence has to be earned. Companies unable to understand this shift repeatedly run into trouble, in some cases with painful and costly consequences (NSW Minerals Council).

- It is integral to sustainable development.
- It acknowledges community demands for a more significant role in decision-making.
- It is good risk management practice.
- It can reduce delays and the cost of redesigns, enforced negotiations and even possible litigation resulting from widespread community opposition.
- It can indicate at an early stage that a project may not be feasible.
- It can reduce some of the uncertainties in the approvals process by identifying and addressing possible contentious issues at an early stage.
- It can identify potential negative social impacts of the proposal and allow the rapid development of strategies to mitigate these.
- It can instil community confidence in you and gain wider community support for the project.
- It can reinforce legitimacy in the decision-making process, which has benefits to industry and government.
- It can collect and disseminate quality information as the basis for better understanding by both you and the community.
- It can assist in deciding alternative strategies.

1.3 When to Involve the Community

Tip: It is neither effective nor appropriate to consult if:

- a final decision has already been made;
- stakeholders cannot influence a final decision; or
- there is insufficient time and/or resources available.

Ineffective or inappropriate consultation is counterproductive and increases apathy and cynicism – not only towards future consultations, but also towards your organisation.

DoE and EPA strongly encourage proponents to undertake genuine community involvement early in the planning stage, and ensure it is a strategic and planned aspect of the ongoing operation of the project. It should begin before you formally apply for any regulatory approvals. Be sure to allow enough time for the community involvement process.

It should be recognised that community involvement does not necessarily produce solutions that are acceptable to all parties or resolve all differences of opinion.

Figure 1 summarises the environmental approvals process and when you should engage with your stakeholders. Work Sheet 1 presents a Community Involvement Planning Checklist.

Figure 1: Community Involvement and the Environmental Approval Application Process

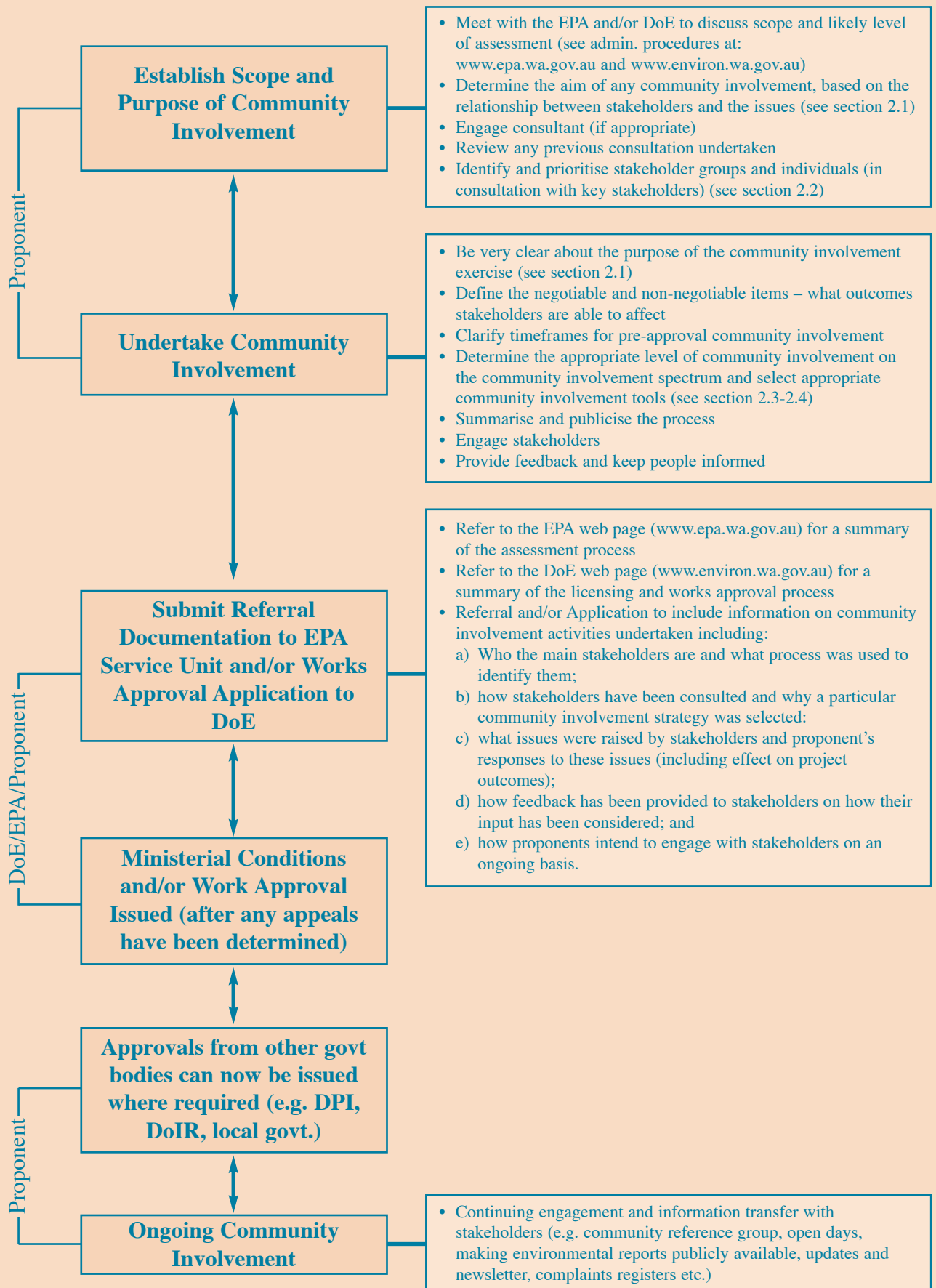
1.4 Definitions

Community – a broad definition of community is used throughout this document. The term includes, but is not limited to:

- all levels of government;
- nearby residents;
- local industry;
- education institutions;
- peak bodies;
- conservation and other special interest groups;
- indigenous groups;
- community groups;
- the media; and
- general public.

Community Involvement/Engagement – is any process on a spectrum from informing the community of your activities through to empowering them in decision-making.

Figure 1: Community Involvement and the Environmental Approval Application Process



It can involve stakeholders in identifying problems and/or developing alternatives and/or making decisions by genuinely incorporating their input. The aim is to improve the decision-making process overall and the quality of the decisions made.

It uses tools and techniques common to a number of fields including: conflict resolution, organisational development, mediation, public relations, communications, facilitation and capacity building (adapted from International Association for Public Participation, 2003).

Proponent – the organisation or body who is seeking environmental approvals via either DoE or EPA approvals processes (e.g. Works Approvals, Licences or Environmental Impact Assessments).

Stakeholder – an individual, group or organisation that has an interest in a project, may be affected by it or who can affect the outcome of it. These will vary depending on the nature of your project.

1.5 Community Involvement Expertise - Internal and External

Tip: The relationship with your stakeholders will continue long after your consultant has gone. Having appropriately skilled staff to enhance this relationship on an ongoing basis is good business.

If you engage a consultant to help with initial community involvement exercises, remember to include a skills transfer component in the contract.

Whilst stakeholder engagement is not an absolute science, it requires adequate planning and financial and physical resources. If you do not have the internal resources to do it well, you could consider engaging an external consultant. They could be engaged to undertake the community involvement process or to provide advice and assistance to internal staff undertaking the process. This decision should be made at the outset, to ensure consistency in dealing with your stakeholders.

Regardless of whether community involvement is undertaken by internal or external staff, those undertaking it need to have the decision-making authority to negotiate with stakeholders on behalf of your company. If this is not possible, then the person(s) needs to have a clear understanding of what is and is not negotiable, and a clear commitment from upper management that commitments will be implemented.

Community involvement occurs throughout the life of a project. Ensure that your staff are appropriately skilled to facilitate positive ongoing relations with your stakeholders.

Just as your staff may require additional skills there are times where it may be appropriate for you to help raise the skills of your stakeholders so that they can participate effectively in the community involvement processes. Situations where this may be appropriate include:

- Ongoing engagement where there is a high level of technical information that stakeholders will need to understand in order to participate in the process. Stakeholders may need access to independent expertise to interpret data and advise them.
- Where there is a low level of trust and high level of concern in the community, you may consider providing funding to the community – either direct to a group, or via an independent third party – to undertake an independent audit into the issue of concern.
- Similarly you may fund your stakeholders, either directly to a group or via an independent third party, to commission an independent social and/or economic analysis of your proposal with a view to considering how the proposal can be made acceptable to the community.
- Commissioning local people to identify local issues and concerns.

PART 2: DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLANS

This section provides guidance and includes work sheets to help proponents:

- Identify stakeholders;
- select a community involvement strategy;
- select stakeholder engagement tools;
- provide feedback to stakeholders on how their input has or has not been considered; and
- evaluate your community involvement program.

Important: Public 'right to know' can sometimes be constrained by legal obligations or other consultation impediments, for example, the Privacy or Freedom of Information Acts and Commercial in Confidence issues.

2.1 Identify the Issues and Aims of the Community Involvement

Before embarking on any community involvement process you need to be very clear about what it is you are actually consulting on. This will need to be clearly and unambiguously communicated to your stakeholders.

- Define the scope of the process, what is on the table for discussion, and what is non-negotiable and therefore outside the scope of the process.
- Consider how to manage stakeholder expectations of issues that cannot be considered in the current community involvement process.
- Do not give people the impression that you are consulting if, in fact, you are informing them of a decision that has already been made.
- Identify what the potential impacts of the proposal are. Think about this from the perspective of the community as well as from your company. Think about impacts in terms of both tangible impacts (e.g. noise, odours, traffic, ground water threats etc.), and potential controversy (e.g. differing perceptions of the risk to personal health, safety and the environment, and political and/or media controversy etc.).
- Some stakeholders will expect an outcome that is agreeable to all parties. This is not always possible, and you will need to manage this expectation from the outset. An emphasis should be given to designing a process that your stakeholders are satisfied with regardless of the outcome that is reached.

Example: Some possible aims of your community involvement exercise might be to:

- Inform stakeholders of the proposed project;
- Maximise the level of accurate and accessible information about the project to affected communities;
- Provide adequate time for stakeholders to consider and engage in meaningful dialogue on the project;
- Identify and attempt to resolve potential issues early in the planning process; and
- Obtain mutually acceptable outcomes on the project.

Refer to Work Sheet 2 for an example "issue identification" check list.

2.2 Identifying Stakeholders

Once you have identified the main issues, identify stakeholders that are most likely to have an interest in these issues (both positively and negatively). Work Sheets 3 and 4 provide guidance and a template for identifying stakeholders who might be relevant to your project or proposal. Be sure that you include groups and individuals that may be likely to oppose your proposal. It is false economy to ignore these people, as their concerns are likely to get larger and more justified the longer you leave them out of the communications/consultative process. You may want to consider if representatives of any of the following stakeholder groups are relevant:

- Government;
- community groups;
- residents (individual and/or broad residential areas);
- people with special needs (e.g. the aged, Aboriginal communities, ethnic groups);
- media;

Tip: Local governments often maintain databases of active community groups in their area and can guide you in identifying relevant stakeholders.

Tip: Look through back editions of local newspapers to see who are the active groups and individuals in the community.

- politicians;
- industry groups;
- educational institutions; and
- internal staff.

Tip: Where possible, get a senior member of your company to address any public meetings. It can be a visible demonstration that the consultation process is important to your organization. Using only a public relations expert will often make people wonder if you have something to hide.

After identifying the stakeholders, it is beneficial to relate each stakeholder to the issue by identifying:

- Stakeholder expectations;
- the benefits to the stakeholder;
- what resources (and risks) the stakeholder will bring to the issue; and
- the relationships between various stakeholders.

These can be summarised as in Work Sheet 4.

2.3 Selecting a Community Involvement Strategy

Tip: Try to be flexible about meeting times, and provide multiple options where possible. Take into consideration the fact that people work, may be involved in other community involvement exercises, have other out-of-work commitments or that parents may need to pickup and drop off their children from school.

There is a range of community involvement techniques that can be used. The choice of which to use depends on your aims and what level of decision-making you are willing or able to share with your stakeholders. The choice of which 'level' of community involvement to use is context based and relies heavily on professional judgement. The approach detailed in Work Sheet 5 can be used to help guide your decision-making process about what is an appropriate level of community involvement for your proposal or project. Work Sheet 5 can also be provided to DoE and/or EPA as a justification for why you have selected a given community involvement strategy.

Tip: Some things to think about:

- Has the community been consulted on similar, or other issues in the past and had bad experiences?
- If so, how will you need to involve them in this exercise to build trust?
- Has the community recently dealt with trauma or loss such as bushfires or been involved in a controversial development?

The levels of community involvement outlined in Table 1 - Spectrum of Community Involvement, range from simply providing information and telling people about your proposal, through to empowering stakeholders to make the decisions that they are willing to live with. Community involvement tools applicable to each level of the spectrum are summarised in Table 2, with some of the more common tools detailed in Appendix 1.

It should be noted that the best community involvement process for your proposal or project is not necessarily the one that shares the greatest amount of decision-making authority with your stakeholders, but the one that is the most appropriately matched to your given situation.

Tip: Vocal community representatives can be a discouragement to some community members from participating in open community forums. If you want to ensure your process gathers views representative of the broad community, you will need to select additional tools of engagement that allow participants to feel safe to contribute, e.g. smaller focus groups using skilled facilitators, open days, interviews, field offices etc.

Most proposals are likely to require community engagement at the 'inform'-'involve' level of the spectrum (see Table 1). Table 1 includes examples of when it may be appropriate to engage with stakeholders at each level of the spectrum.

If you intend to engage with your stakeholders towards the 'empower' end of the spectrum, you will typically need to give them the capacity to effectively participate at that level. This will mean 'informing' them first, before you are able to use any 'consult', 'involve' or 'collaborate' tools.

Table 1: Spectrum of Community Involvement

Spectrum Level	Use when...	Promise to the public	Format options	Tools and Techniques (refer to Table 2 and Appendix 1 for details)
INFORM Promote awareness and educate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A decision has already been made or there is no opportunity to influence the final outcome The issue is relatively simple 	We will keep you informed	Share information	<u>Awareness Campaigns</u> fliers, media advertising, kiosks, brochures, videos, displays, models <u>Information/Education Campaigns</u> field offices/ information centres, fact sheets, technical reports, newsletters, websites, TV
			Bring people together	<u>Open Public Forums</u> reconnaissance trip, site trip, tours to similar facilities, symposia
CONSULT Seek broad-based input/feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions are still being shaped There may not be a firm commitment to do anything with the views collected – but this is clearly communicated 	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns, and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influenced the decision	Bring people together	<u>Open Public Forums</u> open days, events <u>Stakeholder Sessions/Processes</u> briefing workshop, information session, study circles
			Collect input and provide feedback	<u>Individual inquiries</u> questionnaires, comment forms, written submissions, interviews, focus groups, hotlines <u>Secondary research</u> surveys, interactive web pages
INVOLVE Foster meaningful discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You need two-way discussion amongst, and with, stakeholders There is a real opportunity to influence the final outcome 	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	Bring people together	<u>Open Public Forums</u> workshops, Samoan Circles, World Café, town meetings <u>Stakeholder Sessions/Processes</u> delphi process, dialogue techniques, stakeholder research
			Bring people together	<u>Open Public Forums</u> advisory committees, reference groups, community working groups, task forces <u>Stakeholder Sessions/Processes</u> computer decision support processes, design charters, fishbowl planning, future search, appreciative inquiry, citizen juries
COLLABORATE Facilitate consensus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You need citizens to talk to each other regarding complex value-laden issues There is capacity for citizens to shape policies and decisions that affect them 	We will support you to provide direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations to the maximum extent possible	Bring people together	<u>Open Public Forums</u> advisory committees, reference groups, community working groups, task forces <u>Stakeholder Sessions/Processes</u> computer decision support processes, design charters, fishbowl planning, future search, appreciative inquiry, citizen juries
			Bring people together	<u>Authorised panels</u> <u>Voting</u>
EMPOWER Provide effective forum for public decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders have accepted the challenge of developing solutions themselves There is an agreement to implement solutions generated by the stakeholders. 	We will implement what you decide	Bring people together	<u>Authorised panels</u> <u>Voting</u>

Adapted from International Association for Public Participation (2003), Wilcox (1994) and Health Canada (2000)

Work Sheet 1: Community Involvement Planning Checklist

The checklist below can be used by proponents as a guide when planning a stakeholder engagement process.

Important: Items in bold may need to be documented and provided to DoE and/or EPA along with an application for environmental approvals.

Y/N or

N/A	Have you:	Section Ref
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identified the aims of your community involvement process?	2.1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identified the main issues stakeholders will want to address?	2.1, Work Sheet 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identified key stakeholders	2.2, Work Sheet 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identified additional stakeholders with the aid of your key stakeholders?	2.2, Work Sheet 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtained support for the community involvement process and potential outcomes from management?	1.5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identified the negotiable and non-negotiable items in your community involvement exercise (e.g. what decisions have already been made and are fixed, what outcomes do stakeholders have the ability to affect?)	2.1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determined if you will use in-house staff or a consultant to complete the community involvement activities?	1.5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mapped the relationship between individual issues and stakeholder groups?	2.2, Work Sheet 4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identified the main messages you will need to communicate about your project?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Justified and documented your selection of an appropriate level of community engagement?	2.3, Work Sheet 5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Selected appropriate engagement tools and techniques?	2.4, Table 1 and 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Allocated a realistic budget for the community involvement process?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Established how you will record, collate and analyse the information you receive?	2.5, Work Sheet 6 & 7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Considered performance indicators to show if the process has been effective?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Summarised the issues raised?	Work Sheet 6 & 7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provided feedback to stakeholders on how their issues have/have not been incorporated?	2.5, Work Sheet 6 & 7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Genuinely engaged with relevant stakeholders?	Work Sheet 6, 7 & 8
<input type="checkbox"/>	Made any commitments to ongoing community engagement?	Part 3

Work Sheet 2: Identifying Issues

How might people be affected by your project? Consider both positive and negative issues in terms of technical and non-technical impacts in categories such as:

Impact	Technical Impacts	Non-Technical Impacts	Stakeholders*
Endangered environmental resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation • Wetland • Water resource • Air pollution • Endangered species • Important animals 			
Nuisance issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise • Dust • Odours • Traffic • Vibrations • Electromagnetic radiation 			
Livelihood, employment or lost productivity			
Property values			
Local economic vitality			
Community/town growth management			
Health and safety			
Threats to community, cultural, racial or gender identity or history			
Restricted freedom of choice			
Media coverage and/or interest			
Political controversy			
History of mistrust			
Equity concerns			
Other issues:			

Adapted from International Association for Public Participation 2003

*See Work Sheets 3 and 4 for further information on identifying stakeholders

Work Sheet 3: Identifying Stakeholders

A. Identify organised groups: ask key members of the community who they think will be interested (positively and negatively) in the issues that have been identified. Seek out:

- Community leaders (including peak groups such as the Conservation Council of WA, the Urban Bushland Council, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who can help to identify active people in the local area)
- Community organisations (local governments often maintain databases of active community groups in their area)
- Organisations that have conducted community involvement in the past.

B. Identify characteristics of individuals who will most likely be affected by the potential impacts and controversy that may concern the community:

- People living near the proposed actions
- People who use potentially affected resources
- People who have expressed interest in this or similar issues
- Local activists
- Local community groups
- Non-profit groups with associated interests
- Local industries/businesses
- Farmers
- Tourism
- Educational institutions
- Others?

C. Identify any groups that have special needs and ensure that they receive direct attention:

- Groups at particular risk from proposed actions
- Potentially affected individuals who are unlikely to find out about the issues
- People who may be specifically affected because of their cultural and linguistic diversity or socioeconomic status, including aboriginal people.
- Any groups with a potential equity issue.

D. Identify groups and individuals that may not fall within traditional stakeholder categories, such as:

- Elected officials
- Government agencies
- Media
- Internal staff
- Mainstream citizens.

E. Identify additional groups from discussions with some of the above stakeholders.

Adapted from International Association for Public Participation (2003)

Work Sheet 4: Stakeholder Relationship to Issues

List all of the stakeholders that are relevant to your proposal and how they relate to your proposal.

Stakeholders	What is the stakeholder's relationship to the issue?
Government (including Federal, State and local)	
Community groups	
Residents (and/or residential areas)	
People with special needs	
Media	
Politicians	
Industry groups	
Educational institutions	
Internal stakeholders	

Work Sheet 5: Selecting an Appropriate Level of Community Involvement

This work sheet provides a structured process for selecting an appropriate level of community involvement. Additional questions that are important to your organisation may help to inform you on a suitable level of community involvement to undertake. Alternatively, you may devise your own technique that can justify the level of community involvement you will use.

Use the following table to rate how each of the stakeholders will view the issues surrounding your proposal and how they will want to be consulted on these issues. Based on these responses, use the guide below the table to identify an appropriate level of community involvement. The community involvement spectrum (Table 1) indicates tools that are applicable to different levels of the spectrum.

Assessment Questions	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Perspectives of persons external to the proposal (the community)					
What is the probable level of difficulty in solving the issue?					
What is the level of existing controversy surrounding this type of facility?					
How significant are the potential impacts to the community?					
What is the level of significance of this issue to the major stakeholders?					
What level of involvement does the community appear to desire?					
What level of involvement do key stakeholders appear to desire?					
Other questions as relevant:					
Perspectives of persons internal to the proposal (the proponent)					
What is the required level of public input?					
What is the potential for the number of actively involved stakeholders to expand?					
To what degree does the public appear to want to be involved?					
What is the potential for the public to impact on the potential outcome?					
How significant are the possible benefits of involving the public?					
How serious are the ramifications of not involving the public?					
What is the possibility that the media will become interested?					
What is the likelihood that decision-makers will give full consideration to public input?					
What is the likelihood that adequate resources will be made available to support community involvement?					
What is the likely level of political controversy on this issue?					
Other questions as relevant:					

Very Low to Low

'Informing' people of your intentions may be appropriate. Consider working with key stakeholder groups to identify a suitable information program to satisfy public concerns.

Low to Moderate

Community involvement is probably a good idea. Consider how the 'Consult' level of the community involvement spectrum will work with the issues and interests of stakeholders.

Moderate to High

Should consider involvement at least at the 'Consult' level of the community involvement spectrum and probably at the 'Involve' level.

High to Very High

Evaluate how stakeholder issues and interest, and internal considerations, can best be accommodated in the "Involve" or higher levels of the spectrum.

If any marks are registered in the 'very high' column, careful evaluation should be given to the level of community involvement even if the average score was otherwise low.

Most proposals will require community engagement at the Inform-Involve level of the spectrum (See Table 1)

Adapted from: International Association for Public Participation 2003

2.4 Community Involvement Tools and Techniques

The table below contains a summary of tools and techniques that can be used to engage with your stakeholders depending on your objectives and the level of the community involvement spectrum that is appropriate to your proposal or project. The table is presented with 'Inform' level tools and techniques at the top and moving down the community involvement spectrum. Appendix 1 contains further information on some of the more frequently used tools (these are shaded and presented in **bold** in Table 2). In addition, the DoE has prepared the Facilitation Toolkit, available from www.enviro.nsw.gov.au which contains useful information on the nuts and bolts of running community involvement processes that require a facilitator.

Table 2: Community Involvement Tools and Techniques

Tool or Technique	When to use them	Needs/Benefits/Risks
Fliers, brochures and printed material	When you need to have basic information on aspects of the project to hand or mail out.	Expensive to produce. Needs a distribution method to get them to the right people. Important to have any written material translated for particular groups in a project area, or an indication in a number of languages of where interpreters can be accessed. Check with your local council.
Advertising	When you need to reach a broad audience of people within a community.	Can be expensive. Hard to target or to monitor effectiveness. Can miss key minority groups.
Displays	To raise awareness about an issue. May target specific stakeholders.	Can be placed at club houses of stakeholder groups, notice boards at local shopping centres, libraries and council chambers. Consider space restrictions and others that may want to use the same public display areas. Consider providing your own display cabinets.
Fact sheets/information sheets	When you need to provide consistent accurate information on aspects of the project to stakeholders.	Written information needs to be clear, accurate, jargon free and illustrated where possible. Important to have any written material translated for particular groups in a project area, or an indication in a number of languages of where interpreters can be accessed.
Media liaison or publicity	When you need to disseminate clear and simple information within a community quickly.	Relationships with journalists need to be established early so they understand the project. Media releases need to be structured with simple clear messages.
Newsletters	When you need to keep people regularly informed about progress of a long-term project.	Newsletters can be printed and distributed by mail or letterboxing, electronically distributed by mail or posted on the Internet. Requires the establishment and maintenance of a database of stakeholders. Requires good writing/design as well as illustrations and photographs. Important to have any written material translated for particular groups in a project area, or an indication in a number of languages of where interpreters can be accessed.
Technical reports	When proposing a significant amendment to your plan, or on an annual basis to show progress and compliance with regulatory approvals.	Language should be appropriate for the likely audience. People need to be aware of report's existence and where they can obtain a copy. Can be supplied at local government libraries and on your web page.
Public meeting, symposium or open forum	When you need to impart information to large groups.	Needs careful preparation and a good independent facilitator to avoid grandstanding by minority groups with specific agenda. Not good for gathering information as people find them intimidating.
Field offices/information centres	Your proposal may have large impacts that are of interest to a broad cross-section of the community. Differs from shop fronts in that there is a low level of outrage and you are predominantly providing information.	Allows people to drop in at a time that suits them in a non-threatening environment. Needs to be staffed by people with good people skills and a detailed understanding of the project.
Telephone information line or hotline	When you need to provide a single source of answers to stakeholder questions and requests for information.	Telstra provides 1800 numbers which only cost the caller a local call. It is helpful to promote one single telephone number for all queries. It is important that this number is staffed with people who have answers.
Reconnaissance trip, site trip, tours to similar facilities	When you need stakeholders to be familiar with a physical environment or a similar concept already existing elsewhere.	Needs to ensure the appropriate decision-makers are involved. Need to coordinate travel and inspections and have informed people to answer questions.
Briefing workshop or information session	When you need to communicate complex or technical information to a group of people and get stakeholders to attend.	Allows people to engage in the information transfer process and ask questions. Sometimes difficult to promote. Times and venues critical.

Tool or Technique	When to use them	Needs/Benefits/Risks
Open day or shop front	When you need to present ideas or plans to a broad cross-section of stakeholders and obtain responses in an informal way.	Need well-illustrated displays that convey accurate information. Need staff available to take questions, discuss ideas and gauge reactions. Can include a questionnaire to collect and analyse responses.
Interactive web site	When you need to provide accessible, clear and appropriate information cost-effectively to a broad cross-section of stakeholders and then collect easy-to-analyse responses from them.	Websites can provide lots of information cost-effectively to those people with access to computers and the Internet. Web sites can also include response forms that can be completed electronically and e-mailed back to you for immediate analysis. Web sites can also allow stakeholders to ask questions and receive answers with the questions and answers accessible to all.
Models	When you need to generate interest, present ideas and help people think in three dimensions.	Models can be made by experts or by a group of stakeholders. Alternative proposals can be shown by moving parts around.
Questionnaires and comment forms	When you need to obtain structured responses on specific issues to obtain quantitative measurable results.	Less effective in obtaining responses to complex issues. Mail, telephone, web or face-to-face responses can be sought. Mail traditionally provides poor response rates. Important to have any written material translated for particular groups in a project area, or an indication in a number of languages of where interpreters can be accessed.
Telephone survey, interviews or polling technique	When you need to obtain structured responses on specific issues to obtain quantitative measurable results.	Questionnaires need to be designed carefully and simply. Respondents need to be informed on the project. Surveyors need appropriate training. Allows participation by those unable to get involved in workshops or other community involvement methods.
Written submissions	When you need to obtain detailed responses to a specific issue from a broad range of stakeholders.	People are often familiar with, and expect this approach. However, excludes stakeholders who do not have time, skills or resources to write submissions. Advertising for submissions needs to be broad based and preferably not in newspaper Public Notice sections.
Community or stakeholder research	When you need to build a genuine partnership with stakeholders and when it is important that the results of research are credible to stakeholders.	A team with involvement from key stakeholders and from your company is required to share the responsibilities and outcomes of any research.
Focused group discussion	When you need to generate discussion and insights on aspects of your projects.	A skilled facilitator is needed to ensure outcomes are achieved. Timing and neutral venue are critical to ensure involvement. Some reimbursement for travel may be needed. Providing refreshments encourages discussion.
Small group workshops	When you need to generate discussion and insights on aspects of your projects from a known group of stakeholders.	Need to set a clear agenda and have a facilitator who can keep the group on track. May need to reimburse group members for travel and offer meals/ refreshments if the workshop lasts more than two hours.
Delphi techniques	When you need expert input into a decision and where it is not necessary for everyone to meet.	Can be done via email. Good for the development of technical issues. Non-inclusive of broader stakeholders. Useful as an adjunct to other processes – e.g. developing ideas from working groups.
Review sessions	When you need to monitor progress of community involvement and maintain momentum.	Timing is important - too early is pointless, too late and momentum is lost. Agenda includes reviewing progress, evaluating outcomes and planning next steps. Needs a clear report.
Charrettes	When you need to galvanise public attention and input in order to resolve an issue whilst all of the stakeholders are present.	Good for promoting an organisation's openness to suggestions. Intense brainstorming and decision-making process bringing essential stakeholders together for a prolonged meeting(s) to generate options, decision-making criteria and a decision. Need to be clear and have agreement on the objectives. Needs venue sufficient to house all stakeholders, and resources to record issues. Staff with decision-making authority need to be present throughout the process.
Action planning event such as a workshop or a forum involving stakeholders (e.g. Samoan Circle, World Café)	When you need to produce plans of action which are owned by those affected by them or who will implement them.	Needs to be structured, carefully planned and appropriately facilitated.

Tool or Technique	When to use them	Needs/Benefits/Risks
Citizen Jury	When you have complex decisions that need consideration in a transparent forum.	Need independent, randomly selected jury panel, commitment to implement their decision, well-balanced array of experts to present to the jury and an experienced jury facilitator. May need to pay jury members.
Advisory committees, reference groups, community working groups, task forces etc.	When you need consistent input or advice over a period of time from people who have good local and/or expert knowledge.	Time-consuming to recruit and establish. Need effective participants. Need a good facilitator and Terms of Reference. Need a sunset clause.

(adapted from Landcom 2002)

2.5 Providing Feedback to Stakeholders on how their Input has Affected the Decision

If you have involved your stakeholders, you should provide feedback to them on how their input has affected your project plans. This may include:

- issues raised during community involvement process and by whom;
- how the information collected affected your project outcomes;
- why a particular decision was made.

Work Sheets six to eight provide examples of how you can organise stakeholder feedback and provide responses to stakeholders (including the DoE and/or EPA).

Tip: If you do not provide feedback to your stakeholders, they may assume that you have disregarded their comments. This will significantly hinder your future stakeholder relations.

2.6 Evaluate Your Community Involvement Process and Outcome

You should consider evaluating the effectiveness of your community involvement processes and outcomes. There are a number of reasons for doing this:

- To identify if stakeholders are satisfied that the process you have followed is fair, even if they would have preferred a different outcome. If people are satisfied with the process they may be more willing to live with the outcome.
- To improve future community involvement processes.
- To establish if there is a need for ongoing activity.
- To give stakeholders a broad picture of how others view your project or facility by sharing the outcome of your evaluations with them.
- To improve the cost-effectiveness of future processes.

Evaluation is best done continuously throughout your community involvement process. It should be an explicit part of the design of any community involvement process and should not be considered for the first time at the end of the process.

Tools you can consider using include informal feedback, interviews, questionnaires, peer evaluations, debriefs, formal surveys and formal program evaluations.

Evaluations undertaken at the end of a project should consider using an independent group that was not involved in the original project. They should assess against the actual goals of the project, and not a set of goals identified after the fact by the evaluation team.

Work Sheet 8 provides example questions that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of your processes and outcomes.

Work Sheet 6: Example Proforma for Summarising Stakeholder Issues and Contact Details

Date	Issue:	Name of staff notified of issue:	Raised by... stakeholder(s)	Response required (Y/N)	Contact details or method for responding to relevant stakeholder(s)	Response Provided (Sig. & date)
13/02/03	e.g. concern over excessive odours	Jo Bloggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident A • Local Ratepayer Association • Department of • etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • Yes • Yes • Yes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand-out at public meeting and personal letter to address... • As above • Information provided in Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager (28/2/03) • Manager (28/2/03) • Manager (28/2/03)
			•	•	•	•
			•	•	•	•
			•	•	•	•
			•	•	•	•
			•	•	•	•
			•	•	•	•

Work Sheet 7: Example Proforma for Providing Feedback to Stakeholders

This work sheet provides examples of how to capture stakeholder issues and how responses can be fed back to stakeholders and/or to the DoE in support of an application for environmental approvals.

Issue raised	Response	Amendment(s) made to original proposal in response to issue
Concern over excessive odours	<p>Agree that proposed process will generate odour. Co. X acknowledges this to be of concern to the community, particularly those living within 500 metres of the facility. In response to concerns, odour modelling was undertaken that estimates odour levels will meet EPA guideline levels. However, there will no doubt be times when an odour from our facility will affect our nearest neighbours. This is most likely on warm days when there is a gentle breeze. In such situations, affected residents are requested to contact X Manager on X mobile number, who will investigate the complaint in an attempt to identify the source and make any operational changes to reduce the problem where possible.</p> <p>Action: Several areas in the plant have been identified that can be managed to effectively reduce the odour to as low a level as possible. We commit to updating the plant design to reduce odour from these sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enclosure placed over the strongest odour source with odours vented through carbon filters. • Raised awareness of complaint numbers and response procedure.
Concern over excessive odours	<p>Or alternative response</p> <p>Agree that proposed process will generate odour. Co. X acknowledges that some members of the community will be able to smell the facility at some times. The company was aware of this concern when designing the plant and used best technology available. This includes dust suppression on all stockpiles (sprinkler systems) and enclosures over all odour sources that have carbon scrubbers which remove odours from all vents to these enclosures.</p> <p>Therefore, whilst we agree that odour is typically of concern with this type of facility, we have designed a plant that will reduce odours to as low a level as possible. These levels are expected to be well below levels recommended by the EPA.</p> <p>Action: We therefore request that any residents that experience strong odours, contact X Manager on X mobile number, who will investigate your complaint and investigate plant operations to identify any changes that could be made to address your concern.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No amendments identified. • Raised awareness of complaint numbers and response procedure.

Work Sheet 8: Evaluation Proforma

This work sheet provides example questions that may assist in evaluating the success of the community involvement process. Some questions are more appropriately directed to participants and some to your community involvement team. Relevance of questions also depends on the level of community involvement that you have undertaken.

1. Planning

- Were the aims of the community involvement process made clear?
- Was there a clear understanding of the expectations of all parties?
- Were the consultants trained in the skills required for effective community involvement?
- Was the desired outcome determined beforehand?
- Was there agreement on the approach to be taken (internal and external)?
- Were there enough opportunities to allow a full range of views to be expressed?
- Were enough resources (ie. time, staff, funds) allocated?

2. Process

- Were all stakeholders identified at the outset and involved in the community involvement process?
- Were the stakeholders representative of the affected population?
- How were roles and responsibilities made clear for all involved?
- Were independent, skilled and neutral facilitators used?
- Was information made accessible to all including special groups?
- Was the process fully documented?
- Did the process maintain objectivity and independence?
- Was there an acceptance of the diverse values, interests and knowledge of all participants?
- Was there respect for the confidentiality of information shared?
- How was flexibility integrated into the process?
- Was enough time allocated for the process?
- Did participants have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the process and was it acted upon?

3. Outcome

- Did stakeholders perceive that the process fairly considered their input?
- Did stakeholders perceive that decision-makers were sincere in their desire to obtain their input?
- Did participants understand the objectives, promise and process?
- Did participants perceive that the process was sufficiently flexible to address issues as they arose?
- Did participants believe that they had the information they needed to contribute at the level they desired?
- Was it clear to the stakeholders how their input was used?
- Did the consultation achieve your aims?
- Was the final decision generally acceptable to the stakeholders?
- How satisfied are participants overall in the process that was used to arrive at the final decision?
- Was the level of community involvement adequate to represent the concerns of those affected by the decision?
- Did input from the public contribute to a better overall decision?
- Was the process implemented as planned? If not, what changed and why?

Adapted from Government of Western Australia (2002) and International Association for Public Participation (2003)

PART 3: ONGOING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - KEEPING THE COMMUNITY INFORMED

This section presents community engagement tools that the EPA and DoE recommend you use to engage with your immediate stakeholders on an ongoing basis. These techniques are of relevance if you are operating under Ministerial Conditions, works approval and/or licence conditions. The EPA and DoE acknowledge that the tools outlined below will be of varying relevance depending on the specifics of your facility.

Once you have received government approvals to operate your facility, your relationship with your community and stakeholders is just beginning. You should continue to play a proactive role by maintaining dialogue with neighbours, community groups, and local businesses. This continuous communication with your neighbours and other significant stakeholders can be the key to a positive relationship. A steady, open dialogue is necessary to build trust, and also to identify and address new and/or emerging community concerns. It enables communities to voice their opinions about issues affecting them. It also allows you more opportunities to explore solutions and work with them to achieve the most satisfactory outcomes.

Tip: Effective companies devote time to developing relationships with their community.

3.1 Enhancing Dialogue with your Local Community

The points listed below may not be applicable to all scales of operations/facilities in Western Australia, however, the general principles regarding the need for ongoing and genuine dialogue should be adopted for all proposals, and operations/facilities.

Tip: Learn how residents communicate amongst themselves, and then stay connected with communities using their networks and groups.

- Always be open, clear, and honest with communities. If you don't have an answer to their question, let them know and get back to them.
- Be accurate and honest in providing information about who owns the facility, who operates it, how long it will operate, what the major hazards are and how they are being managed. Provide full information – don't hide important details.
- Establish a community advisory panel and maintain active involvement. Use the group for a variety of purposes, e.g communications, consultation plans, monitoring – but be very clear on what outcomes the group has an ability to influence.
- Identify values you share with the community.
- Develop a public communications plan with active input from the community.
- Appoint a community liaison person to continually raise stakeholder questions and concerns.
- Be sensitive to culturally diverse groups. Understand that each culture sees issues differently. You should understand the cultural make-up of your community.
- As appropriate, hire experienced community engagement consultants /facilitators with the same cultural background as those in the community, or who speak the local language.
- Involve stakeholders early in facility modifications. Continually monitor and coordinate land use with neighbours and existing and future businesses.
- Publish a community newsletter or annual report to the community.
- Routinely ask the community what they think of your facility through annual surveys and focus groups. Let neighbours help design, distribute, evaluate and report. This will help track the community perceptions of the facility's performance.
- Establish a complaint/question hotline and a response protocol.

Tip: Telephone is usually the best mechanism for contacting community members after hours. Determine with the person if they would prefer you to contact them during business or personal hours. Once you have established a relationship, ask for their permission to contact them during business hours.

Tip: Try to issue publications jointly with other trustworthy sources, such as universities, physicians or trusted local officials.

Tip: Promise to deliver and deliver what you promise.

- If your facility has the potential to affect property prices in the area negatively, look at ways you can add value to the community to restore price values. For example, you could survey the local community to determine what their values are and work out a plan to help them achieve these. This may include helping fund sports centres, schools, strategies to reduce crime and other initiatives that could have positive influences on property values in the area.
- Make sure that you are accessible. Hold 'open days' for the community on a regular basis.
- Continue to go the extra mile. Don't expect the community to come to you.

3.2 Making Reports Public

How you inform people and how regularly you do it depends on the level or the potential level of interest in your project or facility. The EPA and DoE require that environmental management plans and monitoring/compliance reports be made publicly available in some cases, on your website and at both local and state libraries.

The EPA and DoE also recommend that the community be notified of the availability of these documents via processes such as:

- liaison committees;
- update newsletters;
- local media; and
- internet.

You should also ensure the public is aware of licence amendments, significant changes, new or updated environmental management plans, or intentions to alter Ministerial Conditions.

In addition, be prepared to provide information to the public including, but not limited to:

- licenses, Ministerial Conditions and other regulatory approvals;
- licensed and accidental emissions to air, land or water;
- reportable incidents occurring within your premises or during the transport of your product;
- emergency response program;
- information on any health monitoring;
- results of any risk assessments, where these have been carried out;
- material safety datasheets;
- inputs, processes, outputs and storage of substances on your premises; and
- waste treatment and disposal.

3.3 Emergency Response

Engaging with the community on proposed Emergency Response Plans is advisable in situations where a facility is likely to affect external parties in an emergency situation. This situation would also apply where there is a perceived public safety issue regardless of the assessed technical level of risk.

Processes described in Part 2 of this document can be used to identify a suitable community involvement strategy regarding Emergency Response Plans.

Companies should be mindful of the potential to raise alarm in local residents if this community engagement is not effectively undertaken. Things to keep in mind are:

- The need to be professional, competent and well resourced to address any potential issues.
- Having formal processes for raising awareness of procedures (particularly alarm procedures and recommended action) that the potentially affected community should undertake in case of an emergency.

Too often companies are reluctant to provide information on risk to the public because they believe it will unnecessarily alarm people or produce negative effects. There is no evidence to suggest that such effects actually occur. There is, however, strong evidence to indicate that demonstrating reluctance, or simply not providing information, will generate concern.

- Present technical information in a format and language that is understandable and accessible to the general community. Try to avoid using technical jargon and risk comparisons, such as ‘it’s safer than crossing the street’.
- Be responsive to community concerns.
- Be prepared to show people around your site or, if not yet commissioned, visit a sister site if possible to place the issues in context.

3.4 Open Days

Open days offer many benefits such as making stakeholders familiar with your operations. This reduces the fear of the unknown. Stakeholders will be more comfortable when they see the safety measures you have in place. The benefits of open days outweigh any inconvenience caused by having people on site for a couple of hours.

Open days need to be well publicised and staffed.

Such events need to be carefully planned and presented so as to maintain an adequate level of security and control while still providing visitors with an interesting and informative look at the operations being proposed or conducted on site. Appendix 1 has more information on open days.

3.5 Complaints Registers

Establish processes for monitoring and recording complaints, and your responses to these.

PART 4: FURTHER REFERENCES

Below is a list of similar protocols or Codes of Practice that provide useful guidance on undertaking community involvement processes:

Similar Documents by Government

A very comprehensive and useful guide containing methodologies and case studies applicable to different approaches along the spectrum of community involvement.

NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning, and Natural Resources (2003) The Community Engagement Handbook: <http://www.iplan.nsw.gov.au/engagement/>

The Government of Western Australia's best practice for undertaking community involvement. Both are available from: <http://www.ccu.dpc.wa.gov.au/>

Citizens and Civics Unit, Department of Premier and Cabinet (2002) Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide, Western Australian Government, Perth.

Citizens and Civics Unit, Department of Premier and Cabinet (2003) Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success, Western Australian Government, Perth.

A how-to guide to facilitating groups.

Keating, C., Department of Environment, Water and Rivers Commission and Department of Conservation and Land Management (2003) Facilitation Toolkit: A practical guide for working more effectively with people and groups, Department of Environment. <http://www.environ.wa.gov.au/>

Industry-Specific Documents

A very useful guide with a focus on managing and preventing community outrage. Also contains guidance on setting up committees, public meetings and complaints management systems.

NSW Minerals Council (1996), Best Practice Community Consultation in the NSW Mining and Extractive Industries. <http://www.nswmin.com.au/environment/publications.shtml>

Guidance and templates on how operators of Major Hazard Facilities can involve their stakeholders.

Queensland Department of Emergency Services (2002) Community Consultation and Communication Guidelines. <http://www.emergency.qld.gov.au/chem/publications/pdf/EmergChem.pdf>

An industry standard community involvement code.

Plastics and Chemicals Industry Association (PACIA) (2002) Responsible Care 'Community Right to Know Code. www.responsiblecare.com.au

Other

An excellent reference for preventing and managing community outrage.

Peter Sandman's List of 50 Outrage Reducers: <http://www.psandman.com/col/laundry.htm>

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Health Canada (2000) *Public Involvement Framework and Guidelines*, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/ocapi-bpcp/framework_guides_cover_e.html

International Association for Public Participation (2003) *Certificate Course in Public Participation. Module 2: Planning Effective Public Participation*.

ISO, International Standard Organisation (1996) *Environmental Management Systems: Specification with guidance for use*.

Keating, C., Department of Environment, Water and Rivers Commission and Department of Conservation and Land Management (2003) *Facilitation Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Working More Effectively with People and Groups*, Department of Environment. <http://www.environ.wa.gov.au/>

Landcom (2002) Stakeholder Consultation Workbook.

<http://www.iplan.nsw.gov.au/engagement/stories/docs/landcom.pdf>

Ministry of Sport and Recreation (1996) *Chairing a Meeting*, Western Australian Government, Perth.

Peter Sandman's List of 50 Outrage Reducers: <http://www.psandman.com/col/laundry.htm>

NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning, and Natural Resources (2003) *The Community Engagement Handbook*. <http://www.iplan.nsw.gov.au/engagement/>

NSW Minerals Council (1996) *Best Practice Community Consultation in the NSW Mining and Extractive Industries*. <http://www.nswmin.com.au/environment/publications.shtml>

Plastics and Chemicals Industry Association (PACIA) (2002). *Responsible Care Community Right to Know Code*. www.responsiblecare.com.au

Queensland Department of Emergency Services (2002) *The Dangerous Goods Safety Management Act 2001: Community Consultation and Communication Guidelines*. <http://www.emergency.qld.gov.au/chem/publications/pdf/EmergChem.pdf>

Queensland Environmental Protection Authority (2000) *Environmental Management of Mining Guideline 7: Issue Identification and Community Consultation*' <http://www.env.qld.gov.au/environment/legislation/environmental/Guideline7.pdf>

UK Cabinet Office (2000) *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*. <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm>

Victorian EPA's guideline to running Community Liaison Committees:

[http://epanote2.epa.vic.gov.au/EPA/Publications.nsf/515bc2fde7bf93f44a2565b6001ee896/3365d7726ae83282ca256b05001e1b05/\\$FILE/740.pdf](http://epanote2.epa.vic.gov.au/EPA/Publications.nsf/515bc2fde7bf93f44a2565b6001ee896/3365d7726ae83282ca256b05001e1b05/$FILE/740.pdf)

Wilcox, D. (1994) *A Guide to Effective Partnerships, Partnerships Online*. <http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/frame.htm>

Appendix 1: Common Community Involvement Tools and Techniques

The list of community involvement techniques is by no means comprehensive, rather it provides a brief outline of the more common techniques you are likely to use.

More detailed information on running effective *meetings* and *workshops* can be found in DoE's [Facilitation Toolkit](#) which is available on the DoE web page. The Facilitation Toolkit was produced for use by DoE staff, however it is applicable for use by all parties.

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Public Information, Media and Advertising

Your community involvement process is likely to involve some form of public information, whether it is media releases, advertising, letters to key stakeholders or large-scale displays. Some examples of public information that might form part of your community involvement strategy include:

- Pamphlets / fliers / brochures
- Signs
- Newsletters
- Billboards and posters
- Competitions
- News releases and updates (TV, radio, newspapers and newsletters)
- Advertising
- Audio visual displays
- Television features
- Reports and other 'official' publications
- Internet
- CD ROM
- Exhibition / trade displays

Some things to consider when developing publications

- Ensure information provided is correct and complete. Remember that honest, open and accountable community engagement is the most effective.
- Glossy, expensive-looking publications released as a first draft might convey the idea that the contents are not really negotiable. The release of first drafts without colour covers and photographs, produced on plain paper with a simple layout, is an effective way to indicate to stakeholders that you are prepared to make changes based on their input.
- Use basic language and avoid inappropriate jargon.
- Use simple diagrams to explain concepts and demonstrate a point where possible.
- Use clear and visually pleasing layouts for all documents.

Surveys and Questionnaires

All sorts of information and data can be collected through surveys. Questions can be asked using face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, drop-off and pick-up forms, internet or direct mail methods. Ensure that your stakeholders are not “over-surveyed”, that questionnaires are appropriately designed and that techniques are included to ensure that multiple responses from individuals or organisations do not skew your results.

Advantages

- Provides input from individuals who might not attend meetings or workshops.
- Can provide input from a cross-section of the public, not just the vocal section of the community.
- Statistically valid results are more persuasive with political bodies and the general public.
- Provides base data with which to compare long-term changes.

Disadvantages

- It's possible results are skewed by any group with a specific interest.
- Does not provide an opportunity for two-way communication.
- Response rate can be low, particularly for methods such as direct mail. Effective follow-up is required to improve response rates.
- Level of detail may be limited and may not be sufficient to investigate complex issues.
- For statistically valid results, the process can be labour intensive and expensive.
- May be perceived as a public relations tool.
- It is difficult to get data that everyone will agree is representative.

Checklist

- It may be worthwhile to hire a professional to help design the survey to ensure it is easily understood and to avoid criticisms of bias, particularly if you need statistically valid results.
- Avoid collecting data that is available elsewhere – check first!
- Be clear about the purpose of the data before you collect it and ensure that the survey technique is capable of collecting data suitable for its intended use.
- If you do not obtain statistically representative results, then do not misuse the data; don't claim you have collected data representative of the larger population. Make sure that the sample you choose covers all those potentially affected.
- The questions must be unambiguous and mean the same thing to everyone that is surveyed. Test the survey on friends, family and colleagues who are unaware of the issues first.
- Keep the questionnaire as brief as possible. Justify how you will use the data collected from each question before including the question.
- Provide a very brief project outline to those being surveyed so that they know what you are doing with the data.
- Design the form to engage people, not just to answer specific project enquiries.

Suitable for

- Most suitable for general attitudinal surveys.

Written Submissions

Asking for written feedback on draft documents is a traditional form of community involvement, and one with which engaged and interested individuals and groups will have extensive experience.

Advantages

- Seeking written submissions is a cost-effective form of community involvement.
- In most cases, written submissions will become part of the public domain - tangible evidence of a community involvement process.

Disadvantages

- May not get large feedback except on very contentious issues – and then, only those opposed to a proposal are most likely to invest the time and effort required to prepare a submission.
- Many in the community are cynical about the extent to which written submissions are taken into consideration in the final document.
- The submission process tends to favour the articulate, and those with sufficient resources (time, financial, language and other) to prepare detailed analysis and documentation.

Checklist

- Allow plenty of time for written involvement, and start the process early, so that it has the best chance of improving the proposals concerned.
 - Notify where information can be located.
 - Be very clear in any accompanying documents, who is being consulted, about what, over what time period and for what purpose. Make it as easy as possible for readers to respond.
 - Documents should be made widely available (including electronically), as well as being effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.
- Responses should be carefully analysed with an open mind, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed and reasons for decisions finally taken.

Public Meetings

A public meeting is an open gathering used to present information and exchange views. It can be a difficult technique to use effectively when contentious or complex issues need to be addressed. A public meeting usually begins with presentations by one or more speakers, followed by question time.

Advantages

- Opportunity to provide information and obtain feedback on a broad scale.
- Traditionally viewed by people as a legitimate form of community involvement – people are familiar with the technique and are usually willing to be involved.
- Costs are relatively low.

Disadvantages

- Large attendance or wide variety of interests can limit the quality of interaction and exchange of ideas.
- Does not ensure that all views are heard, and the participants are not necessarily representative.
- Can degenerate into hostile and emotional shouting matches, and the vocal minority may dominate the meeting.
- It is very difficult to keep to a fixed agenda – people may bring up any issue they choose and you can look authoritarian if you try and divert them back to the topic.

Checklist

- Ensure the location is accessible and convenient.
- Provide refreshments and consider providing day care facilities, depending on timing and duration.
- Ensure that the objective of the meeting and the meeting structure are clearly defined. Keep any presentations short with plenty of opportunities for audience response.
- Use an independent and locally respected chairperson if possible. Qualities of a good chair – establishes ground rules early and sticks to them; clearly outlines the scope of the discussion; is a good listener with a retentive memory; is respectful of people, time and process; ensures that repetition is firmly, but courteously eliminated; allows fair discussion on each issue, and ensures that all points are expressed before the group is called to move on; summarises the points of view expressed, both for and against.
- Make sure that any speakers know what is expected of them (e.g. how long they should speak), and that the chairperson is well briefed and is able to control any more vocal members of the audience and limit repetitive discussion.
- Agree on the rules of conduct with participants before the meeting begins (for example, no speaking over the top of someone else, no speeches – keep comments to maximum of two minutes; respect other people's points of view).
- Record issues publicly, for example on butcher's paper or use direct data entry displayed for the group via a projector.
- Be available immediately after and/or for an hour or so before the meeting to answer individual questions.
- Consider running smaller workshop groups with a report back session, rather than keeping everyone together all the time.
- If possible, plan the layout of the room(s) so you avoid 'them and us', and can split easily into groups.

Suitable for

- Getting a feel for public opinion on a particular topic/issue. NOT suitable as the only form of involvement in a process.

Open Day or Information Day

An event where people visit your facility or can drop in at a central location (such as a town hall, council office or school) during a specific time, to view your operation and/or displays, take away printed materials and publications, ask questions or discuss issues with staff. At an information day, participants can usually come whenever they wish, stay as long as they wish, and address whatever topics interest them in whatever order they choose. Information days are run during hours convenient to most people – usually evenings or weekends. Open days usually have set times, will run to a schedule and need to be tightly managed to account for site occupational health and safety issues.

Advantages

- Gives people flexibility about when to attend and how long to stay.
- Can reduce fear of the unknown by familiarising stakeholders with your operations.
- Provides an opportunity for informal and one-on-one discussion between staff and stakeholders – hopefully providing an opportunity to correct misinformation.
- Potentially arouses interest by giving people something to see and do, rather than just be talked at!
- Gives people a chance to become familiar with the organisation and meet staff, helping to develop relationships.
- Can allow for in-depth exploration of issues through a variety of forms of information.
- Can be a non-confrontational format for sharing information.

Disadvantages

- Primarily information giving, rather than receiving (although it is possible to get public response through feedback sheets or response forms).
- Can be expensive to prepare displays and a full range of information.
- Requires out-of-hours work for staff.
- Requires well-briefed, knowledgeable staff with reasonable communications skills.

Checklist

- Staff must be well briefed to be able to answer questions, or at least record people's questions and requests for further information.
- For contentious issues, staff must be briefed or even coached to maintain a non-defensive, open attitude.
- Establish a system to record issues, questions and concerns raised, such as feedback forms or one-on-one interviews by staff.
- Have available a range of information presented in a variety of styles to cater for people's different learning styles, for example: maps and photos, written information, diagrams, hands-on activities if possible, handouts available to take away. But be careful of information overload – keep to the main points and minimise the technical language. The information needs to be informative, not persuasive.
- If the public have the potential to influence the outcome of a project, be sure that information sheets, maps or diagrams are marked 'draft', 'proposed', 'ideas' etc. as applicable.
- Make sure the time and venue is convenient to the people you are trying to attract.
- Dress to complement the audience. A business suit may be too formal.
- Aim to be set-up at least 45 minutes ahead of scheduled start to allow time to talk with early arrivals.
- Have comment cards available for the public.

Suitable for

- Situations where there is a lot of community interest in an issue, particularly in a local community, and there is likely to be some misinformation around.
- Providing information.
- Receiving public input.

Workshops

Workshops are the ‘bread and butter’ of community involvement. Workshops are most effective when designed to generate a group product, such as lists of issues, alternatives, impacts or a mutually acceptable plan of action that is fed directly into the decision-making process. A workshop is not another name for an information session or seminar.

There are a large number of techniques and methodologies that can be used within a workshop, and plenty of good reference material exists. Choosing the right technique and running a successful workshop requires good facilitation – often an external consultant may be beneficial.

DoE has an excellent Facilitation Toolkit which can be accessed from the DoE website. The toolkit was produced for use by DoE staff, however it is applicable for use by all parties who require facilitated outcomes.

Advantages

- Maximum flow of information.
- Solutions to problems can be explored.
- Allows exchange of ideas between participants.
- Participants are generally experienced with the format – which can be an advantage or a disadvantage, depending upon their previous experiences.

Disadvantages

- Needs good, possibly professional, facilitation to successfully achieve the outcome.
- Limited involvement for the general community – those unable or not invited to attend.
- Can be time consuming to organise and follow up on.

Checklist

The Facilitation Toolkit has information on workshop techniques, as well as the physical elements of planning a workshop. Below are some general tips on organising a workshop.

- Have an agenda – try to keep to the subject and keep to time as much as possible.
- Be sure to foster trust within the group so that they feel comfortable.
- Try to agree with participants on what is going to happen before the session – if you don’t, and participants are not happy with what is proposed, then the process will be derailed anyway.
- Agree on the rules of conduct with participants before the meeting begins (for example, no speaking over the top of someone else; no speeches – keep comments to maximum of two minutes; respect other people’s points of view).
- Design the workshop so that it generates a group product. Make sure you are not calling something a workshop when really you are just providing information. Participants will just get frustrated if they have come along thinking they were going to have genuine input.
- It is preferable to hold additional workshops to meet demand rather than restrict involvement.
- Make sure you feed back the outcomes of the workshop session to participants – even just as a record of what took place.

Suitable for

- Solving problems, and situations where input from stakeholders is sought.

Focus Groups

A research technique derived from the marketing field, a focus group is an open-ended discussion with a small group (no more than 12 people). The discussion is led by a facilitator who is (ideally) skilled in drawing out the comments and reactions that will have significance.

Focus groups don't provide a statistically valid analysis of public reaction to an idea or proposal, but they do offer a way to get a feel for what the range of public reactions will be.

Membership of the focus group does not necessarily have to be representative of a community and participants can be chosen for demographic, issue related, or geographic reasons.

Advantages

- Draws out subtle variations in views.
- Allows for brainstorming of ideas.
- Can include those who may usually be excluded (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse groups).
- Allows for in-depth discussion on particular issues.
- Can provide a snapshot of public opinion, when time or resources do not allow for a full review or survey.

Disadvantages

- The facilitator must be skilled at drawing out significant comments – which may require hiring an outside consultant.
- It should not be used as a vehicle to seek or build consensus or make decisions; it is an information gathering exercise only, providing qualitative information – not a sole technique for a consultative process.

Checklist

- Avoid voting or trying to come to a decision – ideas and opinions are the objectives.
- Selection of the group is of primary importance. Invite individuals from different backgrounds.
- May need to have several focus groups to investigate views from different perspectives.
- Set rules – people are not representing others, only themselves.
- Be sure to foster trust within the group so that they feel comfortable.
- Be imaginative in questioning, use humour.
- Requires skilled facilitator. The role of the facilitator is to direct the process; remain neutral; manage group dynamics; draw out participant interests (rather than positions); encourage collaboration and creative thinking; establish a clear context and structured framework for deliberations; develop and maintain a trusting group dynamic so that people feel safe to contribute.
- Rewards/incentives may be offered.
- Try not to use the regular attendees at public meetings, people who know the facilitator or others in the focus group.

Suitable for

- Initial scoping exercises within community involvement processes – possibly to provide some detailed information to prepare for broader community involvement.

Advisory Groups and Committees

Advisory groups facilitate a two-way flow of information with stakeholders and would typically be established to:

- Develop a specific product, like a management plan, that will take a lot of effort over an extended period of time.
- Develop a recommendation on a specific issue or proposal.
- Provide an ongoing source of public input that is not necessarily tied to a specific decision.
- Support broader community involvement on an issue. Never use a committee or advisory group as the sole form of community involvement.

Advantages

- Provides a forum for two-way exchange of views.
- Provides a forum for identifying and constructively resolving issues.
- Members of the group will become knowledgeable about the project.
- Builds a sense of partnership with a group of stakeholders.
- Develops constructive relationships.
- Promotes understanding of a range of perspectives.

Disadvantages

- Has limited power if it is not a decision-making body – this can frustrate participants.
- Membership can be biased and, if not representative of the broader community, can cause lack of credibility.
- There may be substantial differences in the level of expertise of members, which will have to be accommodated.
- The views of members may moderate throughout the process – the group may therefore be viewed as elitist and become less representative of the interests for which they were appointed to the group.
- Committee members may not feed back information to the people that they represent.
- Daytime meetings can limit ability of the public to attend.

Who to Invite?

- Try to limit the group to less than 15 people, preferably to 10 or less.
- Are they representative of the people with a stake in the issue? Are they likely to speak for the people they represent, or just for themselves?

Checklist

- Clarify ground rules, roles and responsibilities up front – devote the first meeting of the group to establishing these (for example, no speaking over the top of someone else; no speeches – keep comments to maximum of two minutes; respect other people's points of view; membership; how decisions will be made (e.g. consensus, voting etc); meeting frequency and duration; roles and responsibilities of members).
- Ensure membership is as wide as possible, and avoid domination by any one interest group.
- Let community and stakeholder groups choose their own representatives.

- Seek an independent widely respected chair. Get consensus within the group on who the chairperson should be – let the group choose. Qualities of a good chair – establishes ground rules early and sticks to them; clearly outlines the scope of the discussion; is a good listener with a retentive memory; is respectful of people, time and process; ensures that repetition is firmly, but courteously eliminated; allows fair discussion on each issue, and ensures that all points are expressed before the group is called on to reach a decision; summarises the points of view expressed, both for and against so that people are clear on what they are voting/deciding on.
- Use an external facilitator where suitable to ensure the transparency of the group process. The role of the facilitator is to direct the process; remain neutral; manage group dynamics; draw out participant interests (rather than positions); encourage collaboration and creative thinking; establish a clear context and structured framework for deliberations; develop and maintain a trusting group dynamic so that people feel safe to contribute.
- When established a review period process should be included; consider reviewing sunset clauses, process and aims and objectives.
- Make sure the group isn't the only channel for community involvement.
- Urge and support group members to maintain regular communication with their members.

