



**People for the Plains Inc.**

PO. Box 456, Narrabri NSW 2390

Email: [people4plains@fastmail.com.au](mailto:people4plains@fastmail.com.au)

Registration Number: 166810242

NSW Department of Planning and Environment  
22-33 Bridge Street  
Sydney 2000

### **Re-Submission on Revised Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects**

People for the Plains is a group of people from North West NSW, based around the town of Narrabri, who are interested in transparent and factual information in regards to the CSG industry in our region. We hold regular meetings to discuss the issues surrounding CSG and coal mining in our region and aim to be a voice for those who are and will be impacted by these industries.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Community Consultative Committee Guidelines of February 2016.

Our group has formally nominated a representative to the Santos CCC in Narrabri and this representative formally reports back to our committee and the community. This is a vital two-way communication tool for our community. However, in our experience, other members have not always taken their roles seriously, attendance is erratic and the chair is not unbiased. The Company often refuses to answer questions directly and minutes are not taken.

CCCs are a necessary tool to provide information access, liaison and feedback between companies and community, but unless they are able to:

- improve outcomes for community,
- hold companies accountable, and
- improve local understanding of risks and benefits of an industry,

they are not likely to be respected or accepted as true consultation by the wider community. A CCC should enable community to negotiate the outcomes of a project.

We feel that the CCC should have a focus on open, unbiased information and should seek to increase the quality of information available to community while offering community members an opportunity to question the information provided.

The Chair of the CCC should be an objective well educated facilitator with no conflicts of interest. Selecting a chairperson from an independent body not associated with the Company or government is imperative. As such, the Company should not nominate the Chairperson. The Department should advertise for a qualified and experienced facilitator and choose the most qualified applicant, with preference to those applicants already within the community.

The draft indicates an independent chairperson will recommend candidates from the community and the secretary of the Department will review, select and appoint community representatives. However, we feel that community representatives should be put forward by their respective community groups eg. CWA, educational groups, hospitals and environmental groups, etc. An invitation to nominate a member as representative on the CCC should be sent to community groups with an interest in health, environment or education. These invitations should be supported by two advertisements in local media outlets. Representatives of groups seeking to benefit from the industry should be avoided, eg. Business /commercial development groups.

The CCC should be more highly respected by the company and treated with confidence as a true conduit of information with the community; i.e. company information should be shared to the CCC, before this information is publicly known. It erodes the confidence in the process and the structure if people 'on the street' seem to know more about the project than those attending the CCC meetings.

Community Representatives should be selected from a variety of not for profit community groups to represent and report back to the community. These representatives must have the capacity to analyse, record and present information relevant to the project and should have access to training and financial reimbursement for time and travel. These representatives must be obliged to formally report back to their groups, with a record of this taken. Members must be required to attend a minimum number of sessions (more than 50%) to remain on the committee. Failing this they should be replaced through the same selection process.

Community representatives must be obliged to declare all and any payments or involvement that they have or are likely to have with the project. This includes secondary business interests. If this declaration indicates any involvement over a threshold (to be set low, such as \$50 per annum) they must withdraw their involvement in the CCC.

CCC members should be residents of the shire in which the project resides.

At present CCCs are not required to take official minutes. Minutes should be compulsory and taken by an independent community representative rather than the Company. Any formal correspondence made by the Chair of the CCC on behalf of the CCC must be discussed with and ratified by the committee prior to its release. Penalties should apply when this protocol is not followed, this should be enforceable by an appropriate authority.

All informational materials and images offered during negotiations should be publicly available. Confidentiality of information provided at meetings should be the exception, not the rule. Unless otherwise agreed by the whole committee, information regarding the Company, breaches, questions and answers or committee concerns should go on the public record.

CCC's should be notified of any new legislation or regulation that will affect the Company operations or requirements.

It is critical that People for the Plains maintains a position on all CCC's relating to coal and CSG mining in the Narrabri region, as this is our area of particular expertise.

CCC's should continue throughout the life of a project. Exploration stages and Production stages of development require different types of communication to/from the community/ company, therefore there should be consideration to the ongoing requirements of/changes to CCCs over these different stages.

Once again we thank you for the opportunity to comment and hope that you take our recommendations into consideration when finalising the CCC Guidelines.

Kirsty Kelly ( Secretary ) on behalf of People for the Plains,