

18 April 2016

Executive Director
Resource Assessments & Business Systems
Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Sir/Madam,

Revised Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) makes the following comments on the publicly exhibited 'Revised Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects.'

The establishment of Consultative Committees after Development Approvals have been given means that these committees have simply a token role in the implementation of State Significant Projects. They can only be regarded as a forum to make announcements and to answer questions.

In this context, the Consultative Committees are a public relations exercise and provide no meaningful involvement opportunities for the community.

The ten points given under the Heading: *The Purpose of the Committee* are telling and the Trust comments in detail on the first four points.

Point 1 – *Establish good working relationships between the Company, the community and other key stakeholders on individual projects*

How is this of value when or if the project is not wholeheartedly supported, or may be opposed by the community? The community may not want a relationship, they may want 'change'.

Alternatively, if the project is supported, why is this necessary?

Point 2 - *Allow ongoing communication of information on the project and environmental performance, including about:*

- *the development of new projects, including site selection, design and any mitigation measures;*
- *development assessment - including scoping of issues for assessment and commenting on assessment documentation (optional);*
- *implementation of conditions of approval and any management plans;*
- *results of environmental monitoring;*
- *annual review reports; and*
- *outcomes of audit reports (including audits required as a condition of consent).*

All of the envisaged communication appears to be for the project development company's benefit, to assuage concerns

The communication appears to not be for the community's benefit except to satisfy the curiosity of individuals.



It appears that none of this 'communication' could have any effect upon the implementation of the project.

Point 3 - Comment on the project's performance against any conditions of approval.

This is a matter for the approval and regulatory authorities, not for the community. If there was a breach of a Condition of Approval, then the Committee's role is irrelevant to the legal issue between the Company and the Approval Authority.

Point 4 - Discuss community concerns and review the resolution of community complaints.

The Trust cannot see any value in discussion or review where there is no indication of any resultant action or priority given to community concerns or complaints.

All of the Guidelines emphasise the irrelevancy of any Committee input, opinions or expectations in relation to the actual course and conduct of the development.

Such consultative committees appear to be an exercise in management of public opinion and in channelling dissent into controllable entities. It is intended that dissent should be aired in the "Consultative Committee" where there is no obligation upon any party to actually listen to or respond to that dissent. This process appears aimed at claiming a level of consultative legitimacy as a project proceeds.

Community Consultation should engage at the project design and development stage, prior to the issue of any Development Approval. Otherwise, community opinion is subservient to the Approval and ultimately worthless.

If there is need for engagement with the public during the course of the implementation of a development then that would suggest problems with the development.

Resulting consultation should be in an open, public forum where the community can speak its mind and any issues can be freely aired and discussed. This would be democracy at work.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Quint
Director - Advocacy