

We recognise a well-run Community Consultative Committees (CCC) can be a valuable forum for project proponents to develop productive relationships with stakeholders. CCC's provide a forum for community members, proponents and key stakeholders to work together toward social, environmental and economic outcomes that benefit local communities. They provide a channel for communication and exchange of key information between those with a direct stake in a project and the wider impacted community, making community attitudes, concerns and preferences accessible to the proponent's staff responsible for project leadership.

After review of the draft guidelines, we wish to make the following comments and recommendations:

Scope and Process

- Broadening the scope of use of CCC's to apply to all State Significant Projects appears a logical and sensible progression. The guidelines do not however include a description of the mechanism for determining when and if the development of a CCC would be appropriate. Clear criteria must be developed and included in the guidelines. This will remove uncertainty and improve transparency.
- At present the recommended community representation on CCC's is heavily weighted toward environmental interests or specific community concerns. As economic and social outcomes are also extremely important, it is vital that the committee include members who can add this lens to discussions.
- The proposed opportunity to form a committee earlier in the development and assessment process, rather than only in the post approval stage, would have the potential to support the development of relationships with stakeholders and with local communities. However, it does come at some risk, particularly as at that stage, the potential impacts of the proposal have not been clearly articulated by the proponent nor independently assessed by the Department of Planning or determined by the PAC. Committee members may in fact find themselves in a compromised position on the basis of decisions made or in the absence of full and proper information. This is also a potential issue of concern for Council.
- If the decision is made to convene separate CCC's during the design, construction and implementation phases, there is risk that the community will feel consultation fatigue. There would need to be clarity about the function of each committee and the way each differs at the beginning of the concept phase.
- The guidelines include reference to the proponent potentially funding CCC activities. There is no guidance regarding the implementation of this reference. Some structure to this process needs to be included to provide transparency to the community and potential committee members as to the type of activities that should be funded. This would provide a level of transparency and accountability that would further enhance community confidence and avoid potential conflict of interest - perceived or otherwise.
- Because collaborative approaches are crucial to the success of a committee, and are not the way most people currently experience committee processes, this approach needs to be more strongly emphasised through the guidelines and the code of conduct.

Representation

- Local government, as the level of government closest to the community are adept at engagement with statutory authorities and are in the position of providing a safeguard and a balance between the voices of the overall community and community special interest groups.
- It is critical that local government has more than the one proposed representative on the committee - particularly if the CCC is formed pre - project approval. In fact we submit that there should be three representatives at the pre-project approval stage which would ensure that third party professional expertise adds value to the discussion particularly when viewed through the lens of Councils policies and Community Strategic Plans. This would permit not only a planning professional perspective to be articulated, but would also bring further expertise from the community development area to interrogate social and economic impacts and outcomes. The inclusion of three Council representatives would be beneficial and add balance to this forum.
- In relation to CCC's formed post approval - it is critical that local government representation be boosted to two representatives. This membership formula, including 2 Council representatives - has been proven to deliver effective representation in the case of the Duralie Coal CCC which has been in operation for some 9 years. During this period there has never been an instance in which the Council representation has either been questioned or the suggestion raised by either the community members or the project leadership that this representation is too weighty and should be reduced. Given that Local Councils carry a large degree of responsibility for the implementation of Conditions of consent it is important that Council be adequately represented at this forum and engage directly from the community representatives and project delivery staff.
- The guidelines lack direction on local government involvement when a project involves more than one local government area. This requires further consideration particularly if the CCC is formed pre- project approval. If only one council is represented, the unique needs and concerns of the area may not be represented in a balanced and fully informed manner.
- The role of the chairperson is crucial to the success of the committee. Without community confidence in the committee, community trust in the consultative process will be minimal. The placement of a chairperson who is seen as sympathetic to the proponents could do irreparable damage to the relationship between the community and proponents. Local government could play a community representative role in the process of confirming a suitable chairperson by seconding the nomination of proposed chairpersons.

In conclusion, the broadening of the engagement of CCC's to include State Significant Projects is a positive progression. There are risks involved that need to be carefully considered and there are also omissions from the guidelines that need further attention.

Great Lakes Council has confidence that these issues will be addressed in the Departments assessment of submissions on the Draft Paper. We request that the recommendations proposed below are considered and included in a revised draft of the guidelines.

We are as always happy to discuss.

Summary of Recommendations

- Inclusion of one additional council representative on the CCC - post approval (totalling two representatives)
- Inclusion of two additional council representatives on the CCC if the committee is convened pre- approval (totalling 3 representatives)
- Inclusion of fixed terms (one or two years) for community representatives, with the option for renomination
- Local government to second nominations for committee chairpersons on behalf of local communities
- Stronger emphasis on embedding collaborative approaches into committee development and function.
- Greater clarity and transparency on the funding of CCC's by proponents.
- Inclusion of representation from each Local Government Area where projects impact more than one Local Government Area.
- Clearer criteria should be developed around the proposed changes included in the guidelines. This will reduce uncertainty and provide clarity for the process.