



## STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDER LIAISON

# Consultation with DPI Water for consultants and proponents of major projects

August 2015

## Purpose and scope

This guideline has been developed to assist consultation with DPI Water where related to major projects, and is targeted at consultants and companies undertaking this work. In particular, it is targeted at consultation on:

- Management plans, such as water management plans, rehabilitation management plans, and water monitoring and modelling plans;
- Major project proposals, including requirements for environmental assessments; and
- Mineral and petroleum exploration, including queries about exploration drilling.

This guideline does not apply to general licence, approval, or other enquiries. For these enquiries please contact water advisory services by email [water.enquiries@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.enquiries@dpi.nsw.gov.au) or phone 1800 353 104, and have your licence or approval number ready (if applicable). This guideline has been prepared to assist proponents understand how to consult with DPI Water in relation to a major development.

Specific guidance will from time to time be developed for types of plans, e.g. Groundwater Monitoring and Modelling Plans.

## Why consult?

Consultation with DPI Water may be either mandatory or voluntary, and proponents may need to consult with DPI Water for a number of reasons, including:

- Condition of a development consent
- Condition of mineral or petroleum title
- Undertaking a development or assessment of a proposal
- Understanding detailed water licensing requirements related to a major development or exploration activity

Through consultation, DPI Water can provide advice to ensure best practice or local conditions are identified and understood, and to ensure development activities are undertaken in accordance with the NSW Government's regulatory and management framework. DPI Water will also gain a better understanding of the extent and scale of activities underway across NSW.

Consultation provides a good two-way dialogue to continuously improve policy and legislation that governs the use and management of water resources in NSW.

## Making contact with DPI Water

Please make initial contact with the Strategic Stakeholder Liaison Unit by email [water.referrals@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.referrals@dpi.nsw.gov.au) or phone 1800 353 104. If you have an existing contact within DPI Water you may wish to copy them into your correspondence for their information.

When making contact, please ensure your request is as detailed and specific as possible. In particular, you should outline:

- Who you are and who you represent. If you are a consultant, please ensure you let us know the name of the proponent company.
- The nature, location, and stage of development you are undertaking (including links to relevant online information).
- The specific piece of work you are undertaking (e.g. water management plan, groundwater impact assessment, etc)
- Specific requirement or reason to consult with DPI Water (e.g. condition X of consent number Y).
- Any earlier communication with DPI Water on this project.
- Specific requests – for example:
  - Review a management plan
  - Provide a briefing on EIS
  - Meeting to discuss application of the Aquifer Interference Policy to a project
- Any queries or uncertainties you would like DPI Water to address.
- Any constraints or critical timeframes for your project. Note that you should plan for sufficient time to consult with Government agencies in project schedules where this is a condition of consent or approval.

In many cases DPI Water will be able to address your query quickly by phone or email.

## Meeting with DPI Water

DPI Water has internal rules on meeting with proponents and their consultants. These rules are designed to protect our staff, ensure transparency and probity, and ensure that adequate records are maintained of these meetings. In particular:

- We will decline requests for informal meetings such as at cafes, restaurants and bars. Meetings should be arranged at an official office location, on site, or another appropriate community venue (such as a community hall).
- An agenda should be prepared and circulated by the meeting initiator in advance.
- In most cases, DPI Water will not attend meetings with proponents and their consultants without another Government representative being present.

## Providing material for review

All material for review should be made available to DPI Water in electronic format, as an attachment to an email or made available for download on the internet (confidential material should be password protected). Our review officers are located in locations across NSW and reports will be provided to them electronically.

If you are unsure how to provide large files via the internet please contact the Strategic Stakeholder Liaison Unit for preferred methods of distribution.

Electronic documents should generally be provided in searchable PDF format. Where requested, data may need to be provided as tables in spreadsheet format, and models and GIS maps need to be provided in appropriate formats for examination.

Hard copy reports should not be mailed to DPI Water routinely, unless specifically requested, or where there are certain materials that are difficult to review electronically. However, DPI Water may at times request hard copies to assist with its review.

## Revisions

If you are providing a revised version of an earlier plan, please provide a tracked changes version and / or a clear summary of the changes that have been made. This will assist DPI Water complete its review much quicker.

## Confidentiality

Please note that all information provided to NSW Government agencies is subject to the provisions of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*. DPI Water will handle all information provided to it in confidence in good faith, and in accordance with its obligations under this and other statutory obligations. For further information please visit the websites of the Department of Industry ([www.trade.nsw.gov.au](http://www.trade.nsw.gov.au)) and the Information and Privacy Commission ([www.ipc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au)).

Confidentiality does not diminish the responsibility of proponents to provide the information necessary for assessment and review to DPI Water, and we will not consider information that has not formally been provided to us in our review.

Proponents are encouraged to make final and approved versions of all management plans available online, even where not legally required to do so.

## What you can expect from us

DPI Water will endeavour to provide comment and review that is clear, reasonable, and practical in its scope. Where our requests or requirements may lead to significant delay or cost to a project, we will consider alternative solutions or options that achieve the desired outcomes of the NSW Government.

Where required a senior representative of DPI Water will be available to meet with you within a reasonable time of us providing comment that could significantly impact on your project.

## Timeframes

In general, you should allow 4-5 weeks for DPI Water to undertake a review of a management plan or similar document. Minor plans and revisions to earlier plans are likely to be quicker, however please discuss any time constraints with the Strategic Stakeholder Liaison Unit.

We will endeavour to meet any particular time pressures you have, however it's important that you plan to allow sufficient time for Government agencies to undertake a review, make any necessary changes (in consultation with that agency), and then seek approval of that plan as required by any relevant condition.

Where delays are anticipated we will advise you of the expected timeframes, and discuss if there are any potential interim options that may help to reduce any subsequent delays to your project.

## Customer Service Charter

DPI Water's service standard requires that 80% of major project consultations be completed within 30 days.

## What we expect from you

First and foremost we expect all consultation to be open and genuine. This includes allowing sufficient time for us to undertake any necessary technical review, and sufficient time for you to consider and respond to our comments.

We expect that you will consult with affected third parties, as necessary, and ensure they are aware of any activities that you are proposing that will impact on them.

Meetings should have a clear purpose, and sufficient time and detail should be provided to DPI Water to allow us to prepare and ensure the appropriate staff are able to attend. We receive hundreds of requests for consultation each year, and general meet and greet type meetings are discouraged except for very large or complex projects, or where a meeting is possible with minimal disruption to our staff. Project briefings are recommended to be timed to directly assist DPI Water's review and assessment of an EIS, management plan or similar.

We expect all documentation to be clear and easy to navigate, and all necessary supporting information to be made available to DPI Water in a timely manner.

## Feedback on this guideline

We welcome your comments or suggestions on improving this guideline. Please send an email to [water.referrals@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.referrals@dpi.nsw.gov.au) with a subject of **Consultation guideline**.

## More information

Strategic Stakeholder Liaison Unit, Department of Primary Industries – Water

[www.water.nsw.gov.au](http://www.water.nsw.gov.au)

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (March 2015). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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