



AGL Gloucester Gas Project  
Focus Group Research

# Key findings & recommendations

## Final

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# Methodology and Approach

Key objectives of the focus group sessions were to engage a diverse sample of community members to obtain qualitative feedback on the draft Stakeholder Engagement Management Plan (SEMP).

Representatives from Gloucester and Stroud Road communities.

Three focus group sessions

- Gloucester - 22 and 23 September (14 and 5 attendees)
- Stroud Road - 18 September (18 attendees)

Questions examined

- Objectives
- Stakeholders
- Issues / gaps
- Methods of communication (active and passive)
- Quality, quantity, style and timing of communication

# General conclusions

- Participants valued the opportunity to be involved.
- The consultation to date had not stemmed the level of uncertainties about the impacts of the project within the community
- Participants acknowledged that community consultation improvement was required.
- There were mixed views about AGL in the community.
- Generally, participants were concerned about the quality and timing of information.
- There was a great desire to have independent verification on the studies undertaken by AGL.
- Stroud Road in particular, felt there were significant gaps in community engagement in their community.
- Other resource extractions industries in the region complicated issues further.

# Focus Group Question 1

Objectives influence the development of the Plan. Are there any gaps in this list?

*The intent of this question was to seek any gaps in the consultation objectives.*

## **Findings**

The current objectives were supported so there are no additional objectives needed.

- Stated objectives needed to be measured so that better transparency and balance in the consultation provided, or information disseminated can be demonstrated.
- General agreement that the name of the SEMP should be changed to reflect community. Participants didn't like the term "stakeholder".
- More factual information.

## **Draft Recommendations**

- Change the SEMP title to Community Engagement Plan (completed – now CEP).
- Suggest including key performance indicators in the CEP against stated objectives (to be finalised).

# Focus Group question 2

Are there any stakeholders missing from the list?

## Findings

### Other stakeholders identified include

- Tourists/short-term visitors
- New residents (e.g. retirees moving into the area)
- Emergency services including the SES and RFS
- Medical services industries
- AGL Shareholders/Board
- Greater Taree Shire Council
- Gloucester Regional Community
- Communities affected by the broader footprint of the project (e.g. Hexham, Stroud Road, other towns along the pipeline corridor)
- Other resources extraction companies
- Stroud/Stroud Road community
- Heritage groups
- Interest groups including The Gloucester Project, Gloucester Stroud Preservation Alliance
- Local schools and school community (P&C, teachers, staff)
- Utility providers including Ausgrid, Essential Energy, Transgrid, Telstra

### Draft recommendations

- Update stakeholder list in CEP
- Conduct stakeholder analysis (including meeting and discussing expectations where possible) of each of the additional stakeholders to identify level of interest and impact.

# Focus Group question 3

A range of issues have been identified in the SEMP. What are the key issues you would expect to be consulted about?

## Findings

Participants agreed that the issues identified in the SEMP were issues they would like to be kept informed about.

- Research identified that integrity, balance and transparency of information about issues needs to be improved.
- Research found that there was a perception of inefficiencies and poor quality of communication and information

## Draft recommendations

- Establish a community engagement plan of activity 12 months in advance, identifying key milestones in the program.
- Clarity, consistency and high quality of information to be sustained throughout the consultation process. Reference facts where possible.
- Ensure hard copies of communication materials and reports are located around Gloucester, Stroud and Stroud Road including in public libraries, community halls and / or local businesses.
- Establish complaints protocols and advertise them.

# Focus Group question 4

## What style / method of communication do you prefer?

This question examined both passive and personal (active) styles of communication / engagement.

### Findings:

#### *Most preferred styles / methods*

- Information sessions
- Project newsletter/community update
- Group meetings
- Community forums
- Complaints register

#### *Other styles to support engagement*

- Personal: Reliance on CCC, 1800 number, face-to-face individual meetings, project briefings, open days, site tours, site briefings, drop in sessions.
- Passive: emails, letters, signage, newspaper updates, fact sheets, reports, minutes

### Recommendations

- Ensure most preferred methods can be incorporated into program of activities.
- Support these processes with other forms of communication

# Focus Group question 5

Discuss with participants the types of issues that might arise, and how they would prefer to be consulted.

*(The intent of this question was to drill down further to issues. As discussion of the focus groups evolved much of this was covered. Because of time limits, this question was not specifically addressed in Stroud Road. Much of the information was captured throughout the session).*

## Findings

This was a more qualitative session with participants and revealed varying issues. Most of these centred around the uncertainties associated with the project. One comment in particular:

*“the effectiveness of the communication depends upon your stand in relation to the issues which differ amongst people and interest groups. I am concerned about the impact of this (even through I’m not affected) and want to make sure everybody is given the information”.*

## Draft recommendations

- Clarity, consistency and high quality of information to be sustained throughout the consultation process.
- Implement engagement processes early enough to allow deeper community discussion around more sensitive issues.
- Independent expert advice is important as is academic reference to claims made about mitigation of risks.



# Focus Group question 6

**Quality** – the integrity of the information

**Quantity** - how much information you are receiving and whether it is adequate

**Style** - personal or passive – how you prefer to be engaged

**Timing** - enough notice/consultation about the issues that may affect you

*The intent of this question was to critique these four elements in context with the AGL project so that focus on specific areas could be recommended*

## Findings

- Participants felt that quality and timing of communication were of paramount importance.

Stroud Road participants provided the following process with regard to community engagement

- Provide the information.
- Do so in a timely manner (minimum four weeks for any relevant project information that has an impact on the community).
- Involve all stakeholders at all stages of the project.
- Provide a forum for feedback on that consultation stage.
- Take feedback on board and action (no false promises).

# Focus Group question 6 (continued)

## **Draft recommendations**

- Incorporate Stroud Road process as stated.
- At least 4 weeks' advice/notice required regarding all major activities that have the potential to impact on individual stakeholders and / or the community (such as seismic survey work etc.).
- At least 2 weeks' notice (written or advertised) to the community or affected stakeholders regarding community forum dates or other community events.
- Establish dispute resolution protocols.
- Establish media protocols, and rules around engaging media.
- Community access to counsellor.
- Access to academic references where possible.
- Establish website protocols to ensure relevant and up to date information is on the project website.



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