

4 Consultation during preparation of the environmental assessment

4.1 Consultation prior to the assessment

In 2005, the proponent released the report 'Future water options for the ACT region', in which the project was recommended as one of the preferred options to secure the ACT's water supply (ACTEW 2005a). Consultation undertaken in conjunction with this report included:

- Briefings of community and business groups (18 briefings);
- Briefings of ACT Government, Commonwealth agencies and advisory bodies (15 briefings);
- Development of a project website available from August 2004, which received 3,200 visits;
- Information sent to 450 community groups;
- Media advertisements;
- Sustainability workshops held with participants including community, government and professionals;
- Community meetings (four meetings) were held to explore stakeholder interests and values;
- The 'Palette of Possibilities' exhibition was held in Canberra, Queanbeyan and Cooma attracting over 800 visitors; and
- The proponent received 255 written responses, mainly as a result of the exhibition and via the website.

The results of this consultation process are outlined in detail in the Future Water Options Consultation Report (ACTEW 2005b).

4.2 Consultation for the project and environmental assessment

4.2.1 Consultation plan

A community engagement and stakeholder management plan has been prepared to support the approvals, design and delivery phases of the project. Implementation of the plan commenced in January 2008 and will continue for the duration of the project. A range of meetings with community groups, individuals and government agencies have already occurred including meetings and contacts with government stakeholders, local community groups, landholders and members of the public, with 604 total events and 1431 contacts with stakeholders (358 distinct). A breakdown of these events is outlined in Table 1 of Appendix S, *Community Feedback*. The plan outlines the process for community engagement and stakeholder management. It provides the following in relation to consultation for the project:

- An overview of the organisational and community context;
- A description of the community engagement and stakeholder management strategy and approach;
- The methodology for identifying the community's issues;
- Identification of the project's stakeholders, likely issues, and communication messages, and the phases where stakeholders are likely to be impacted or interested;
- An overview of the communication tools and techniques that will be used to engage and communicate with stakeholders, aligned with project delivery milestones;
- A mechanism for recording and evaluating community comments and issues;
- A reporting framework to inform design and construction; and
- An evaluation and monitoring program to assess the level of community engagement and effectiveness of the plan.

The delivery of the plan has considered:

- Appropriateness to audience, goal and message;
- Relevance to project goals;
- Timing and consistent information;
- Attitudes of the community toward the issue/activity;
- Cultural appropriateness including language; and
- Environment—geographic considerations.

The most appropriate tools were selected to engage and communicate effectively with the community about the project. The consultation activities undertaken are described below.

Aboriginal consultation is described in section 14.1.1.

4.2.2 Community scan

The proponent undertook a community scan to ensure that all stakeholders and community groups were considered and captured in the stakeholder database and distribution list. The community scan identified residents, business owners and operators, local community and environmental groups, local government and agency contacts. A site visit also formed part of the community scan.

Stakeholders included:

- Statutory authorities:
 - Elected representatives (federal, state, territory and local);
 - Local councils;
- Representative Aboriginal organisations and land councils;
- Individual landowners;
- Commonwealth, state (NSW) and territory (NSW and ACT) government agencies;
- Industries – potential customers;
- Industries – bystanders;
- Media – local, metropolitan and national;
- Community groups:
 - Environment groups;
 - Local residents groups;
 - Local interest groups;
 - Recreational user groups;
 - Non-local interest groups;

The plan categorises each of the stakeholder groups according to their potential level of interest in the project.

4.2.3 Feedback mechanisms

A hotline telephone number, reply paid post, website and email facility were established at the commencement of the project to enable all stakeholders to provide feedback to the project team for consideration in the assessment. Project fact sheets, a frequently asked question document, community newsletters and website updates were used to inform community members and encourage feedback.

A database management system was established to manage contact and issue information received. Since project inception over 600 discussions or other forms of contact with more than 350 distinct stakeholders have taken place and been recorded on the project's consultation database.

4.2.4 Initial contact with directly affected landholders

As the general route corridor for the pipeline was refined, and detailed survey and assessment work was undertaken, a letter was sent to, and visits undertaken with, potentially directly impacted landholders.

Initial contact was made with all directly affected landholders by letter in February 2008. Additional letters were sent to landholders in March 2008 inviting them to attend the community drop in session held at Burra on 25 March 2008.

Ongoing liaison has taken the form of written letters and an extensive series of individual meetings with landholders.

There are approximately 30 landholders on the directly impacted landholders list.

The purpose of contact with directly affected landowners is to ensure they are fully informed about the nature of the project in relation to their land holding and that they understand the proponent's approach to gaining access to land and subsequent compensation. The aim is to gain access on a voluntary basis. The meetings with landowners are also aimed at ensuring that the concerns of landowners during construction, rehabilitation and operation are addressed.

4.2.5 Community information sessions

Three community information sessions have been held to provide project information, seek community feedback and provide an opportunity for community members to ask the project team questions:

- Drop-in session at Burra Community Hall on 25 March 2008, attended by 35 residents;
- Community meeting on 9 December 2008, attended by approximately 70 local residents; and
- A community meeting held on 10 March 2009 detailing the proposed route alignment and preliminary findings of the environmental studies, attracting approximately 50 local residents.

In addition to these meetings, The Hon. Mike Kelly, Federal Member of Parliament for Eden-Monaro, convened a stakeholder roundtable meeting at Burra Community Hall on 20 January 2009. The meeting was well attended by community members, Palerang Shire Council and senior ACTEW staff.

4.2.6 Other meetings and discussions with community and non-government groups

Consultation has been undertaken with the following groups:

- ACT Rural Landholders Association;
- Australian Railway Historical Society;
- Building Science Forum of Australia;
- Burra Community Association;
- Burra Landcare Group;
- Burra Rural Fire Brigade;
- Burra-Urila Residents and Ratepayers Association and Pipeline Subcommittee;
- Canberra Investment Corporation;
- Community Alliance Party;
- Conservation Council of South East Region and Canberra;
- Landcare groups;

- Molonglo Catchment Group;
- Queanbeyan Business Council;
- RSPCA;
- Southern ACT Catchment Group;
- Tuggeranong Community Council;
- United Ngunnawal Elders Council;
- Universal Resources;
- Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee;
- The Village Building Company (via Queanbeyan City Council).

Presentations have been given to many of these groups, while other groups have sought information on the project on behalf of members. Meetings have also been held with the appropriate Indigenous groups, representatives of which have also participated in the community drop in session.

A project update was presented to the Burra Community Association at their monthly meeting on the 30th September 2008. Several meetings have been held with the Molonglo Catchment Group, including a presentation on 10 October 2008 and a walk along the potential impacted area of Burra Creek on 19 November 2008. A presentation and project update was provided to the Burra-Urila Residents and Ratepayers Association on 13 November 2008, with regular contact ongoing since that time.

As guided by the Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer CESM Plan, a range of meetings with community groups, individuals and government agencies occurred since project inception (including during preparation of the draft EIS/EA) and prior to it being lodged for public exhibition. This included meetings and contacts with government stakeholders, local community groups, landholders and members of the public, with 604 total events and 1431 contacts with stakeholders (358 distinct). A breakdown of these events is outlined in Table 1 of Appendix S *Community Feedback: Community Consultation on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (ACT) & Environmental Assessment (NSW) for the Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer*.

4.3 Consultation with government agencies

During 2005 initial consultation occurred with the NSW Government, Palerang Shire Council, and the Burra-Urila Residents and Ratepayers Association. During 2008 and the early part of 2009 members of the project team met or held discussions with a large number of agencies, during preparation of the assessment, to identify issues for consideration. The following agencies have been consulted:

Local Government

- Palerang Shire Council;
- Queanbeyan City Council;

ACT Government

- ACT Planning and Land Authority;
- ACT Health;
- Tourism ACT;
- Territory and Municipal Services including, Parks, Conservation and Lands, ACT Roads, ACT Heritage Council, ACT Emergency Services, ACT Flora and Fauna Committee;
- Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water;
- ACT Chief Minister's Department;

- TransGrid;
- ActewAGL;

NSW Government

- Department of Environment and Climate Change;
- Department of Primary Industries;
- Department of Water and Energy;
- Department of Planning;
- RailCorp;
- Department of Lands;
- Roads and Traffic Authority;
- Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority;
- Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority;

Commonwealth Government

- Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts;
- National Capital Authority;
- Murray Darling Basin Authority; and

Other

- Australian Rail Track Corporation Ltd.

In addition, the NSW Department of Planning convened a planning focus meeting on 4 September 2008. Further information on this meeting is provided in chapter 2.

Additional meetings involving the NSW Department of Planning, ACT Planning and Land Authority and the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts have been undertaken to discuss cross jurisdictional matters and coordination.

4.3.1 Issues raised by agencies

Key issues during consultation activities are summarised in Table 4.1. These issues are cross-referenced to where they are addressed in the assessment. It is to be noted that the table below is a summary of the main issues raised.

Table 4.1 Issues raised by agencies

Stakeholder	Key issues	Document reference/ comment
NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change	• Aboriginal heritage issues • Water quality • Ecological impacts • Construction impacts, including soil removal, noise, dust	Chapter 14 Chapter 11 Chapters 12, 13 Chapters 9 – 25
NSW Department of Primary Industries	• Impact on fish • Operating rules	Chapter 12 Chapter 6
NSW Department of Planning	• Planning approval	Chapter 2

Stakeholder	Key issues	Document reference/ comment
NSW Department of Water and Energy	• Mechanism for purchase of additional water • Impacts on water supply • Operational regime with particular reference to dry years • Proposed extraction levels for both Tantangara and run of river • Cumulative impacts of projects • Potential impacts on flora and fauna • Pipeline licence and authority to survey	Chapter 2 Chapters 9, 10 Chapters 6, 9, 10 Chapters 6, 9, 10 Chapter 26 Chapters 12, 13 Chapter 2
NSW RTA	• No issues	N/A
RailCorp	• ACTEW to consult ARTC	Chapter 25
Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority	• Consult with Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority	Chapter 23
Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority	• No issues	N/A
Murray Darling Basin Authority	• Matters of flow, use, control and quality • Cap on water use • Impact on salinity • Operating rules	Chapters 6, 9 – 11 Chapter 5 Chapter 16 Chapter 6
ACT Health	• Water quality • Impact on water restrictions	Chapters 11, 24 Chapter 23
ACT Territory and Municipal Services <i>Including Parks, Conservation and Lands, Roads ACT, Environment Protection Authority, Tourism, ACT Heritage Council, ACT Flora and Fauna Committee</i>	• Traffic impacts • Impacts on Angle Crossing • Operating rules • Aboriginal heritage issues • Impact on flora and fauna, ACT and Googong Foreshores • Environmental offsets	Chapter 25 Chapter 25 Chapters 6, 28 Chapter 14 Chapters 9, 10, 12, 13 Chapter 13
ACT Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water	• Operating rules • Environmental flows • Ecological communities • Spoil management	Chapter 6 Chapters 6, 9, 10 Chapter 13 Chapter 19
ActewAGL	• Environmental offsets	Chapter 13
TransGrid	• Environmental offsets	Chapter 13
Queanbeyan City Council	• Water supply • Traffic impacts at Googong Reservoir • Consult with the two major property developers for Queanbeyan's urban release areas	Chapters 6, 11 Chapter 25 Chapter 23

Stakeholder	Key issues	Document reference/ comment
ACT Rural Landholders Association	- Flows in Murrumbidgee River - Traffic at Angle Crossing	Chapter 9 Chapter 25
Palerang Shire Council	- Impact on Murrumbidgee River - Impact on Burra Creek - Possible community benefits - Impact on landholders in the area	Chapters 9, 11, 12 Chapters 8, 11, 12 Chapter 23 Chapters 17, 23
Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts	- Impact on Ecological Endangered Communities - Operating rules	Chapters 13, 26 Chapter 6
National Capital Authority	Consistency with National Capital Plan	Chapter 2
ARTC	- Timing of construction works on rail crossing - Consult with the lessee of the rail crossing (Australian Railway Historical Society) regarding construction timing	Chapter 25 Chapters 23, 25

4.4 Consultation on the draft EIS/EA

The consultation program for the draft EIS/EA was conducted between 14 August and 18 September with NSW Department of Planning indicating it would accept last submissions until 2 October 2009. This period of formal consultation built on the continuing communication and liaison with the community and other key stakeholders as outlined in the sections above.

The results of the consultation program are detailed in Appendix S.

The community consultation activities undertaken during the exhibition period exceeded those required by the NSW Department of Planning and ACT Planning and Land Authority. The consultation program was in addition to continued liaison with the directly impacted landowners.

The following consultation activities were undertaken to encourage the community to review the draft EIS/EA and provide comments as part of the public exhibition process:

- In addition to the complete draft EIS/EA publications, a user-friendly CD and an easy to read summary document that featured the complete list of commitments were prepared for distribution to the community;
- Project fact sheets providing information on construction, environmental commitments, Murrumbidgee flows and how the community could have its say, were distributed with the draft EIS/EA documents;
- A direct mail campaign invited more than 100 individuals and community organisations to participate in the public exhibition process;
- A range of stakeholder group or one-on-one meetings and presentations were held;
- The public exhibition process was advertised in the Canberra Times and regional papers as well as promoted by media release;
- Five community drop-in sessions were hosted;
- The ACTEW website was updated with the EIS/EA and associated fact sheets; and
- The ACTEW email and telephone hotline number were promoted for community members who wanted more information or had comments to make.

Consultation on alternate outlet location

A specialist consultation program was conducted at the conclusion of the formal public exhibition period for the draft EIS/EA focused on the proposed alternate outlet location upstream of the location proposed in the draft EIS/EA.

This consultation was undertaken as a result of the considerable community interest both prior to and during the consultation period. 16 written submissions called on ACTEW to adopt an alternative upstream discharge option. This EIS adopts this alternate output option as the preferred project

This consultation program included meetings with eight representative community organisations and 11 landowners directly affected by the proposed alternative outlet location. Details on this consultation program is included in the *Consultation and Submissions Report* and associated attachments at Appendix S.

4.4.1 Consultation participation

Throughout the consultation period, feedback and participation in consultation activities were recorded. Key features of the participation in the consultation program are summarised below:

- During the consultation period 83 submissions were received by the NSW Department of Planning and the ACT Planning and Land Authority, of which 25 submissions were duplicates submitted to both jurisdictions. More than half of these submissions were from individuals living in the region;
- Submissions were received from the following government agencies:
 - ACT Environment Protection Authority;
 - ACT National Trust;
 - Murray Darling Basin Authority;
 - National Capital Authority;
 - NSW Department of Environment Climate Change and Water (2 submissions);
 - NSW Industry and Investment, Division of Primary Industries, Fisheries Conservation and Aquaculture;
 - NSW Heritage Council;
 - NSW Office of Water;
 - Palarang Shire Council;
 - Territory and Municipal Services ACT;
- 17 submissions were received from directly impacted landholders; and
- 33 members of the public attended the five drop-in sessions.

4.4.2 Issues raised during consultation

Throughout the consultation period there were some clear trends emerge as to the key areas of interest from across the community and government sector. These issues were consistent across all consultation activities, such as the drop-in-sessions and the written submissions.

The key issues raised during the consultation period in order of frequency were:

- **Impact on Burra Creek:** a wide variety of issues were raised with respect to Burra Creek including questions around the proposed flow regime and the associated modeling and concerns about impacts such as erosion, reduced water quality and loss of existing creek habitat. The community expressed interest in understanding the proposed monitoring regime better. There was a minority view that discharging into Burra Creek earlier will have positive impacts on that section of the Creek;
- **Alternative outlet option:** members of the community expressed support for an alternate discharge location about 2km further upstream in Burra Creek (upstream outlet) as it will mean less impact on

landholders and it was believed will have a positive benefit on the ecosystems of the creek. Some indicated they would like to see construction savings to ACTEW, as a result of the shorter pipeline, reinvested into community or environmental projects;

- **Construction issues:** matters raised include suggestions relating to management plans that ACTEW will put into place during construction, direct impacts of construction such as traffic, spoil;
- **Noise:** comments seek commitments with regard to construction noise and the associated blasting; more detail is sought in relation to the location and potential noise impacts of pipeline air-valves;
- **River flow:** submissions raise matters in relation to the level of Murrumbidgee River flows and the associated impacts at Angle Crossing, on downstream users. Several submissions suggest that there is insufficient water in the Murrumbidgee River to meet the requirements of this project;
- **Rehabilitation:** submissions raised specific rehabilitation comments in relation to areas such as crossing of watercourses, Burra Creek and along the roadside. More broadly queries were raised about ACTEWs commitment to rehabilitation and concerns about scarring along the pipeline route and the route becoming an informal dirt track; and
- **Heritage:** matters raised include the process of managing heritage artifacts located during construction and the continued liaison with local indigenous groups. Heritage questions were also raised in relation to the World War II bomb shelter and school at Williamsdale, the poplar trees along Williamsdale Road and impacts on London Bridge Arch.

In addition to the above issues, other comments related to the scope of the draft EIS/EA, operation of the pipeline, aquatic and terrestrial impacts and consideration of alternative options to secure the water for Canberra and the region.

There were six written submissions received that were directly opposed to the project.

The figure below shows the spread of topics that were raised through written submission to ACTPLA and NSW Department of Planning.

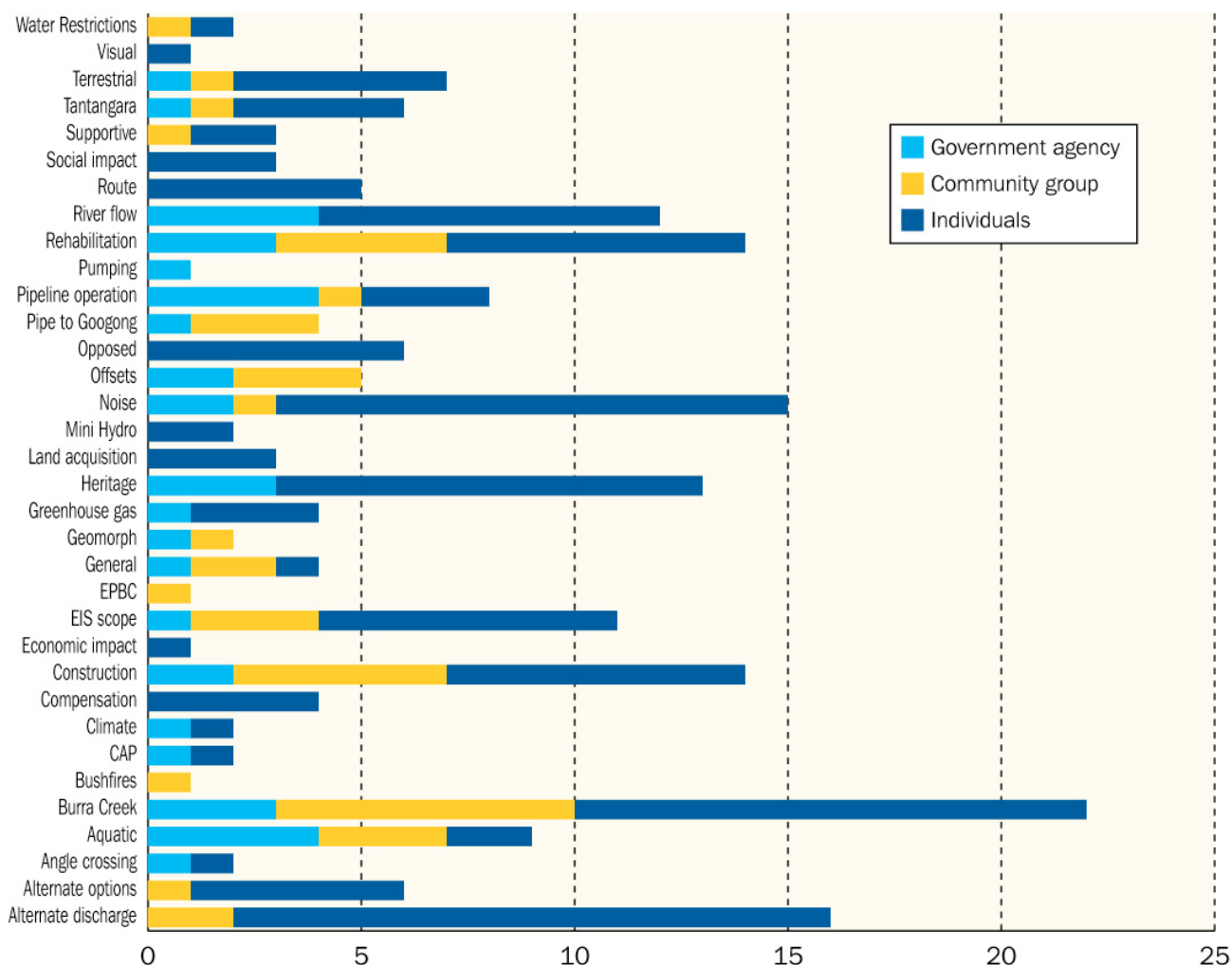


Figure 4.1 Submissions received by topic.

17 submissions were received from landholders who are directly affected by the pipeline passing through their properties. The key issues raised by these landholders were:

- Support for the alternate upstream outlet location; and
- Concerns associated with potential noise associated with air valves along the route.

Other issues raised by landholders reflected those raised generally across all the submissions including construction impacts, impacts on Burra Creek and comments about the broad route selection.

There were two directly impacted landholders who directly opposed the project.

4.4.3 Addressing the issues raised

A complete list of issues raised by submissions during the consultation process is included as Attachment 4 to Appendix S which is the Community Feedback report. This list of issues provides details on ACTEW's response to each specific issue and the relevant area of the EIS which discusses the matter in more detail.

Key issues raised and the associated summary of ACTEW's response is detailed below.

Impact on Burra Creek

There were a large number of issues raised about the potential negative impact of the project on Burra Creek, this included concerns about the validity of certain modelling undertaken in the draft EIS/EA. To address these issues:

- ACTEW engaged aquatic ecology specialists to review earlier assessments undertaken for the draft EIS/EA;
- Many of the additional specialist studies for the upstream outlet also addressed submissions relevant to their area of expertise; and
- Additional data sourced from the Ecowise and Waterwatch monitoring programs was incorporated into the updated assessments.

These further assessments have provided an improved understanding of the Burra Creek system, notably a more robust basis for comparison of the characteristics of Burra Creek and the Murrumbidgee River. The study also investigated the potential impacts on geomorphology and aquatic flora and fauna to give a more holistic understanding of baseline characteristics of Burra Creek. The study recommends operational procedures to protect aquatic ecosystems (refer to section 12.5.3).

Based on the outcomes of the desktop study ACTEW has refined its proposed monitoring and the adaptive management framework to direct the future operation of the project and minimise the risk to the ecology of Burra Creek. This approach is in line with industry best practice and has been adopted successfully in a broad range of infrastructure projects, including other ACTEW projects within the ACT. Subject to regulatory requirements, the results of monitoring will be available for critical review by key community stakeholders.

ACTEW believes the issues raised in these submissions have now been adequately addressed.

Alternative Upstream Outlet Option

In response to the large number of submissions in favour of the alternative outlet option further upstream in Burra Creek, ACTEW has adopted this option into the final project specifications.

ACTEW commissioned extra environmental investigations associated with the option and undertook specific community consultations with local community organisations and potentially affected landholders.

The EIS adopts the alternative outlet option which is outlined in detail in the Preferred Project Description in Chapter 6. All environmental assessments associated with the route have been updated to reflect the upstream outlet location.

The upstream outlet also reduces the number of air and scour valves required, addressing a key concern of landholders located on the original alignment.

As an example of public benefits resulting from the upstream outlet cost savings, ACTEW is working closely with Palerang Shire Council to fund the upgrading and sealing a section of Williamsdale Road at Gibraltar Hill. Survey and design work have been completed, and road widening land acquisition negotiations are underway by the Council. The land proposed to be acquired will be sufficient to include a bridle path or “greenway” along this section of road. This work will significantly improve road safety at this location. Any extension of ACTEW’s current funding commitments to cover the road construction will be conditional on planning agency approval of the water transfer project.

ACTEW has also offered to assist the community over the longer term to re establishment of riparian vegetation along Burra Creek particularly through the Burra “village” area.

Construction issues

ACTEW is committed to the development of management plans as an important early step in ensuring impact during the 18 month construction period is minimised. These management plans are outlined in detail in section 27.3.2 of the EIS and include the following sub-plans:

- soils and water management;
- flood contingency;
- flora and fauna management;
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage management;
- waste management;
- noise and vibration management;
- air and dust management;
- traffic management; and
- integrated risk.

Several submissions raised matters that will be dealt with in one of the plans detailed above. Specific reference to how these have been taken into consideration by ACTEW can be found in Appendix S.

Noise

Chapter 20 of the EIS provides detail on the noise management plan for the project. In relation to construction noise, ACTEW will apply pro-active construction noise and vibration management sub-plan for potential sources of noise and vibration in order to minimise impacts. This sub-plan will require endorsement by the relevant NSW and ACT agencies and feature auditing and monitoring of the construction noise and vibration. The plan will be coupled with community consultation and information and a noise complaint handling procedure which will feature a course of action to manage and address complainants concerns in a timely manner.

The construction noise and vibration mitigation measures are provided in section 6 of the Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Report (Appendix L). This appendix also discusses the potential blasting impacts associated with the project and identifies that airblast overpressure is the most likely impact of blasting noise. Methods to reduce the impact of airblast overpressure are detailed in section 6.3 of the Noise and Vibration Assessment report, which includes optimising blast design, making efforts to reduce the number of shots and allowing for the effects of temperature inversion and wind speed and the direction of the propagation of airblast to surrounding areas.

Operation and likely impacts associated with the inclusion of air valves are discussed in Chapter 20. Under normal operation of the pipeline, these air valves will not be required to function, hence, there will not be audible noise generated by the air valves. However, the air valves would be required to operate during special maintenance operations, pipeline filling and emergency conditions, which may lead to noise being generated by air released from the valves. Air release valves generally only operate for a short duration when required. Air release, and hence noise emission, are mostly predicted to be gradual under controlled maintenance conditions but could occur suddenly under emergency conditions.

The determination of the actual air valve noise levels is difficult because the level of noise emitted is a function essentially of the pressure and the volume that has to be released, which, for any given pipeline or section of pipeline, is different at each of the air valves where column separation is occurring. Hence, the measurement of actual air valve noise levels associated with other existing pipelines was considered to be of limited value.

Three air valves were identified with potential to cause environmental impact during their operation. It is proposed to include design measures for noise attenuation at two of the air valves in question. The third valve is not expected to operate, except under extreme conditions and attenuation is also proposed.

The number of air valves associated with pipeline has reduced as a result of the adoption of the preferred project outlet location.

Full details on the impacts on air valves are at Chapter 20.

River flow

Issues associated with the impact of the project on the Murrumbidgee River, Angle Crossing and downstream users are discussed in Chapter 9 of the EIS.

All modeling has taken into account historical flows in the river, including recent low flows. Projected pipeline extractions allow for the impact of climate change and the projection of river environmental flows in the Murrumbidgee. This acknowledges that there will be periods when there is not enough water flowing in the river to allow pumping to occur. Despite these expected limitations, the amount of water available to be pumped is projected to be sufficient to make the pipeline project viable.

The impact of pumping water on water flow parameters such as depth, velocity and volume at Angle Crossing is presented in section 9.4 of the EIS and is assessed as being low.

Chapter 9 also addresses the question of impact on flows leaving ACT and entering NSW, noting that all existing Canberra and Queanbeyan demand is met through abstractions from the Murrumbidgee, either by interception before the flows arrive there or directly from the River. This fact also applies to effluent reuse and stormwater harvesting, as these flows would have otherwise also entered the Murrumbidgee River. Overall, the Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer will result in a 1 % change in average flows leaving the ACT (with the average flow leaving ACT being 509 GL/annum). This change will not impact on environmental flow requirements, as transfers to Googong will only occur once there are sufficient environmental flows in the Murrumbidgee River.

The relatively small impact on net water volume outflows suggests that the impact on downstream users will be minimal. The mitigation measures described under section 9.6 'Proposed abstraction regime', which cover preservation of downstream environmental flows and monitoring to revise environmental flow rules if necessary, are aimed at protecting the interests of downstream users.

Rehabilitation

ACTEW is committed to successful rehabilitation of the construction easement and an appropriate Landscape Rehabilitation Management Plan will be put into place to ensure this. This will include using the latest technology and experts in the field of native grass revegetation to improve native grass revegetation and eliminate noxious weeds. Where appropriate or required by property holders, rehabilitation may include the re-establishment of improved pastures. The pipeline route has been designed to avoid areas of high conservation value. There will be a 15 m easement in areas of EEC.

Top soil will be stockpiled on stripped ground and after the pipe is laid and buried, the rehabilitation plan will be followed. The strip topsoil to rehabilitation timeline should be no more than three months.

To avoid potential for the route to become an informal 'dirt-track' the construction area will remain fenced during the rehabilitation period. Following construction the area will remain fenced and police will be informed of any illegal activity. No permanent access is to be constructed after rehabilitation is complete and fencing will be removed. All erosion control procedures will be followed.

The pipeline traverses through private landholdings so the risk of people coming onto properties will be minimal without the land owner being aware. During construction the area will be under security guard.

Heritage

Further Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment is to be conducted as part of the required actions in the Indigenous Heritage Management Sub Plan of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). These actions involve the testing of known and potential archaeological deposits to determine the most appropriate strategy for impact mitigation, such as surface artefact collection and/or salvage excavation. ACTEW has engaged consultants to conduct the program of archaeological subsurface testing across the project area. The assessment area will also include the upstream pipeline outlet location and associated potential downstream impacts, west of Burra Road.

In response to a number of submissions on the draft EIS/EA, an unanticipated discovery protocol will be drafted and included within the Indigenous Heritage Management Sub Plan of the CEMP. The protocol will address both Indigenous and non-indigenous finds and comply with the requirements of the ACT and NSW statutory authorities.

4.5 Next steps for consultation

ACTEW community engagement and stakeholder management program will continue throughout the life of the project and provide opportunities for the community to continue to contribute to the implementation of the project.

ACTEW will continue to work closely with directly affected landholders to discuss construction requirements and in particular develop individual agreements with landholders around the long term rehabilitation of land.

The proponent will work with Palerang Shire Council and community members to identify potential community benefits in recognition that benefits derived from the project (including secure water supply and a stable economy) are not directly related to the local impacted community.

The proponent will keep the community informed about the project during construction via personal contact, regular letterboxed updates, the project website and where appropriate, through advertisements in the local newspaper and community information sessions. ACTEW's toll-free project info line and construction response line will also be used. A dedicated Community Engagement and Stakeholder Management resource has been allocated for the life of the project.

Further statutory consultation will also occur as the ACT Development Application and the Commonwealth Public Environment Report processes continue during the first half of 2010.