

CHAPTER 5 - ENGAGEMENT



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5. Engagement

This chapter summarises the community and stakeholder engagement carried out before and during preparation of the EIS, how the issues raised have been considered, and the engagement proposed to be undertaken during the design and delivery of the project. Further information is provided in Appendix E (Community and stakeholder engagement report).

5.1 Engagement approach

5.1.1 Overview

Santos recognises effective engagement underpins a fair and transparent project development and environmental impact assessment process. Following public announcement of the project in November 2022, Santos has developed and implemented a continuous program of stakeholder and community engagement activities, including for the EIS preparation phase, to raise awareness about the project, understand community and stakeholder issues, and obtain important feedback to help shape the project's design and environmental assessment.

The engagement program of activities has been developed with reference to *Undertaking engagement guidelines for state significant projects* (DPHI, 2024b) and the project SEARs (see Appendix A (SEARs compliance)).

As part of Santos' commitment to building and maintaining relationships with the community and stakeholders, and understanding their interests, needs and priorities, engagement for the EIS has also been informed by:

- ongoing landholder engagement being undertaken as part of the design process
- engagement undertaken for the Aboriginal heritage and social impact assessments (see chapters 12 (Heritage) and 15 (Social and economic))
- ongoing engagement and consultation for all of Santos' projects and activities in the Narrabri LGA.

5.1.2 Engagement objectives

The engagement objectives for the project are to:

- build and maintain community and stakeholder relationships
- inform the local community and stakeholders about the project and the opportunities to engage
- provide the community and stakeholders with an opportunity to ask questions and identify areas of concern regarding the project, and explain how their feedback will be considered
- provide direct feedback to the project team so it can be considered as part of project development and design
- develop solutions that address stakeholder expectations where possible, being clear about the level of influence engagement will have on the project
- effectively and proactively identify and manage issues raised by the community and key stakeholders when making project refinements
- manage stakeholder feedback and complaints in a timely, respectful way
- monitor and evaluate stakeholder feedback.

5.1.3 Community and stakeholder identification

Understanding the local community and identifying stakeholders is critical to the success of the project. A stakeholder is any individual, group, organisation or entity that has an interest in a project, policy, or decision. Stakeholders may be directly or indirectly affected by the outcomes, or may perceive that they could be impacted.

Four main groups of stakeholders were identified as outlined in Table 5.1.

Further information on stakeholders, including the full stakeholder list for the project, is provided in Attachment A of Appendix E (Community and stakeholder engagement report).

Table 5.1 Stakeholder groups for the project

Group	Definition
Directly impacted local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members and landholders who own, live or work at properties with the potential to be directly impacted by the project Community members who travel on the roads impacted by the project
Broader community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider community and landholders surrounding the project site Community members and interest groups Local businesses, industry groups, organisations and chambers of commerce State forest users
Aboriginal stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native Title Applicants Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs)
Government and organisational stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian and State government agencies likely to have an interest in the project, including those referenced in the SEARs Local councils Elected members of the parliaments of NSW and Australia Infrastructure and service providers

5.2 Engagement prior to and during preparation of the EIS

5.2.1 Tools and activities

Santos employed a broad suite of engagement methods and communication tools to support project engagement. Methods and tools were selected depending on the stakeholder, their availability and the purpose of the engagement activity.

The following key communication tools facilitated information sharing and engagement, and were used to communicate upcoming community information and consultation sessions, project information and contact details:

- communication material, including project updates, website information, newsletters, factsheets, letters/emails, newspaper advertisements and social media
- free call phone number and email address for people to direct their enquiries.

The following activities were undertaken to engage stakeholders and gather feedback:

- Narrabri community shopfront/project office
- site visits
- community information and consultation sessions
- meetings and briefings, including one on one and small group meetings with government, stakeholders and community members
- direct mail, letterbox drops and doorknocking
- updates provided at Narrabri Gas Project Community Consultative Committee meetings
- landholder engagement.

A summary of key tools and activities is provided in Table 5.2. Further details, including information on timing and outcomes, is provided in section 3 of Appendix E (Community and stakeholder engagement report).

Table 5.2 Engagement tools and activities

Tool / activity	Description / purpose
Community contact points	<p>The free information and enquiries line (1800 071 278) and project email (Info@huntergaspipeline.com.au) are available for the community and stakeholders to seek information, ask questions, provide feedback and raise concerns.</p> <p>These contact details are included on communication materials. A register of all interactions from the enquiries line and project email is maintained.</p>
Project website	<p>The website (see Narrabri Lateral Pipeline) provides information on the project, links to communication material, and details about engagement opportunities and outcomes.</p>
Communication material	<p>Communication material, including project updates, newsletters, fact sheets and letters, have been distributed at engagement activities and sent via mail, letterbox drops, and via email distribution lists. This included sending letters to community interest groups inviting them to participate in consultations with Santos regarding the project.</p> <p>The monthly newsletter is sent via email to a distribution list and made available via: News and information. Each newsletter provides information on the current status of Santos' projects in Narrabri (including the Narrabri Lateral Pipeline, Narrabri Gas Project and the Hunter Gas Pipeline). An extract is also published in the Wee Waa, Narrabri and Gunnedah local newspapers.</p>
Media - Newspapers and social media	<p>Project information and updates are regularly shared with the wider community through media advertisements in the local newspapers and on social media channels. All community information and consultation sessions are advertised through these channels as well.</p>
Narrabri shopfront/project office	<p>The Narrabri shopfront is located at 125 Maitland Street, Narrabri.</p> <p>Dedicated Santos community staff are available during business hours to provide project information, answer questions or receive feedback.</p>
Government and organisational stakeholder briefings	<p>Written notification has been provided to government and organisational stakeholders on a regular basis to advise of project milestones and opportunities for consultation. Meetings have been undertaken to share information and updates, and seek feedback during the scoping and preliminary investigation phase, as well as the EIS development phase.</p>
Aboriginal stakeholder briefings	<p>In addition to consultation required under the relevant guidelines for Aboriginal cultural heritage and social impact assessment (see chapters 12 (Heritage) and 15 (Social and economic)), Santos has engaged more broadly with key Aboriginal stakeholders regarding the project and EIS. Santos met with the Red Chief and Narrabri LALCs, and the Gomeri Applicant, to provide a briefing on the project and seek feedback on points of interest for the EIS. All parties also visited the project site allowing the conversation to continue on Country.</p>
Site visits	<p>Site visits have been undertaken with the following stakeholders to enable familiarisation with the proposed project site and to look at key project locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Chief LALC • Narrabri LALC • Government agencies • Gomeri Applicant • RAPs.
Community information and consultation sessions	<p>Advertised drop-in information and consultation sessions have been held to provide an opportunity for the community, stakeholders and landholders to meet with members of the project team, discuss project details, ask questions, provide feedback, or discuss issues of concern.</p> <p>Thirteen sessions were held between November 2022 and March 2025 in various locations, including Narrabri, Baan Baa, Boggabri and Gunnedah.</p>

Tool / activity	Description / purpose
Narrabri Gas Project Community Consultative Committee	<p>A condition of the consent for the Narrabri Gas Project is the establishment and operation of a Community Consultative Committee in accordance with the <i>Community consultative committee guideline: State significant projects</i> (DPE, 2023a).</p> <p>While the primary purpose of the Committee is to discuss the Narrabri Gas Project, regular updates on the Narrabri Lateral Pipeline are included in the agenda given the projects' shared stakeholder interest. More information on the Committee, meeting minutes and presentation can be found on the Narrabri Gas Project website: Narrabri Gas Project.</p>
Landholder engagement	<p>The project as described and assessed in the EIS would directly impact 12 private properties.</p> <p>Throughout the engagement process, Santos has endeavoured to engage meaningfully and sensitively with directly impacted landholders. A dedicated land access advisor has been appointed since 2022 to provide ongoing briefings, respond to questions, and arrange survey access when required. On most occasions, landholders have had the same point of contact throughout the engagement process. Santos has provided a map of the proposed project site to all property owners directly impacted by the project.</p> <p>The land access advisor has met with landholders on request multiple times, including on site, to hear their perspectives, and to determine measures that would minimise adverse impacts on their properties. This has resulted in several adjustments to the proposed alignment to accommodate landholder requests and how they use their land (see section 5.2.3).</p> <p>Between October 2022 and June 2025, there have been over 955 points of contact across the directly impacted landholders, including presenting property access deeds, drop ins, emails, site visits, phone calls, text messages, surveys and provision of a map of the proposed project site.</p>

5.2.2 Summary of key community issues raised and where they are addressed in the EIS

A summary of the key issues raised by the community that are relevant to the EIS, and where they have been addressed, is provided in Table 5.3. Further information on issues raised, including those by other stakeholders, and where these have been addressed is provided in Attachment D of Appendix E (Community and stakeholder engagement report).

Table 5.3 Summary of key community issues raised relevant to the EIS

Issue category	Overview of key issues raised	Where addressed in the EIS
Traffic/access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts of construction vehicle movement on roads, traffic and property access Queries regarding proposed new access tracks and road works Road safety during construction Constraints on vehicle crossings of pipeline during operation 	<p>Site access arrangements and proposed works are described in section 3.6.3</p> <p>Chapter 13 (Traffic and transport) and Technical Report 9 (Traffic and transport) consider the potential traffic, transport and access impacts of the project</p>
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on threatened flora and fauna, native vegetation and trees Management of impacts on native vegetation, including proposed approach to managing offsets 	<p>Chapter 6 (Biodiversity) and Technical Report 1 (Biodiversity development assessment report)</p>
Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for impacts on soils (including erosion) and the proposed management approach 	<p>Chapter 7 (Soils)</p>

Issue category	Overview of key issues raised	Where addressed in the EIS
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for impacts on water quality, groundwater and flooding • Interaction with landholder water supply 	Chapter 8 (Water) and Technical Report 4 (Water)
Noise and vibration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing and during of construction activities generating noise • Potential for noise and vibration impacts during construction and operation 	Section 3.5.2 describes the proposed working hours Chapter 9 (Noise and vibration) and Technical Report 5 (Noise and vibration) consider the potential noise and vibration impacts of the project
Land use, property and agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns regarding impacts on private property, including dwellings and infrastructure • Queries in relation to the easement, compensation and future uses • Impacts on productive agricultural land, farming operations and livestock • Concerns about constraints on future development potential • Proposed approach to rehabilitation and biosecurity management 	Chapter 11 (Land use and agriculture) and Technical Report 7 (Land use and agriculture)
Heritage and cultural impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts on Aboriginal cultural values and potential sites of significance 	Chapter 12 (Heritage) and Technical Report 8 (Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment)
Social and economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts on the community, including amenity impacts, and how these would be managed, • Future economic development, employment and training opportunities 	Chapter 15 (Social and economic impacts) and Technical Report 11 (Social impact assessment)
Hazards and risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety of the design and potential safety risks 	Chapter 16 (Hazards and Risk) and Technical Report 12 (Preliminary hazard analysis)

5.2.3 How the project has responded to the inputs received

The engagement undertaken to date has contributed to the project team’s understanding of potential impacts to the community and private properties and has enabled the project’s alignment and design to respond to and minimise these impacts, where possible.

The project option development and design refinement process (see chapter 2 (Strategic context) of the EIS) included consideration of potential impacts on properties.

For the eastern section of the project, within private properties, Santos has worked closely with landholders to identify an alignment that would minimise impacts on existing uses, structures and facilities (including property improvements such as farm dams, areas of cropping, location of dwellings, etc.).

Examples of design refinements that have been adopted based on feedback received include adjusting the alignment in a number of locations to:

- more closely follow property boundaries/fence lines and minimise potential impacts on agricultural uses
- avoid or minimise impacts on productive agricultural land, farm infrastructure and dams, and residential properties
- avoid areas with known cultural heritage or high environmental values
- avoid areas that are regularly waterlogged in heavy rain events.

As part of the design development process, and in response to any further feedback received, refinements to minimise environmental and community impacts would be undertaken where possible. Key areas for ongoing design and construction planning refinement in consultation with landholders include:

- fine scale route adjustments in consultation with landholders
- construction planning to minimise impacts on existing State forest facilities and use
- access arrangements
- water sourcing
- design and construction planning to minimise impacts on infrastructure and land use.

5.3 Ongoing community and stakeholder engagement

5.3.1 EIS exhibition engagement

Community and stakeholder engagement will continue during the public exhibition period of the EIS. DPHI will exhibit the EIS and invite public submissions as part of the assessment process. The EIS will also be referred to key government agencies for their review. During the exhibition period, DPHI will:

- publish the EIS online via the Major Projects Planning Portal
- notify the public of the exhibition period in accordance with the requirements of the EP&A Act and EP&A Regulation
- in some cases, arrange a community information and consultation session to explain the assessment and submission process and to listen to community views on the project.

Stakeholders who are interested in, or who may be potentially impacted by the project, are encouraged to make a formal submission via DPHI's Major Projects Planning Portal.

Santos will:

- provide updates on the project via the project website
- send notifications to project update subscribers
- hold community information and consultation sessions in key locations
- develop communications material that conveys relevant project information in plain English, so that potential impacts and implications can be easily understood
- encourage stakeholders who are interested in, or who may be potentially impacted by, the project to make a formal submission via the Major Projects Planning Portal.

The 1300 enquiry line, project email, and Narrabri shopfront will continue to remain open during exhibition of the EIS.

5.3.2 Collating submissions

Following exhibition of the EIS, all stakeholder feedback will be reviewed and addressed in a submissions report. If further engagement is required to respond to the issues raised (e.g. to clarify issues of concern or to seek feedback on proposed refinements to the project), the details of that engagement will be outlined in the submissions report.

If responding to the submissions extends over a long period of time, regular updates (via the tools/techniques listed in Table 5.2) will be provided to the stakeholders regarding the status of the project.

5.3.3 Engagement during design and delivery

Community and stakeholder engagement will continue in the lead up to and during construction, operation and decommissioning.

To manage stakeholder relationships throughout future project phases, Santos will adopt a proportionate communication approach with stakeholders, reflective of the level of interest and potential impact the project may have on each group during each phase. In line with this approach, it is proposed to maintain the following communication and engagement channels (as outlined in Table 5.2) during construction:

- community shopfront / project office
- project webpage
- information and enquiries line and email address
- regular project and activity updates
- landholder engagement
- engagement with relevant government agencies, including Narrabri Shire Council
- updates and feedback through the Narrabri Gas Project Community Consultative Committee.

Ongoing complaints management and dispute resolution

Santos has an established complaints management process. Information about how to make a complaint, including contact details, is available online at: [Complaints](#). This process would be extended for use for the project during construction, operation and decommissioning. Santos will acknowledge complaints within two business days and aims to respond to all enquiries or complaints received via the information line within five business days as far as possible. The procedure involves the following steps:

- Capture enquiry or complaint and record details, including the time and date the call/email is received, contact name, phone number, and nature of enquiry/complaint.
- Assess and investigate enquiry/complaint by the relevant business unit and escalate if unable to be resolved.
- Where a complaint involves a reportable pollution incident, notify the NSW Environment Protection Authority (NSW EPA) and other relevant authorities as required by the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (POEO Act) or other applicable legislation.
- Where possible, provide the enquirer/complainant a timeframe for responding to them or resolving the issue, and keep them updated on progress.
- Close out complaint/enquiry and record all communication actions and responses.

Santos maintains a publicly available register on the website of project-related complaints received from individual members of the community or representative bodies.