

# Maitland community meeting summary

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## Snapshot

**Date:** 20th August 2025

**Venue:** Maitland Town Hall

**Number of people registered:** 55

**Number of people attended:** approximately 58

These notes should be read in conjunction with the presentation provided.

If something can be immediately addressed, we have put in a [Please note] after the question

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## Key takeaways overall

Concerns and questions focused on further clarity of the processes described in the draft Guidelines, the standards of behavior expected of pipeline proponents, landholder compensation, how it is determined and delays in landowner payments.

Questions were asked about how the guidelines overlap, departmental responsibilities, and whether health, property and community impacts are adequately addressed by the processes.

| Regulations                                                                        | What we heard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <p><b>Gas Supply (Safety and Network Management) Amendment Regulation 2025</b></p> | <p>N/A</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p><b>Pipelines Amendment (Miscellaneous) Regulation 2025</b></p>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request the Department examine the concept of landowner surety, whereby an amount of money is placed in trust by a pipeline proponent and drawn on if needed to address the impacts caused by construction and operation of the pipeline.</li> <li>• Request that the regulations should address what level of compensation could be available for the contamination of properties (e.g. weed spread).</li> <li>• Concern about how the government enforces penalties for negative impacts like contamination, and the time and activities required for landowners to resolve this. It is felt that the level of work to manage this process causes stress and mental health impacts for landowners and should be compensated.</li> </ul> |

| Draft Guideline                                                         | What we heard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <p><b>Authority to Survey (ATS) for Pipelines - Draft Guideline</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The guidelines to address the issue of a pipeline proponent's lack of communication with landowners and refusal to respond to landowner questions.</li> <li>• Question about how the Department intends to verify a pipeline proponent's evidence of reasonable attempts to engage with landowners. For example, how can landowners prove that meetings claimed to have occurred, did not occur?</li> <li>• Request for the Department to consider a regulated compensation schedule for an access agreement, similar to the remuneration frameworks in other developments.</li> <li>• Question over whether baseline studies are conducted before land is accessed for survey, to establish the current land conditions and to then be able to measure the impacts of survey activity and (any) compensation.</li> <li>• The concept of landowner surety, whereby an amount of money is placed in trust by a pipeline proponent and drawn on if needed to address the impacts caused by the surveying activity.</li> <li>• Criticisms over the behaviour of a pipeline proponent toward landowners in obtaining an ATS. For example, the proponent trying to reach landowners using a restricted number, turning up to workplaces unannounced, trying to talk to children and to give them a deed of options. Request for a prescribed method of communicating (as preferred by the landowner).</li> <li>• Question whether complaints about proponent behaviour can be made when the Minister is considering approving an ATS.</li> <li>• Discussion about whether ATS matters could be referred to law enforcement for resolution.</li> <li>• Concern that the ATS process may let 'people walk onto properties unannounced' [<b>Please note:</b> the Guidelines specify that this must not occur].</li> <li>• Request that landowners are compensated for their time to manage these processes, including the stress and health consequences.</li> <li>• Comment that if landowners refuse to sign agreements due to detrimental terms, it's unclear what happens if acquisition or access proceeds without their consent, leaving them uncertain about their rights.</li> <li>• There is confusion over the references to 'land' and 'easements over land' in both Guidelines.</li> </ul> |

| Draft Guideline                                               | What we heard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <b>Compulsory Acquisition for Pipelines - Draft Guideline</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The guidelines to address the issue of a pipeline proponent's lack of communication with landowners and refusal to respond to landowner questions.</li> <li>• Questions over who pays for compensation for affected land and who determines what is reasonable compensation.</li> <li>• Questioning over when landowners will receive compensation as there have been delays in the provision of money.</li> <li>• The use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) by pipeline proponents is affecting the community, in some cases it potentially disallows the landowner to talk to the Department.</li> <li>• There is confusion over the references to 'land' and 'easements over land' in both Guidelines.</li> <li>• Requested that since landowners bear the risks of delays, losses, and land impacts, the Guidelines should address assurances such as a monetary performance guarantee to be provided by the pipeline proponent.</li> <li>• Clarification was sought whether acquisition compensation funds come from the proponent or the Government [<b>Please note:</b> the pipeline proponent pays for property compensation].</li> </ul> |

## Issues relating to the Maitland area and other issues

- Guidelines speak of the pipeline proponent needing to act in 'good faith', but some people perceive 'bad faith' in their interactions with the landowners, e.g. entering properties without prior arrangements and contacting third parties to act as an intermediary.
- Clarification was sought whether the Valuer General values land with or without the pipeline in place. [**Please note:** Under the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*, the value is determined without the infrastructure in place].
- Comment that some landowners had their land valued by the Valuer General with no right to appeal, leaving them stuck with potentially unfair outcomes. An example was given where the Valuer-General devalued a land that was going to host a pipeline.
- Question if there is a threshold where failure to reach agreements with landowners could stop a project in that location.

- Question about the potential for gas mined from Narrabri to be exported. Concern that while landowners lose property value, a pipeline proponent makes money.
- Question regarding which authority will regulate how pipeline proponents meet the guidelines, e.g. the lack of correspondence, or the behaviour of pipeline proponents not being in good faith, with respect to engaging landowners. [**Please note:** The Guidelines are regulated by the Pipelines and Gas Networks team within the Department, being the safety and technical regulator for pipelines and gas networks].
- Question about the whether the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme has been considered alongside the proposed placement of the pipelines. The Flood Mitigation Scheme was developed by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure [**Please note:** Planning processes are not considered by the guidelines for ATS and Compulsory Acquisition].
- Concern that the Guidelines have only been developed now following a long period of community concern about process.
- Question over how many staff work in the complaints handling team within the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON). [**Please note:** the EWON website notes there are 80 staff in this team].
- Request that the two Guidelines be considered for overlap – can a timeline of how the processes apply from a landowners’ perspective be provided?

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## Next steps

The Department will:

- provide presentation decks and meeting note summaries online and to participants who provided contact details.
- raise with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure the issue of required flood mitigation infrastructure, impact assessments, and the potential for pipeline projects to impact this infrastructure.

Community members and landholders at these forums provided valuable feedback which is currently being considered by the Department. The Department wishes to thank all of the participants at the community forums for their time and insights.