

Muswellbrook community meeting summary

Snapshot

Date: 20th August 2025

Venue: Muswellbrook RSL

Number of people registered: 11

Number of people attended: 14

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.

Key takeaways overall

Concerns and questions focused on the transparency of information, issues of fairness and the method of enforcement of the Authority to Survey (ATS) and compulsory acquisition processes covered in the draft Guidelines. Questions focused on how the Department will verify a proponent's claims of reasonable engagement with landowners, and specific requests for further clarifying the processes described in the Guidelines.

Regulations	What we heard
Gas Supply (Safety and Network Management) Amendment Regulation 2025	N/A

Regulations	What we heard
Pipelines Amendment (Miscellaneous) Regulation 2025	• Clarification was sought on whether there is a process pertaining to the decommissioning and rehabilitation of land for pipelines at the end of its life. • Issues with the wording of liability clauses associated with insurance of an operating pipeline stating that landowners purposely or negligently damaging the pipeline infrastructure will be held financially responsible. Noted that the pipeline is a burden on their property and this is an additional risk for landowners. For example, damage may be accidental. • Request for the Department to consider repercussions if the proponent has done something in contravention of: ○ the Guidelines (is there a monetary penalty for ongoing Guideline breaches), and ○ Questions about possible penalties for pipeline proponents not being truthful in their engagement with landowners.

Draft Guideline	What we heard
Authority to Survey for Pipelines - Draft Guideline	• Clarification was sought on whether the ATS Guideline steps will apply retrospectively to processes currently underway. • Request that the Guidelines specify that affected landowners should be consulted before preferred corridors or routes are announced. The participant making this comment suggested this should be the first step in the Guidelines. • Question over whether there is information on how pipeline proponents have abided by the steps up until now? • Request that it be made clear to the public the information that proponents need to provide to the Department for an extension of an ATS to be granted. • Question whether the Department intends to verify a pipeline proponent's evidence of reasonable attempts to engage with landowners, before approving an ATS. Further, what are the proof points required for evidence of a 'reasonable engagement'? For example, how can landowners prove that meetings claimed to have occurred, did not occur? • A specific example was provided where a proponent had claimed an inability to contact the landowner, despite having their contact details, and then threatened to invoke an ATS. • Clarification was sought as to whether it is a reasonable request for the proponent to provide responses to correspondence? Would not replying to landowner requests breach the Guideline? • Comment that when a proponent intends to invoke an ATS, they have communicated this to both the landowner and the Department. This may seem reasonable to some landowners, but others may see it as coercive communication. • Question on when the Government has agreed with a landowner rather than a pipeline proponent in an ATS application (and refused an ATS application).

Draft Guideline	What we heard
Compulsory Acquisition for Pipelines - Draft Guideline	- Clarification was sought on whether the Guideline steps will apply retrospectively. - Clarification was sought whether it is a maximum of a 6-month negotiation period. [Please note: It is a minimum of 6 months] - Question on whether there is a public register tracking proponents' communications and compliance steps in the compulsory acquisition process. This level of transparency would be appreciated. - Request for the guideline to clarify the evidence (beyond a letter) that counts as proof of reasonable steps at negotiation. - Clarification was sought on whether acquiring an easement over land effectively amounts to acquiring the whole property, as it wasn't clear from the draft Guideline. - Suggested that in the Guideline the wording around the 90-day requirement in Step 4 and Step 6 is confusing. - Concern that non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) contained in a Deed of Option with a landowner can unfairly restrict a landowner.

Issues relating to the Muswellbrook area and other issues

- Clarification was sought over the purpose of the consultation process, the dates of the consultation and if pipeline proponents were involved with the current consultation.
- Question if there is a threshold where failure to reach agreements with landowners can stop a project in that location.
- Question over what happens in a regulatory sense where a pipeline crosses state borders.
- Question regarding who to send complaints to regarding the ATS and Compulsory Acquisition processes **[Please note:** Complaints can currently be sent to the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water].
- Request for the Department to consider a pipeline benefit payment scheme, similar to the electricity transmission strategic benefits payments scheme.
- A participant noted they wanted the pipeline to go through the back of their property, not through the middle and that alignment adjustments should still be possible (even though it falls outside the current 200m wide corridor).

- Although outside the draft Guideline, questions about the Valuer-General process:
 - Does the Valuer General only value the land and not any structures on it?
 - Does the valuer general conduct desktop valuations of land or on-ground surveys?
- [**Please note:** The Valuer General website is [here](#), including information on the page called 'How land is valued in NSW'].

Next steps

The Department will provide presentation decks and meeting note summaries online and to participants who provided contact details.

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.