

Community Consultation Guiding Principles for Botany Groundwater Community Liaison Committee

The aim of these principles is to provide a guidance document for the involved stakeholders and set out a standard on which the communication process can be judged.

To maximise the effectiveness of the Botany Groundwater Community Liaison Committee (CLC) it is essential that the committee's activities and involvement are based on a publicly available clearly defined aims and principles. This will complement the Terms of Reference and provide a basis for the effective operation of the CLC.

The following offer suggestions based on successful experiences both in Australia and overseas. The Canadian National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy provides ten guiding principles for any consensus process. These principles are also endorsed by the National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) Guidelines for Community Consultation. These define aspects that are fundamental to any effective consultative, participatory or consensus process.

These Principles are

1. Purpose Driven - people need a reason to participate in the process
2. Inclusive Not Exclusive - all parties with a significant interest in the issue should be given the opportunity to be involved
3. Voluntary Participation - the parties who are affected or interested must participate voluntarily
4. Self-design - the participants design their process
5. Flexibility - flexibility should be designed into the process
6. Equal Opportunity - all parties must have equal access to relevant information and the opportunity to participate effectively throughout the process
7. Respect for Diverse Interests - acceptance of the diverse values, interests, and knowledge of the parties involved in the consensus process is essential
8. Accountability - the parties are accountable both to their constituencies, and to the process that they have agreed to establish
9. Time Limits - realistic deadlines are necessary throughout the process
10. Implementation - commitment to implementation and effective monitoring are essential parts of any agreement.

These principles need to be supported with clear aims and actions to achieve best practice consultation.

Aims

1. To promote an informed understanding of the environmental and remediation issues
2. To enhance the development, adoption and implementation of practicable and effective long term remediation and management of the Orica impacted Botany groundwater
3. To place the Orica impacted Botany groundwater and its management in a broader context
4. To achieve practicable, socially acceptable and environmentally responsible outcomes.

Actions That are Necessary to Implement Principles

1. Mutual respect and a willingness to be open and listen to others
2. Clear and timely communication
3. Comprehensive access to information, with translation of key information into plain language, with particular attention to the inclusion of people from non-English speaking backgrounds
4. Capacity building for community groups to develop the community knowledge base so informed judgements can be made about complex issues
5. Provision of clear and realistic timelines
6. A commitment to and a process for feedback to the community

7. Assistance for individuals and groups to engage fully in the process and assurance that people who enter the process at different stages will be accommodated
8. Stimulation of constructive exchange of views
9. Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the program
10. Regular review and updating of contact lists
11. Openly share responsibilities for effective consultation with those who enter into the consultative process

These actions are based on the successful experience of the National Advisory Body for Scheduled Waste. They have been applied and tested in real world consultation and consensus in the development of the three Management Plans for PCBs, HCB and organochlorine pesticide waste. This model also formed the framework for the Homebush Bay Environment Reference Group under the direction of the Olympic Coordination Authority.

Media liaison

At the CLC extraordinary meeting of 23 August 2005, members requested that media liaison did not occur between individual members of the CLC or the Independent Monitoring Committee (IMC) at any time. While representatives of the media may attend the CLC meetings from time to time, members are obliged not to make comment to the media on behalf of the CLC. This request has been formally acknowledged and now forms part of these communication guidelines.