

Western Slopes Pipeline activity update.



February 2018

To date, APA has held over 100 face to face meetings with more than 70 individual landowners along the route. Whilst a large number of directly affected landowners have had the benefit of one on one briefings with an APA representative, a number of individuals have indicated that they are uncomfortable meeting directly with APA at this time and would prefer to meet in a group setting. APA is committed to providing all stakeholders with opportunities to access relevant information regarding the project and have questions answered in a way that they are comfortable with.

Cancelled Community Drop-in Sessions

You may be aware that APA recently cancelled planned community drop-in sessions in Tottenham and Coonamble in early December. APA had never intended or advertised these sessions as public meetings and no arrangements for this type of forum were in place. Rather, the sessions were intended as an opportunity for individual landowners or members of the broader community to talk directly to representatives of APA in an informal setting. Unfortunately, in the days leading up to the planned events a number of groups and individuals began advertising via social media that a public meeting was now to be held at the direction of the NSW Department of Planning. This was simply not the case. Whilst APA recognises that the vast majority of people were simply keen to come along and put questions to APA, arrangements were not in place to hold a properly moderated public meeting.

Replacement Consultation Events

In order to replace the recently cancelled drop-in sessions, APA will be holding a range of stakeholder consultation activities in early 2018. This will include:

Community Meetings

Two open public meetings will be held to give community members the chance to receive an update on project activities and put their questions to APA. Our commitment is to provide an answer to every question asked. If we can't answer a question at either meeting, a follow-up response will be published on our website soon after. If anyone would like to submit questions in advance of the meetings, they are invited to email them to westernslopespipeline@apa.com.au. The public meetings will be facilitated by an independent moderator to ensure everyone has a fair go. The sessions have been scheduled to avoid conflict with school holidays and to provide the best opportunity for all interested people to attend. Dates and venues follow:

- Wednesday 7 February: Tottenham, War Memorial Hall, 5-7pm
- Thursday 8 February: Coonamble, Coonamble Bowls Club, 5-7pm

Landowner forums

Directly affected landowners will be invited to discuss matters specifically relevant to them in a group setting.

Four meetings are scheduled between February 19-22 at various locations along the proposed pipeline route.

Further community information sessions including detailed information on specific areas of interest will also be scheduled during 2018 to coincide with future project milestones including release of the project Environmental Impact Assessment.

Community Consultative Committee

The second Community Consultative Committee (CCC) meetings for the project were held in Tottenham and Coonamble on the 5th and 6th of December 2017 respectively. Minutes and presentation materials from these meetings are now available on the project website. A combined meeting of the North and South committees has been scheduled for 6 March 2018.

Updated Consultation Materials

APA's project website will be updated in coming weeks with a new layout to make it easier for interested members of the community to find information regarding the project. The website address remains the same <https://www.apa.com.au/about-apa/our-projects/western-slopes-pipeline/>.

On the website you will also find an updated version (January 2018) of our landowner reference guide. This document includes 20 pages of detailed responses to common questions regarding the project. If you would like a hardcopy of this document, please do not hesitate to request one by contacting the project team. Other materials available on the website include copies of all previous project newsletters, minutes from Community Consultative Committee meetings and links to the Preliminary Environmental Assessment, Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) and Authority to Survey (ATS) on the applicable Government websites.

If you have a question which isn't covered by the materials on the website you are also encouraged to contact the project team by emailing westernslopespipeline@apa.com.au or by calling **1800 941 145**.

Environmental Assessment Update

Field survey work required to inform the project Environmental Impact Statement has now been completed. APA would like to thank landholders for their cooperation during this process, particularly where multiple return visits were required to complete specific survey activities. Over 5 months of field work, APA's consultants have completed a significant work program including detailed flora and fauna, soils and cultural heritage surveys.

APA's project team are now reviewing the information collected and finalising the various technical reports which will be used to inform the project Environmental Impact Statement. We expect to lodge this document with the Department of Planning & Environment for assessment in Q2 2018.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Update

- All cultural heritage survey work proposed to be undertaken during this phase of the project has now been completed. This has included approximately 270km of targeted survey effort along the proposed alignment.
- APA would like to thank the traditional owners that have participated in this work for their professionalism and sharing of knowledge regarding the cultural heritage values of the country through which the pipeline is proposed.
- APA is currently finalising the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report for the project. In accordance with government guidelines, this report will be sent to the project's Registered Aboriginal Parties for comment prior to inclusion in the Environmental Impact Statement for the project.
- The EIS will outline appropriate management strategies to ensure that the potential for impact on the cultural heritage values of the area is minimised.

All Aboriginal Cultural Heritage consultation has occurred in strict accordance with the relevant Government guidelines. To date, this process has included direct communication, advertisements in local papers, focus group meetings in key localities and involvement by traditional owners in survey activities. In total there are 54 individual Aboriginal Parties that have registered their interest in the project. APA remains open to and encourages feedback from Aboriginal people that have not formally registered an interest in the project. In the first instance, feedback can be provided by email to westernslopespipeline@apa.com.au or by calling **1800 941 145**. Where feedback relates to sensitive information that Aboriginal people may not want disclosed, discussions can be held directly with our appointed Archaeologists who have suitable protocols in place for handling such information.

Retouched flake artefact and modified tree located during survey activity.



Field Surveys Facts and Figures

- 1922 records of 211 individual fauna species
- 770 flora species and 30 individual plant communities recorded
- Approximately 270km of cultural heritage pedestrian survey and 155 individual test pits
- Collection of over 200 soils samples.

State and Federally Listed Painted Honeyeater



apa response to commentary regarding field survey activities in late 2017

A number of inaccurate claims about survey activity related to the Western Slopes Pipeline have recently been aired publicly. For clarity, the following is a summary of the most prominent of these claims and APA's responses.

APA employees or contractors trespassed on farmland

This is not true. All property access has been undertaken with landowner agreement or in accordance with the Authority to Survey (ATS) issued by the Minister for Energy and Utilities. In all instances, APA has written to the relevant landowner prior to access taking place, asking them to notify APA of any property specific requirements, including biosecurity protocols. Wherever such requirements have been provided we have fully complied with them.

APA employees or contractors breached property biosecurity plans when they entered properties to conduct survey activities

In the absence of specific feedback from affected landowners, and prior to accessing any property, APA has exercised its duty of care in assessing and mitigating any biosecurity risks. APA also has its own biosecurity protocol which is available on the project website and has been prepared to address identified project risks and fulfill our General Biosecurity Duty.

APA is aware that some landowners are finding the current biosecurity environment challenging partly due to new government regulations in this space and a lack of clarity around landowner obligations. APA has considered how we can better assist in this regard and where access is proposed in the future we will offer to make available suitable consultant expertise to assist landowners in the preparation of a property Biosecurity Management Plan in accordance with the guidelines and processes recommended by the DPI.

APA is acting beyond the scope of activities it is permitted to undertake under the Authority to Survey

The Department of Planning has clarified on its website that APA is permitted to undertake all of the survey activities necessary for this phase of the project, under the ATS. See the department's website: www.resourcesandenergy.nsw.gov.au/energy-supply-industry/pipelines-electricity-gas-networks/pipelines/authority-to-survey. APA respectfully suggests that the advice that some landowners are relying on in this regard is misleading.

APA did not contact landowners prior to proposed survey activities

This is not true. All landowners have been notified of APA's property access in accordance with the conditions of the Authority to Survey. For some properties this has included three separate notices in the four weeks leading up to the planned access.

APA damaged fences in the course of carrying out recent survey activities

APA has not damaged any fences. The landowner who has made these claims has not responded to multiple attempts by APA to make further contact in relation to the issue. We would be happy to discuss the matter further with the landowner and address any verified claims. APA has surveyed approximately 270km of the proposed route and has received no other feedback from landowners concerning interference with fences or gates.

APA employees and contractors claimed they had a Court order to access properties for the purpose of survey activities

APA has never stated that we have a court order permitting access to properties. Rather all access has been in accordance with the Authority to Survey, a copy of which has been provided to all directly affected landowners.

APA employees and contractors refused to show identification when requested by the groups that confronted them on farms in Coonamble

The survey team that were detained against their will on a landowner's property on 20 November were accompanied by an APA staff member wearing an APA uniform, carrying an APA business card and a copy of the Authority to Survey. That staff member was responsible for the consultants completing the survey. The presence of the survey team was also subject to three separate written notices.

Regardless of the above, we have taken on board feedback from the most recent Community Consultative Committee meeting and will be introducing improved identification arrangements for future survey activities to provide absolute clarity for landowners.

easement weight limits – fact or fiction?

There have been a number of recent social media posts suggesting that APA's statements regarding permissible weight limits for crossing the pipeline easement have been misleading. In particular, a photo has been shared of one of our existing pipeline easement signs that refers to a 4 tonne weight limit.

This particular sign is located in an area where this is a very high frequency of 3rd party heavy vehicle access to the easement and as such a very conservative limit has been applied for external access. This weight limit does not apply to the relevant landowner who can operate within the agreed limit under the relevant easement terms.

Unfortunately, social media groups have falsely stated what they claim to be evidence of APA's operations, without context or reference to APA or, in this case, the landowner whose property is affected.

The Australian Standard applicable to the design of the pipeline, AS2885, requires APA to design the pipeline to address all reasonably foreseeable circumstances including traverse by heavy loads. APA reiterates our previously stated position that where landowners have indicated to us a need to traverse the easement with heavy vehicles on a regular basis we will ensure that the design of the pipeline is appropriate to accommodate the additional loads. This may involve additional burial depth, thicker walled pipe sections and/or dedicated heavy vehicle crossing points.

APA will design the pipeline to accommodate all reasonable landowner requirements for a full range of farm machinery and other heavy vehicles in order to ensure there is no impact on your day to day operations.



upcoming project activities

Q1 2018

- Community Consultation Activities (see front page)
- 3rd round CCC meetings
- Finalise drafting of Environmental Impact Statement
- Commencement of easement negotiations with landowners

Q2 2018

- EIS Lodgement
- Community consultation activities to coincide with release of EIS
- EIS public exhibition and submission period

How can I find out more information, provide feedback or register a complaint?

If you wish to register any comments, find out more information or provide feedback about the project, please contact us by:

- Telephoning 1800 941 145 (free call 24 hours/7 days)
- Emailing us at westernslopespipeline@apa.com.au
- You can also complete an online enquiry form and find more information at: <https://www.apa.com.au/about-apa/our-projects/western-slopes-pipeline/>



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