

Letter to the editor

To the editor,

RE: Western Slopes Pipeline Project

In her letter of Wednesday 26 April, Megan Kuhn raises a range of concerns regarding APA's current application for an Authority to Survey (ATS) under the Pipelines Act 1967 (NSW). For the benefit of all landowners, we would like to respond directly to some of those concerns, provide an update on our landowner engagement activities and articulate the types of activities APA is proposing to undertake under the ATS.

The preliminary alignment for the Western Slopes Pipeline requires further investigation and refinement to identify potential impacts and develop a plan to manage them, address specific landowner considerations and resolve potential constructability issues. To do this we need to undertake field survey activities along the length of the alignment, including:

- Biodiversity surveys – to identify flora and fauna values within the project area
- Cultural Heritage surveys – to assess Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage values (i.e. artefacts or other sites)
- Soil and geotechnical surveys – to understand the nature of the soils along the alignment and identify areas of near surface rock
- Land surveys – to accurately locate the preliminary alignment, confirm cadastral boundaries and place survey pegs where necessary
- Hydrology studies – to obtain information about flooding and surface water movements

Our preference is to undertake field surveys under a voluntary agreement with landowners. So that we can adequately fulfil our environmental assessment obligations, we have also applied to the NSW Department of Planning for an ATS as referenced above. If granted the ATS will, subject to conditions, allow APA to enter private land where necessary to complete field survey activities.

We believe it is in the best interests of landowners to enter into a voluntary agreement with APA so that any specific conditions or concerns you may have can be captured. Some examples of what may be referenced in the agreement include:

- The timeframe for the activity, including any periods that need to be avoided (for

example harvest or other major cropping activities)

- Preferred access locations and tracks to be used
- Restricted areas
- Any property specific biosecurity requirements

Under a voluntary agreement, landowners are also indemnified for activities that APA conducts with respect to accident or damage, and comprehensive safety and biosecurity management processes will be in place for all such activities. We encourage landowners to speak with relevant government agencies and independent advisors to seek advice, in addition to speaking directly with us about the Project and our requirements.

One of our land access officers will liaise with you throughout the field survey phase to make sure all aspects of the agreement are upheld. They will also make sure you are provided with adequate notification of any proposed activities, including details of the nature of those activities (timing, equipment to be used, hours of work, etc).

APA is committed to building positive long-term relationships with all landowners along the proposed Western Slopes Pipeline alignment.

To date we have been able to make contact with all but five of the owners of parcels along the preliminary alignment and have met with and provided personal project briefings to many of these.

The exchange of information during these meetings allows landowners to better understand what is proposed and helps us appreciate the features of your land and how you operate your property. This feeds into work to refine the alignment and minimise any potential impacts.

Any landowners that have to date been reluctant to meet with our team are encouraged to make contact so we can provide you with the facts about the project and directly answer any questions you may have.

Should any landowners or other stakeholders, including Mrs Kuhn, require further information about the project, they are encouraged to contact APA's project team on 1800 941 145 or westernslopespipeline@apa.com.au.

Jim Fjeldsoe

Access & Approvals Manager, APA Group