

# Local government and the environmental impact statement process

## Background

When a project is declared a 'coordinated project' for which an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971*, the Coordinator-General manages an extensive coordinated assessment of the project involving State Government agencies, Local Government, the Commonwealth Government (when appropriate) and the public.

The assessment is a thorough and rigorous process which requires the EIS to assess and report on a project's social, economic and environmental impacts and the measures proposed to avoid, manage, minimise or mitigate the impacts that are directly related to the project.

The Office of the Coordinator-General has undertaken a review of the EIS process. As a result of this review, EIS documents now have a stronger focus on critical matters and lead to outcome focussed conditions. There are no changes in the legislation guiding development of the EIS—project proponents are required to meet the same standards for dealing with a project's impacts.

## Local Government

The Office of the Coordinator-General expects that project proponents will undertake an appropriate consultation process, particularly with all tiers of government. The information and feedback provided by Local Governments is a critical contribution for understanding the potential local impacts.

Local Governments have two opportunities for direct input during the EIS process: firstly when the draft Terms of Reference is released for public consultation, and then when the EIS document itself is released for public consultation.

It is the role of Local Governments to:

- review and provide consistent data and information for the EIS assessment
- review and provide advice on the proponent's assessment of impacts on local government services during the EIS public consultation period and make a submission to the Coordinator-General as appropriate
- engage with proponents on strategies to mitigate these impacts on local government services
- represent local community groups as appropriate.

For this reason, the Office of the Coordinator-General sees consultation and negotiation with Local Governments as an essential component of the EIS process.

An issue for Local Governments continues to be the resources required to participate in the EIS process, particularly reviewing draft EIS documents. Amending the Terms of Reference and the EIS documents to focus on critical matters should assist in reducing the burden on Local Governments.

## Queensland Government

### Office of the Coordinator-General

The Office of the Coordinator-General commits to ongoing discussion with Local Governments during the review of EISs for coordinated projects. These discussions can occur at multiple levels within both Local Governments and the Office of the Coordinator-General, depending on the issue being addressed.

Local Governments, with concerns in relation to a coordinated project, are encouraged to seek meetings with the Office of the Coordinator-General to discuss and resolve these concerns.

Where a coordinated project impacts on Local Government services, the Office of the Coordinator-General may provide the relevant draft conditions to Local Governments for comment prior to the finalisation of the Coordinator-General's Evaluation Report.

The Coordinator-General has the final decision on the conditions for a coordinated project that is recommended to proceed.

### Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

The Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, through its case managers, can assist industry to engage early with local government so they can understand their future obligations about social, economic and infrastructure impacts in resource communities.

This may assist in reducing unnecessary costs and frustration for industry and local government.

Once the Coordinator-General recommends that a project can proceed, case managers can where necessary assist industry in the ongoing delivery of their obligations for social, economic and infrastructure impacts.