



POSITION PAPER

Community Consultation on State Significant Development

NATIONAL TRUST INVOLVEMENT

As a community-based Heritage conservation organisation, the National Trust has had a seventy year history of providing comment to government at all levels on proposed development that has heritage impacts.

In April, 2016 the Trust formally commented on publicly exhibited revised guidelines for Community Consultative Committees for State Significant Projects.

In the submission's opening comments the Trust noted that -

“The establishment of Consultative Committees after Development Approvals have been given means that these committees have simply a token role in the implementation of State Significant Projects. They can only be regarded as a forum to make announcements and to answer questions.

In this context, the Consultative Committees are a public relations exercise and provide no meaningful involvement opportunities for the community.”

All of the Guidelines emphasised the irrelevancy of any Committee input, opinions or expectations in relation to the actual course and conduct of a development.

In its submission the Trust noted that such consultative committees appear to be an exercise in management of public opinion and in channelling dissent into controllable entities.

It is intended that dissent should be aired in the “Consultative Committee” where there is no obligation upon any party to actually listen to or respond to that dissent. This process appears aimed at claiming a level of consultative legitimacy as a project proceeds.

NATIONAL TRUST POSITION

- The Trust believes that for community consultation to be worthwhile and not subservient to an Approval it should engage at the project design and development stage, prior to the issue of any Development Approval and it must be true “engagement” with the community.
- The Trust calls for consultation to take place in open public forums where the community can speak its mind and where issues can be freely aired and discussed.
- The Trust believes that “the community” must include community organisations with specialised knowledge and experience and not a randomly selected group of community members.
- The Trust believes that ‘promotions’ of major projects in shopping centres etc. are not community consultation.
- The Trust believes that comment on a project's performance against any conditions of approval is a matter for the approval and regulatory authorities, not for the community or a Community Consultative Committee. If a breach of a Condition of Approval were to occur, then the Committee's role is irrelevant to the legal issue between a Company and the Approval Authority.
- The Trust calls for priority to be given to the resolution of community concerns or complaints raised at Community Consultative Committees and that there be resultant action to address those concerns.

ACTION TO PROMOTE THE TRUST'S POSITION

The Trust will promote its views on this issue with planning authorities, local government, the public and in the media.