

Terms of Reference

Sydney's Desalination Project Liaison Group (DPLG)

Sydney's Desalination Project Liaison Group (DPLG) is an important forum for community engagement within Kurnell. Members from interested groups and members of the public are chosen to participate in this group through a nomination process.

The DPLG will provide a forum for the local Kurnell community, for those with an interest in Botany Bay and marine works in the Tasman Sea, Sydney Water, Sydney Water's contractors and alliance partners to exchange information. The group will discuss the impact of plant and pipeline construction activities on the Kurnell precinct.

The aim of the DPLG is to encourage open communication about the project, address key community issues or concerns, provide feedback to members of the group and to seek community input to project issues where possible.

The DPLG will not consider or debate the benefits or otherwise of desalination.

1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1 Membership

The DPLG membership will consist of:

- at least six (6) and no more than ten (10) members from the community
- at least one (1) officer from each of the three (3) organisations involved in the delivery of the project (ie. Sydney Water, the Water Delivery Alliance and Blue Water JV)
- at least one (1) officer from Sutherland Shire Council.

Relevant project staff will be invited to attend meetings subject to topics for discussion on the agenda.

1.2 Membership selection

Members of the DPLG will be chosen after submitting a written nomination form and supporting documentation. Sydney Water will assess all nominations, in consultation with Sutherland Shire Council, and membership will then be determined.

Representatives on the DPLG will be drawn from the following sectors:

- social - members of community groups, interested residents, local schools etc
- economic - business or business organisations
- environmental - individuals or organisations in the region involved with environmental management issues

Additional members may be appointed by Sydney Water, in consultation with Council, based on the need for their expertise.

1.3 Resignation

If a member resigns from the DPLG, Sydney Water may choose to:

- nominate and invite a replacement to join the DPLG
- advertise a general expression of interest, or
- invite a representative of the member's interest group as a replacement.

1.4 Terms of appointment

The term of appointment is December 2007 until December 2009.

Membership of the DPLG is on a voluntary basis and no payments are made for meeting attendance.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

2.1 Principles

DPLG members and Sydney Water agree to the following principles, which are important to the successful functioning of the DPLG:

- openness and respect between members and meeting attendees
- willingness to consider the range of issues proposed for discussion
- willingness to communicate with other community members about Sydney's Desalination project
- consideration of a range of positions and needs.

From time to time, members may be offered confidential or sensitive information about the project. Members agree not to disclose information identified as confidential.

If a member believes he or she may have a conflict of interest in relation to a particular issue or item of discussion at any time, the member should make this position clear to the chairperson. The DPLG will then agree on an appropriate code of conduct during that particular item of discussion.

2.2 DPLG members

Members of the DPLG have the following obligations:

- attending meetings and participate in discussions
- representing the interests and views of their interest group, residential or business area; or in the case of individuals, to present their own views
- informing interest groups and others about the project status and direction, and convey feedback at meetings
- making their contact details available to other members of the DPLG
- raising items for discussion by the DPLG
- advising the chairperson if they are unable to attend meetings
- discussing issues relevant to the project as defined by the Terms of Reference
- acknowledging and support the Terms of Reference for the DPLG
- restricting issues and debates to items relevant to the Terms of Reference
- being open and honest in their dealings at DPLG meetings and with DPLG members and project representatives
- declaring any vested interests; and

- respecting any confidentiality requirements requested by the members, guests, officers or elected members present.

Members should also acknowledge that:

- the DPLG is not a forum to debate whether, where or when a desalination plant should be constructed
- the NSW government has committed to constructing the desalination plant and its associated infrastructure
- while all issues, concerns and feedback will be discussed and considered by the group, Sydney Water reserves the right to make the final decision
- information on meeting attendance and contents may be made public.

2.3 Sydney Water

Sydney Water will establish the DPLG and encourage representation of broad community interests. Sydney Water, and its representatives in Blue Water JV and the Water Delivery Alliance, is responsible for:

- engaging a chairperson and minute taker to support DPLG meetings
- attending each meeting of the DPLG
- determining if it is appropriate for specialist staff to attend meetings to discuss particular topics
- presenting expertise and information at meetings to help members understand issues
- providing for reasonable additional information requests as quickly as possible (where information is available)
- considering the group's input and views on design, construction and operation and reporting back on how this information has or hasn't been used.
- ensuring all administrative responsibilities are completed by the note taker to ensure the DPLG's smooth operation, including issuing of meeting notes within two weeks of a meeting, and issuing agendas one week before meetings
- communicating directly with the community and stakeholders, as required by the project activities
- arranging a meeting area and refreshments for each DPLG meeting.

2.4 Role of chairperson

Sydney Water will engage a chairperson to chair meetings of the DPLG, verify meeting notes and act as a point of contact for the Sydney Water officer responsible for assisting with these duties. The chairperson will be appointed in consultation with Sutherland Shire Council.

The chairperson must:

- have demonstrated and suitable experience in chairing project liaison groups for major infrastructure projects
- not be an employee of Sydney Water or any of the companies contracted to deliver the project, including any companies affiliated through parent companies
- have not been an employee of Sydney Water in the five year period immediately prior to construction commencing
- must be currently employed as a facilitator or mediator.

The duties of the chairperson include:

- maintaining the focus of discussion on the agenda and matters consistent with the Terms of Reference for the DPLG
- setting meeting agendas
- ensuring that minutes are kept and confirmed at the next meeting
- declaring meetings open or closed or adjourned, where appropriate.

2.5 Speaking to the media

While members of the DPLG are not prevented from speaking to the media, any statement made must be clearly made in terms of a personal view rather than that of the DPLG.

If members receive any requests for information from the media on the DPLG, they should direct the enquiry to the Sydney Water Communications Manager.

It is not expected that the group will make any media statements or comments.

3. MEETINGS

3.1 Meetings

Attendance at the meetings is only by invitation of the chairperson.

Meetings will be held from 6pm-8pm at a venue in or near Kurnell, every second month, beginning in January 2008. The DPLG will close in December 2009, at the conclusion of the desalination project.

3.2 Meeting procedures

Meetings shall be conducted in such a way that promotes effective information exchange in accordance with generally accepted meeting practice.

The names of members present will be recorded.

It is not a requirement that consensus be reached among members on the issues discussed.

3.3 Agenda items

Issues for discussion will be listed on the agenda distributed one week before each meeting.

Members of the DPLG and project team may nominate agenda items to the chairperson up to two weeks before the scheduled meeting. Such items must relate to the Terms of Reference.

Where possible, all communication material including agendas will be circulated electronically

In general, only items on the agenda will be discussed at the meeting. This ensures that any DPLG member or officer has the opportunity to attend that DPLG meeting to hear the discussion on the matter if they so wish. This openness is designed to ensure that all are aware of what is to be discussed and therefore allowing them to make an informed choice about attending that meeting.

The opportunity will exist to raise last-minute agenda items at the beginning of a meeting, however it will be at the discretion of the chairperson as to whether time allows for the item to be discussed at that meeting.

The chairperson will determine priorities for each meeting as appropriate. The number of issues placed on the agenda may be limited to allow for adequate levels of discussion.

Standing agenda items may be developed through the course of the project

3.4 Meeting schedule

Ordinary meetings of the DPLG will be held on a two-monthly basis initially. Frequency of meetings may be adjusted as required by project timetables.

Meetings will normally start at 6pm unless otherwise resolved by the DPLG. Meetings will finish after two hours, if not earlier.

Administrative support and meeting facilities for the DPLG will be provided by Sydney Water.

Special meetings or site inspections may be convened by resolution of the DPLG or Sydney Water.

On the scheduling of special meetings by Sydney Water, written notice will be given to all members of the DPLG not less than seven days before the meeting and advising of the matter/s to be discussed at the meeting.

3.5 Meeting notes

The chairperson will be responsible for keeping meeting notes for submission to the next ordinary meeting of the DPLG for confirmation.

The chairperson will verify the meeting notes before circulation to the DPLG.

Meeting notes will be sent to all members of the DPLG and regular attending officers.

The meeting notes will be referred to Sydney Water to consider any recommendations.

The meeting notes may be posted on Sydney Water's website for the general public to view.

3.6 Reimbursement of expenses

There is no capacity to provide reimbursement of expenses such as travel and child care.