



Natural Resources Access Regulator

Stakeholder engagement strategy

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Natural Resources Access Regulator Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

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1. Introduction

The Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) is an independent regulator established under the *Natural Resources Access Regulator Act 2017*. NRAR is responsible for compliance and enforcement measures for natural resources management legislation, which currently includes the *Water Management Act 2000* and the *Water Act 1912* and associated regulations.

NRAR's legislative objectives are to:

- ensure effective, efficient, transparent and accountable compliance and enforcement measures for the natural resources management legislation
- maintain public confidence in the enforcement of the natural resources management legislation.

To do this, we will:

- ensure compliance with the *Water Act 1912* and the *Water Management Act 2000*
- promote best-practice management and regulation of surface water and groundwater
- take a risk-based and outcome-focused approach to regulation
- guide decision-making and action by our people, through the adoption of a graduated and proportionate response to non-compliance
- ensure decisions on enforcement action are transparent to the community.

1.1. Purpose of this document

This document sets out NRAR's strategy for engaging with stakeholders. It also outlines some of the activities that will help to build and maintain public confidence in NRAR's measures for enforcing natural resource management legislation and making sure people comply with it. Similarly, the strategy explains the principles that underpin NRAR's engagement activities.

This strategy will give the regulated and wider community greater certainty about NRAR's role and activities, and allow NRAR to understand the expectations of stakeholders who are affected by or have a specific interest in its activities.

1.2. Scope

Our stakeholders are the individuals and groups who could affect or be affected by our activities, and those with an interest in our activities. The NRAR stakeholder engagement strategy sets out how we engage with our stakeholders and the broader community and the principles that will guide this engagement.

This strategy is in line with the principles outlined in the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment stakeholder and community engagement policy available from the department's website at www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform/stakeholder-and-community-engagement.

1.3. Principles for engagement

NRAR will follow these principles when engaging with stakeholders:

Purposeful

NRAR's engagement activities must contribute to our objectives and focus on outcomes. Our engagement activities will have clear objectives to promote success and positive outcomes for stakeholders and NRAR.

Inclusive

NRAR will identify and allow all relevant stakeholders to participate in planned/scheduled activities. Engagement will give NRAR an opportunity to share and promote developments in our core activities, to receive feedback and resolve issues for stakeholders.

Timely, proactive and responsive

NRAR will engage proactively with stakeholders to give them enough time to consider and give feedback about matters of interest. It is also essential that NRAR responds to stakeholders in a timely manner, that we follow up on interactions and that we supply the requested information.

NRAR will endeavour to give responses to stakeholders before the agreed deadline to reinforce that the relationship and the stakeholders' needs are important. We should continually foster the relationship to make sure the engagement is ongoing and that time is set aside to connect with stakeholders.

Open and transparent

Our dealings with stakeholders must be open and transparent. This is vital for stakeholders, the broader community and the reputation of NRAR, and for making sure people have access to the same level of information.

NRAR's stakeholder engagement strategy will prevent the need to deal reactively with requests to meet with specific interest groups.

The strategy will also safeguard the wellbeing of staff by providing a framework within which we undertake stakeholder engagement activities. This protects staff from the stresses of perceived, actual, or inadvertent improper conduct or loss of reputation. It is essential to declare and document any actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest in dealings with stakeholders.

Respectful

Engagement with stakeholders is to be respectful of the needs, experience, perspective and expertise of participants. Views expressed by stakeholders may be contrary to the policy or procedures that NRAR must follow. Acknowledging this and moving the conversation along will reduce the risk of conflict.

Individual NRAR staff must remain professional in their dealings with stakeholders and uphold the NSW Government's mandate, regardless of individual opinions. Relationships with stakeholders should be, and are acknowledged to be, a two-way one, with both NRAR and stakeholders communicating and contributing information and ideas.

1.4. Objectives of NRAR's stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement is an essential element of all aspects of our work. Through active stakeholder engagement, we seek to:

- educate stakeholders about NSW water laws
- encourage voluntary compliance
- increase the visibility and openness of NRAR's activities in licensing and approvals, monitoring and audit, and investigation and enforcement
- encourage open, two-way communication about how these activities are conducted and why
- build community confidence about the lawful and fair use of our precious water resources for community, environmental and economic purposes
- work with the community and water users to ensure the health and integrity of our water resources.

2. Stakeholder engagement activities

NRAR will engage with individuals and groups at state, regional and local levels, and will meet on an ad hoc basis as opportunities or needs arise. This strategy describes some of the processes and activities that we may undertake at a statewide and local level. We can relate the outcomes of these stakeholder engagement activities back to NRAR's strategic framework, priorities and performance indicators. They will help NRAR meet its broader objectives.

NRAR will identify existing opportunities and forums through which it can connect with stakeholders, as well as continuing to build on the sophistication and reach of its current communications activities and channels.

When determined, a schedule of planned engagement will be published on NRAR's website:

www.industry.nsw.gov.au/nrar

2.1. Statewide engagement

Our board and executive will engage statewide through structured activities with stakeholders from industry bodies, community groups, Indigenous communities and organisations, and various government agencies.

NRAR's operational branches will engage regionally and locally when needed to inform, educate and consult with key regional and local stakeholders.

2.2. The NRAR board

The board will meet with stakeholders and these meetings/engagements will be recorded in the board minutes, which are published on NRAR's website to ensure transparency and accountability.

2.3. Chief Regulatory Officer/Executive

Our executive will meet with the following stakeholder groups statewide:

- water user and irrigation industry representatives
- environmental groups
- Indigenous groups
- government entities.

We will engage with the Indigenous community in a meaningful and respectful way, giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples a voice in state-level engagement about how water resources are regulated.

For each stakeholder group, our executive will hold meetings at a frequency to be determined by operational needs. NRAR will maintain records of these engagements publish reports of our engagement activities on our website.

2.4. Local and regional engagement

Where NRAR has a reasonable presence, and where no suitable forum already exists, NRAR may establish local information-sharing groups, including local bodies, locally based Australian Government agencies, locally based state government agencies, local government and branch offices of industry associations. If established, these information-sharing groups will focus on local or regional issues and may inform broader, statewide approaches adopted by NRAR.

NRAR will engage with the Indigenous community in a meaningful and respectful way, giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples a voice in local and regional engagement about how water resources are regulated.

For each stakeholder group or established forum, NRAR will maintain records of engagements and publish reports of these engagement activities on our website.

2.5. Existing networks/associations

Representatives of NRAR will seek opportunities to:

- attend relevant, existing stakeholder engagement meetings, at both state and local levels
- approach local cooperatives for meetings and other activities
- attend chamber of commerce meetings
- attend other local business/rural issues network meetings
- participate in field days and other industry events to promote NRAR programs and engage with attendees.

2.6. Outreach

Outreach activities may include participation in online events and forums as well as ad hoc visits to stakeholders, stalls at local events, participation at conferences, or participation at other events and consultative activities such as town hall meetings when it is safe to do so.

2.7. Communication

NRAR will engage with the broader community and select target groups using a range of external communication activities to support and promote its objectives, which may include:

- industry newsletters
- media releases
- social media posts and advertising campaigns
- interviews with print, radio and television outlets
- opinion pieces for relevant print/online outlets, for example *The Land*, *Farmers' Weekly*.

3.Process

NRAR will engage with stakeholders to inform them about or to support operational programs, policy initiatives or campaigns. We will do this in line with the principles outlined in this strategy and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of participation. More detail of this standard approach is in Appendix 1 International Association for Public Participation spectrum of participation.

NRAR will use a range of engagement techniques to best suit the needs of our stakeholders and promote effective outcomes.

4.Engagement planning and implementation

NRAR will complete its stakeholder identification and analysis and determine a schedule for engaging with stakeholders. Engagement through structured activities will take place with stakeholders from industry bodies, community groups, Indigenous communities and organisations and various government agencies. An example of the template we will use is in Appendix 2 Engagement plan template.

5. Feedback

NRAR will continuously improve the way we work.

You can provide feedback on the services provided by NRAR by calling 1800 633 362; by emailing nrar.enquiries@nrar.nsw.gov.au, or online at www.industry.nsw.gov.au/nrar.

6. Review

NRAR will periodically review this stakeholder engagement strategy, based on our experience and stakeholder feedback.

Appendix 1 International Association for Public Participation spectrum of participation

- across the department, we will undertake stakeholder and community engagement activities in line with standard processes and in accordance with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of participation. This will result in more effective and rigorous engagement outcomes for NRAR, its stakeholders and the community.
- NRAR will use open approaches to consult with, inform, promote awareness and access the views and knowledge of stakeholders and the community.
- engagement will use a range of approaches, including public communication, information, education and consultation. For example, this will be through website and social media material and undertaking industry forums, interest groups, public meetings of community forums.
- NRAR will use technology where possible and appropriate to reduce potential barriers to participation in engagement activities, such as fear of gathering in person, distance, mobility or availability at prescribed times/locations.

The IAP2's public participation spectrum is shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

IAP2's public participation spectrum

Increasing impact of the decision



Table 1. Public participation goal

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public

Table 2. Promise to the public

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide

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Appendix 2 Engagement plan template

Table 3. Engagement plan template

Item	Natural Resources Access Regulator—Stakeholder engagement plan
Branch	[name of NRAR branch leading engagement]
Location	[the local government areas/water sharing plan areas included]
Purpose	[define the purpose of the engagement activity] <i>Use the IAP2 principles:</i> • <i>inform</i> • <i>consult</i> • <i>involve</i> • <i>collaborate</i> • <i>empower</i>
Target audience/groups	[identify your stakeholders] <i>Key stakeholder groups include:</i> • <i>industry</i> • <i>environment</i> • <i>community</i> • <i>government</i>
Key messages or information needs	[the key messages you intend to share] <i>Consider your intention:</i> • <i>inform</i> • <i>consult</i> • <i>promote awareness</i>
Timeframes	[when this engagement will take place] <i>Consider:</i> • <i>duration—that is, is the engagement over a specific timeframe or ongoing?</i> • <i>frequency</i>
Engagement process	[how you will engage with this group of stakeholders] <i>What methods you will use:</i> • <i>face-to-face meetings</i> • <i>information sessions</i> • <i>video/teleconference</i> <i>How you will communicate your plans:</i> • <i>email</i> • <i>website</i> • <i>public notices</i>