

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

For the

SOUTH WEST LODDON WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

May 2016

Introduction

The South West Loddon Water Supply Project is an \$80.6 million project and is a joint initiative of the Loddon Shire, GWMWater, Coliban Water, Goulburn Murray Water and Victorian and Federal Governments.

When completed the Pipeline will provide a reticulated water supply to the farm gate of more than 600 rural properties who currently rely on catchment dams for their water supply needs. During the extended dry these catchment dams have not provided a secure supply and land owners have had to rely on carting water for their stock and domestic needs.

A large part of Stakeholder Engagement in respect to the South West Loddon Water Supply Project is going to rely on a coordinated Communication Strategy.

As part of our engagement effort in respect to the project this Communication Strategy has been developed using the IAP2 philosophy and principles.

The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and GWMWater's working IAP2 model which is applied to projects that we manage appear as Appendices 1 and 2.

The Communication Strategy for the South West Loddon Water Supply Project has been designed to be flexible, so that it can be changed or modified based on the stage that the project is at and as issues emerge.

It does however embrace some key messaging that should continue to underpin all communications throughout the life of the project.

Aims

The main aims of the Communication Strategy are to:

1. Promote the South West Loddon Water Supply Project in the best possible light.
2. Recognise and promote the investment in the project by the funding partners.
3. Promote the broad benefits to individuals and to the region that will be realised through the delivery of the project.
4. To keep the community up-to-date with the progress of the project so that we encourage the ongoing support and enthusiasm for the completion of the project.
5. To ensure that the community has an opportunity to provide feedback and to identify issues of concern that need to be addressed.
6. To positively engage the full range of Stakeholders in all the relevant aspects of the project.

The Key Messaging

The key messages that will need to be committed to and adopted right throughout the project until its completion are vital. This is to ensure that interest and commitment to the project does not wane despite any seasonal climatic or other external events which may arise.

The South West Loddon Water Supply Project is a project with long term aims and benefits similar to those that were aspired to when securing ongoing support for the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline.

In developing the original messaging for the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline one of the key visions for the project was identified as *'Securing the future of our region'*.

This was a key mantra that was adopted and used successfully particularly when people became nervous or anxious about continuing to support the project. From discussions with landowners to date this is already informally being used by them to good effect when promoting the need for the South West Loddon Water Supply Project.

Underpinning the vision of *'Securing the future of our region'* are a number of statements which explain how we will achieve this key vision for success, namely;

- The pipeline will provide a reliable, high quality water supply to farms with water supplied 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- The pipeline will provide water that will allow existing agricultural enterprises to consolidate and expand with the knowledge that they will have access to a reliable, high quality water supply 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- The project will improve the security of water supply to the townships of Bridgewater, Inglewood, Korong Vale and Wedderburn.
- The project will provide access to water that will encourage new enterprises and investments to the region with the knowledge that they will have access to a reliable, high quality water supply 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- The project will provide environmental benefits to local rivers, streams and wetlands resulting from the decommissioning of farm dams which currently divert run-off water from the environment.
- The project will provide a source of recreational water at Skinners Flat Reservoir.

These statements could be used as part of our broad messaging when talking about the benefits of the project.

Some Key Messages to be Communicated!

- The Loddon Shire, GWMWater, Coliban Water, Goulburn Murray Water, Victorian Government and Federal Government (the promoters and funding partners) have listened to and taken on board the benefits that the community wants to see delivered by this project.
- Based on experience with other similar projects we are confident that the investment necessary by land owners will be affordable to them.
- The region has the capability of delivering this project on time and on budget.
- The successful implementation of the South West Loddon Water Supply Project is the key to *'Securing the future of our region for our children'*.

Communication Tools to be used

1. Infotutorials

It is proposed to develop a series of infotutorials which would be prominently placed across the bottom of either page three, five or seven of local newspapers circulating in the region.

The infotutorials will cover topics such as;

- Landowner Contributions.
- Who is putting up the Capital to pay for the pipeline?
- What is the size and route of the pipeline?
- What is the construction timeframe?
- Where is the water coming from?
- What will the quality of the water be?
- How much water will I need?
- When will I be able to connect?
- What happens if the mains traverse my property?
- What is a Supply-By-Agreement (if not able to amend water district)?
- What do I need to do on my property to be able to connect to the pipeline?
- Why 3 days on farm storage?
- Farm Dams - "a thing of the past?"
- Metering the water used?
- Community benefits
- Recreational Benefits

This is not an exhaustive list and can be added to or taken away from, depending on the emergence of issues as the project progresses.

2. Fact Sheets

It is proposed to develop a series of fact sheets loosely based on the infotutorials above. These will be static in nature and will be able to be handed out at Open Days, Public/Community Information sessions, Field Days etc.

3. Community Information Booths

Rather than Public Meetings to disseminate information it is proposed that we use a series of Information Booths. The concept is to run a series of these across the region and to have a number of teams of people who can run these events armed with Maps, Fact Sheets, the On Farm Guide and any other relevant information. The team members would be well briefed and scripted and be able to deal individually with interested landowners as they visit the Information Booth. The advantage of using this method is that we will get the chance to meet with and deal with all landowners individually and those not willing to ask questions in a public forum can be engaged individually. It also allows us to deal with any difficult landowners on a one to one basis rather than in a public forum where they may dominate.

4. A Pipeline Newsletter

It is proposed that this be a recognisable communication vehicle that we can mail to all landowners on a two monthly basis which can provide an update on the progress of the project. It could also include some positive case studies from farmers in other areas that have seen the benefits of a piped supply, and could include other relevant information that comes up in response to questions at the Information Booths.

5. Media

There will be a need to inform the media during the project to ensure that they report fairly and in a balanced way and that they are very well informed of the facts associated with the project.

As part of the process of keeping the media informed we could consider a series of media briefings, particularly for ABC Bendigo, Horsham and Ballarat and ABC Country Hour. It would also be valuable to brief the Weekly Times and The Pyrenees Advocate, The Bendigo Advertiser, the Weekly Advertiser, The Wimmera Mail Times and The North Central News.

To assist in building this relationship we will schedule a series of media releases which are current, informative and newsworthy.

6. Social Media

To underpin all of the work outlined above consideration will be given to the development of a Facebook Page or links to existing Facebook Pages. A recent Survey of GWMWater Customers indicated that 50% are now using Facebook compared with 33% in 2014, so this is emerging as a good way to communicate immediately with a range of people.

7. Community Consultative Committee

The South West Loddon Water Supply Project Customer Consultative Committee (SWLPCCC) is a consultative committee of the GWMWater Board for the South West Loddon Water Supply Project Steering Committee (SWLPSC).

The SWLPCCC's role is to support the South West Loddon Water Supply Project Steering Committee in the development and implementation of the South West Loddon area, specifically in respect to the views of potential customers and issues that may impact on them as a result of the project.

8. Landowner Liaison

GWMWater will engage landowner liaison officers to contact and/or meet with landowners on site to discuss and explain the topics establish by this strategy.

Actions

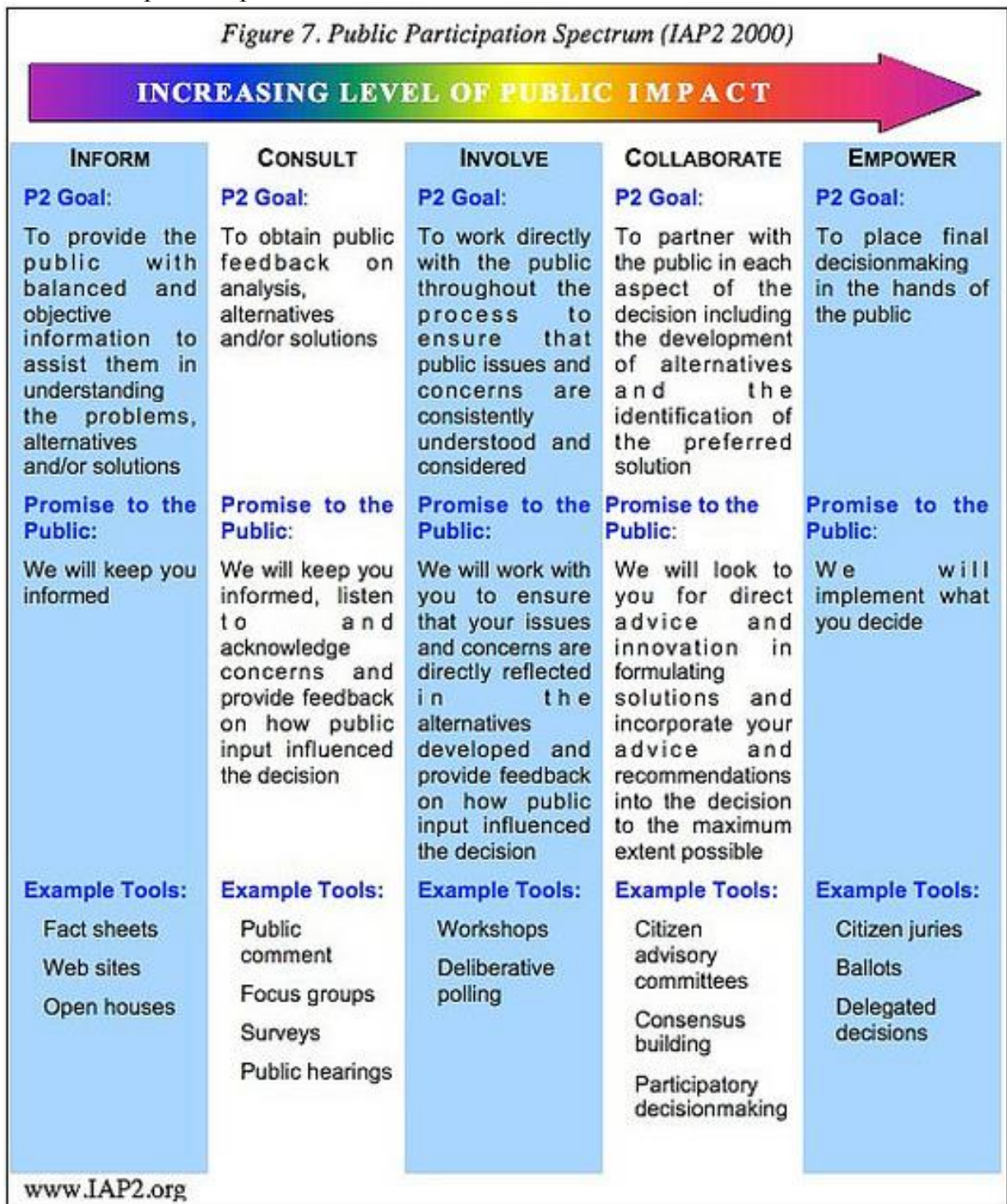
ACTIVITY	WHO	WHEN
Initial letter to landowners	Loddon Shire Council	June 2016
Project Fact Sheet established	GWMWater	June 2016
Pipeline Newsletter	GWMWater	August 2016 (Bimonthly)
Regular briefings and updates to Council / Boards / Staff / Funding Partners / Local Members	Loddon Shire Council / GWMWater / All	Ongoing
Land Liaison	GWMWater	July/August 2016 (Stage 1)
Community Consultative Committee	Loddon Shire Council	As required
Develop MOU with Dja Dja Wurrung	GWMWater	September 2016
Invite Dja Dja Wurrung representative to join the Project Steering Committee	GWMWater	August 2016

Conclusion

To facilitate a project that remains well supported and seen in a favourable light requires a clear communication structure and methodology.

Appendix 1

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum



Appendix 2

GWMWater's IAP2 Project Manager tool

