New Major Projects upgrade for state significant projects

The Major Projects portal has been upgraded to facilitate pre-lodgement engagements between proponents and public authorities for all state significant projects

What has changed?

You can now directly engage with public authorities as required by your Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) via the Major Projects portal. This feature will apply to all state significant projects for which a request for SEARs is accepted on or after 21 July 2023 and will be mandatory for these projects that engagement is undertaken via the Major Projects portal. You can use the portal to:

- initiate engagement requests with relevant public authorities (agencies and Council)

- share information (technical findings, plans and project descriptions)

- receive advice from public authorities and even request meetings via the portal (although meetings need to be held outside of the portal).

The upgrade will help you digitally engage, in real time, with public authorities and carry out consultation on your project before submitting your Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The upgrade will also provide the department with oversight of engagement to assist with the assessment of the proposal.

Why should I engage with public authorities for my project?

In order to comply with your project SEARs, you are required to carry out pre-lodgement consultation with relevant agencies and the local council for the area affected by your project. Pre -lodgement engagement should be meaningful, proportionate and tailored to the needs of relevant agencies and the council to allow for issues to be identified early and resolved prior to lodging your EIS. For Project Specific SEARs, the list of public authorities that should be engaged is set out in the issued SEARs. For Industry Specific SEARs, you are required to identify relevant public authorities that should be consulted prior to lodging your EIS.

When should I start engaging public authorities?

After the department has issued SEARs on a project, you will be able to initiate engagements via the Major Projects portal. Similar to offline pre-lodgement engagements, online engagement should be carried out at least 6 weeks before submitting your EIS. Engagement should be undertaken in a meaningful manner. Engagement should be commensurate to the scale and complexity of the projects. For large and complex engagement, early engagement is recommended.

Prior to contacting an agency or council, you should have:

- reviewed the SEARs for the project and any other published guidance

- engaged suitable consultants

- have undertaken due diligence for the site

- prepared a scope of works for the project, including preliminary documentation (for example, site survey or architectural drawings)

- identified any non-compliances, variations from development standards, relevant project impacts, mitigation measures and the methodology for your assessment

- formed key questions to guide discussions.

How do I use the portal to undertake engagement?

1. Dashboard view

Once the department has issued SEARs on a project, pre-lodgement engagement will appear as a new task on your dashboard

2. Create new engagements

On the pre-lodgement engagement screen, select the create engagement button to initiate engagements with public authorities.

Note 1: only one public authority can be selected per engagement. Please ensure your engagement request and any supporting documentation covers the relevant matters for the selected agency.

Note 2: you may create multiple engagements with public authorities. The list of public authorities you have engaged will be displayed on your pre-lodgement engagement screen

3. Request a meeting

You may request a meeting with a public authority either when creating the engagement request or by clicking the meeting request icon after an engagement request has been made.

Note 1: A public authority will have the option to accept or decline a meeting request. If a request is accepted, the authority will get in touch to organise a meeting date and time. A public authority may also create a meeting case for an engagement request

Note 2: You can only have one meeting request per engagement at any point in time.

4. Upload meeting minutes

You can upload your meeting minutes following a meeting. The task will appear on your dashboard as shown below.

Once you upload the meeting minutes, the system will auto close your meeting request and a copy of the minutes will be sent to the public authority.

5. Public authority advice

The system enables public authorities to provide the following responses:

(a) public authorities may provide the advice that engagement is not required for your project. E.g: engagement may not be required for certain straightforward projects where a standard condition may suffice for the project.

(b) public authorities may need additional information before providing advice. You will need to provide this information to receive a response from the authority.

Note 1: When an agency or council provides advice or a response to your engagement, you will receive a system notification email. You can then login and view the public authority's response.

6. Public authority may opt for no further engagement

An agency or council may opt for no further engagement after providing advice on a project. You will not be able to request additional advice once the public authority opts for no further engagement and will need to complete / close out this engagement. However, if you believe that the authority has not adequately provided advice on your project, and you are unsatisfied with the engagement outcomes you may outline your reasons in the field shown below.

Response

Public Authority Response	Wednesday, 19 July 2023 12:19:01 AEST
Notes: test	

Further Engagement

DPE WATER opting for No Further Engagement ?   Yes

Reason for No further engagement

No further engagement necessary for this project

Review Response

Do you agree that the engagement has been satisfactorily resolved? ★   Yes   No ✓

Enter details of your request ★

Remaining: 2500 characters

Attachments

Add attachment +

7. Complete or close out engagements

You must complete or close out all open engagements before lodging your EIS. By selecting the 'close out engagement' option under the 'Actions' tab, you can close out an open engagement in the following scenarios:

- you have not received a response from an authority

- you accidently created an engagement with an authority

- in certain other circumstances that may be unique to a particular project

Note 1: Any meeting cases associated with an engagement case will also be closed when an engagement case is closed.

8. Other engagements

You can upload details of any other engagements carried out for your project, such as community engagements or engagement with agencies that may not be available in the Major Projects portal by clicking on the 'Add Other Engagements' button.