The CRC for Forestry is established and supported under the Australian Government’s Cooperative Research Centres Program.

Handbook for operational community engagement within Australian plantation forest management

 CRC for Forestry

Authors
Melanie (Lain) Dare
Jacki Schirmer
Frank Vanclay
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science for sustainable forest landscapes

Authors
Melanie (Lain) Dare
Jacki Schirmer
Frank Vanclay
Community engagement (CE) is a major component of modern forest management, the interface between forest managers and the communities in which they operate. The current regulatory environment and increasing public scrutiny of forest management practices, policies and priorities has resulted in CE becoming normal practice for forest managers.

CE describes an array of participatory techniques that are used to enable impacted and interested people to become more involved in decision-making processes, whether through simply having the opportunity to observe or learn about the decision-making process, to input their views, or to take an active part of the process. By creating a shared learning environment, CE activities can provide many benefits to both forest management organisations and communities, such as increased trust, legitimacy and social capacity.

The frequency of engagement and the range of engagement activities in which forest managers participate make it vital that they have a comprehensive understanding of CE, as it is important to be able to apply engagement tools and techniques and to also understand the underlying social principles of engagement.

This handbook presents a practical guide to CE within Australian commercial plantation forest management, although the concepts presented are also relevant for strategic engagement processes. Providing a comprehensive yet realistic overview of the underlying principles and concepts, the handbook attempts to support forest managers conducting CE in the field by:

- providing an accessible and practical resource that guides forest managers' understanding of CE principles
- highlighting the complexities of working with communities, including the dynamic nature and diversities of communities
- providing practical advice on CE design and implementation, including stakeholder analysis, tools and techniques and evaluation processes.

Introducing engagement and its importance within commercial forest management, the handbook guides the forest manager through practical CE within forest management and its underlying social concepts. Detailing the theoretical ideals and operational reality, the handbook brings together the wealth of experiences shared by forest managers, highlighting the complex and somewhat unexpected journeys of engagement.

Recognising the challenges faced by forest managers conducting CE processes, the handbook attempts to help forest managers overcome these difficulties by acknowledging the existence of these problems, carefully designing CE processes to reduce the impact of such challenges and improving forest managers' skills and awareness of CE.

With considerable detail and practical advice given regarding CE design, it is hoped that the handbook will encourage a holistic approach to CE design and implementation. Rather than implementing a range of quick fixes to issues as they arise, proper CE design, implementation and follow-up will help improve a forest management organisation's CE policies and procedures, as well as improving relationships with community members.
As there is a large range of CE tools and techniques available, this handbook focuses on those commonly used within commercial plantation management and deemed suitable for use given the operational environment and current CE skills in the industry. The techniques described in the handbook range from basic informing techniques such as notification letters and fact sheets, through to more deliberative techniques such as charrettes and fishbowls. Readily adaptable to suit individual situations, a variety of tools and techniques can be applied simultaneously, providing a range of opportunities for stakeholder involvement.

Improved evaluation procedures are an important development for CE within plantation forest management. The handbook overviews the value of evaluation and basic steps to follow. Evaluation, an often overlooked process, can help improve CE practice and provide transparency and legitimacy to forest management organisations.

The dynamic social, political and commercial environment in which forest management is conducted constantly impacts on management priorities; however, CE remains a constant necessity. Tools and techniques, regulations and communities may adapt over time, but the need to provide open and transparent forms of communication remains. The handbook reflects the experiences and insights of a large number of forest managers, researchers and community members. While the handbook reflects current knowledge and practice, it is anticipated that it will need to be revised to reflect new learning and a new forest management environment in the future.

Acknowledgments

This handbook has been developed using the shared experiences of numerous forest managers and community members. The authors would like to thank all research participants who gave their time to share their stories, providing a rich and detailed account of the many sides of CE. Our fellow researchers and members of the industry have been extremely supportive and patient throughout the development of this handbook, providing excellent feedback and encouragement.

Caveat

While all authors would like to think that their work is enduring, we acknowledge the dynamic nature of forest management, CE and society at large. It is therefore important to stress that the information and guidelines given in this handbook are suitable for the forest management environment that we currently operate within. Changes in social values and resulting priorities, policies and regulations are inevitable and thus over time may render parts or the whole of this handbook obsolete.

In addition, as managers improve their CE practices, this handbook may become overly simplistic for their purposes. We regard this as a welcome prospect, as we all strive to improve the practice of CE and to expand the range of available opportunities to share our understandings and insights.
## Contents

### Overview
Acknowledgments  ii
Caveat  ii

### 1. Introduction
Purpose of this handbook  2
Proposed audience  2
How to use the handbook  3

### 2. Why community engagement is important within plantation forestry
What is community engagement?  6
What is plantation forest management?  7
When is community engagement used in the plantation industry?  8
What are the main principles of community engagement?
* Inclusivity  10
* Transparency  11
* Clear and agreed purpose and process  11
* Emphasis on mutual learning and sharing of knowledge  11
* Building of relationships and trust  12
What are the benefits and limitations of community engagement?  12
Why do community engagement?
* When best intentions go wrong  15
Who is the community?
* The community is dynamic  15
* Examples of community  16
* Problems facing community definition within forest management  16

### 3. Challenges facing community engagement
Satisfying a diversity of expectations  20
Achieving true representation is difficult  20
Availability of resources  21
Practitioner skills and training  21
Availability and acceptance of knowledge  22
Business environment  22
Continuing conflict  23
Stakeholder burnout  24

### 4. Guidelines for effective community engagement
Practical community engagement  26
* Planning considerations  26
* Context of the engagement process  26
* The basic steps of community engagement  28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using external facilitators or moderators</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical logistics</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of community engagement processes</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of information and knowledge</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of knowledge</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of information trust and legitimacy</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information delivery</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conflict resolution</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Recognising when conflict is occurring</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Analysing the causes of conflict</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: Responding to conflict</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with interests</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with relationships</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with clashes of values</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with external issues</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with data conflicts</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Designing the community engagement process</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context and problem analysis</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing the maturity of the issue</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing your community</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder analysis and selection</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing an appropriate level of engagement</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sharing</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving the public</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering stakeholders</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing the appropriate engagement tools and techniques</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devising ground rules</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Stakeholder analysis</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are the stakeholders?</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying and analysing stakeholders</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common techniques for stakeholder analysis</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-selection</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowball identification technique</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming and mind-maps</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder profiling</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritising stakeholders</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritisation according to the maturity of issues</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritising according to the influence and dependence of stakeholders</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritising stakeholders and issues</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Community engagement tools and techniques 71
Charrettes 74
Community advisory committees 75
Community liaison officers 78
Community profiling 79
Fact sheets 81
Feedback and information systems 83
Field trips 84
Fishbowls 85
Focus groups 86
Informal community conversations 87
Key stakeholder interviews 89
Letter notifications 90
Media 92
Multi-stakeholder partnerships 95
Newsletters 96
One-on-one and face-to-face meetings 97
Open houses or open days 99
Philanthropy and strategic social investment 101
Public meetings 102
Public submissions and public hearings 104
Role-plays 105
Surveys or structured questionnaires 106
Web-based engagement 107
Workshops 108

9. Evaluation of community engagement 109
How to conduct an evaluation process 111
   Developing an evaluation plan 111
   Collecting and analysing data 114
   Interpreting and sharing the data 114
   Acting on evaluation results 115
References and websites 115

10. Conclusion 123

11. References and recommended resources 125
Useful websites 128

Glossary 129

About the Authors 132
Tables
Table 1: Generalised pulpwood plantation management process and community engagement opportunities 9
Table 2: Key benefits and limitations of community engagement within operational plantation management 13
Table 3: Planning for engagement: context and process considerations 26
Table 4: Overview of the four stages of issue maturity 50
Table 5: Questions to help determine the appropriate CE methods 57
Table 6: Sample stakeholder checklist 66
Table 7: Key considerations within a stakeholder profile 68
Table 8: Tools and techniques for community engagement 73
Table 9: Engagement evaluation self-review template 116
Table 10: Evaluation tools suited to the evaluation of community engagement processes conducted by forest managers 118
Table 11: Stakeholder evaluation of completed engagement processes 121
Table 12: Sample questions for evaluation of engagement using semi-structured interviews with stakeholders 122

Figures
Figure 1: The basic steps of community engagement 29
Figure 2: Flow diagram to highlight the CE process 47
Figure 3: Continuum of participation 51
Figure 4: IAP2 spectrum of public participation 52
Figure 5: Relationship between the public, stakeholders and the community 61
Figure 6: Sample mind-map for a controlled burn operation 64
Figure 7: Sample mind-map for a pesticide application operation 65
Figure 8: Stakeholder profile template 69

Theory boxes
Theory box 1: The power, politics and complexities of community 18
Theory box 2: Knowledge formulation 33
Theory box 3: Aligning CE with commercial foci 48
Theory box 4: Required information – quantitative data vs qualitative data 117
Community engagement (CE) is an integral component of modern forest management. The wider community are increasingly demanding the ability to influence decision-making – demands that are supported by numerous international, national and state agreements, legislation and policies, state-based Forest Practices Codes, forest certification standards and individual corporate policies.

The challenge for the forest industry is to not merely comply with relevant policy and legislation, but to fully embrace CE within forest management and proactively encourage open and transparent decision-making processes. However, forest management is a convoluted process with some forest management decisions not suited to engagement activities (e.g. contractor management). It is important to be able to objectively determine when CE is required, how to conduct CE and how to learn from the CE process, all of which is covered within this handbook.

This handbook has been developed by the Cooperative Research Centre for Forestry using research conducted by staff from the University of Tasmania and the Australian National University. Research into an array of social aspects of forest management has highlighted an awareness of the interconnections between operational forest management and the communities in which they operate, connections that further strengthen the need for enhanced CE within operational forest management. While based on academic research, this handbook is not intended as an academic text. Instead, the handbook synthesises the collective learning of academic theories and principles with the practical experiences of industry and community representatives who have generously given their time and insights during the research process.

The content in this handbook is based on findings from a recent study analysing the effectiveness of CE practices used by the Australian forest industry as part of day-to-day forest operations. The study identified the CE needs of the forest industry and the effectiveness of methods used in the field to meet these needs. The study also reviewed a wide range of existing literature on CE in natural resource management to identify further strategies and approaches most likely to meet the specific needs of the forest industry. In addition to the handbook, several journal papers are being developed by the authors that examine the implications of the study for CE theory and forest policy more broadly.

Many CE or participation handbooks are readily available (see References and recommended resources), focusing on particular audiences such as government, community development, mining or forestry. This handbook has been developed using these resources as a guide, taking advantage of the significant expertise, effort and relevance they offer.
Purpose of this handbook

This handbook aims to provide practical guidance for CE practitioners in operational plantation forest management; however, the handbook would also be useful for engagement practitioners operating in native forest management or implementing more strategic forms of engagement. The handbook provides information and skills to effectively plan, implement, evaluate and adapt engagement processes to suit the operational context and engagement objectives.

The handbook includes information relating to what CE is and why it is important for forest management, practical tips for designing and implementing CE processes, detailed descriptions of key methods and tools applicable within operational forest management and an introduction to evaluation of CE activities.

While this handbook is practically oriented, it is more than a 'how to' document. Key engagement tools and techniques are critically examined to identify what works, what doesn't, strengths, weaknesses, issues, inadequacies and common mistakes. Such depth of information will assist CE practitioners in making an informed decision about what method, or combination of methods, is suitable for their objectives.

The handbook aims to help forest managers confidently answer, or at least have the tools and capacity to answer, the following questions:

- Why am I conducting CE and what are my engagement objectives?
- What information do I need to satisfy my objectives?
- What are my resources: how much time, skill and money do I have available to me?
- Who do I need to involve: what stakeholders should be involved and to what capacity?
- How can I involve the range of stakeholders I have identified: what tools and techniques suit my stakeholders, the operational context and available resources?
- How did we go: were the objectives met, were the stakeholders satisfied and how can we improve our engagement practices for next time?

The handbook attempts to provide practical and realistic advice regarding engagement processes conducted by operationally based forest managers. A considerable amount of theoretical knowledge is available regarding CE and, where relevant, such knowledge has been reflected within the handbook. Some readers may find the level of theory provided is limited and may wish to seek further information. A list of relevant literature is therefore included in the References and recommended resources section located at the end of the handbook.

Proposed audience

The handbook has been designed primarily for plantation forest managers working in the field in operational plantation management. This might include planning the establishment of plantations (e.g. local government/neighbor liaison), cultivation, planting, application of chemicals and harvesting. The handbook is not aimed at assisting the development of long-term strategies such as infrastructure development or policy development.
While pertinent to the forest manager charged with the role of CE design and implementation, this handbook should not be limited to those people with a specific role in community liaison. The information provided is equally suitable for the general field forester who typically has informal and ad hoc interactions with the broader public – interactions that often require the skills and social awareness outlined in this handbook.

While focusing on commercial plantation management, this guide is also relevant to other domains of resource management, including native forest management and more generic natural resource management activities.

How to use the handbook

The handbook is structured to allow the reader to focus on specific parts of CE development, whether these are the basic principles of engagement, or more practical tasks such as stakeholder analysis, the selection of appropriate tools, or how to evaluate the engagement process.

The initial sections (sections 2–5) provide general information that help build a practitioner’s understanding of CE as an integral component of modern forest management. Subsequent sections (6–9) provide more practical descriptions of how to analyse stakeholders and how to conduct a CE process. This includes determining the logistical, behavioural and sometimes theoretical concerns to be aware of, what is a suitable work plan when using particular tools, what are the common mistakes and how they can be avoided.

In addition to detailed descriptions, some key engagement methods are described using an actual example to show how the tool can be implemented in the field and suggestions are provided for consideration when applying the tool in individual situations.

To aid in the negotiation of the handbook, each section is summarised at the beginning, with the section content and key messages briefly outlined. More theoretical discussions are located in a box, this enables those less interested in these considerations to focus on the practical implementation of CE, while still providing information for those also interested in the theory of CE.

References to source material, or further reading, are noted throughout as [1] and a full list of references is presented at the end of the publication.
2. Why community engagement is important within plantation forestry

What is in this section?

- What is community engagement?
- What is plantation forest management?
- When is community engagement typically conducted by forest managers?
- What are the main principles of community engagement?
- What are the benefits and limitations of community engagement?
- Why do community engagement?
- Who is the community?

Key points

- Community engagement is a catch-all term used to describe a variety of informing, involving and collaborative communication techniques.
- Plantation forest management refers to all operations conducted during the acquisition, forest management planning, site preparation, planting, maintenance and harvesting of plantations.
- Community engagement is an ongoing process throughout the life of a plantation.
- The timing and form of community engagement applied is dependent on the social context, the people involved and the purpose of the engagement.
- Changing social values and priorities have resulted in increased scrutiny of forest management practices, and thus a need to include the community in forest management decision-making.
- It is important to recognise that the community is dynamic; constantly changing as it adapts to the social context, purpose and form of the engagement.
The Australian forest industry has seen significant change over recent decades. With continual pressure from global markets, environmental lobbyists and the society at large, the environmental and social practices of the industry are under constant scrutiny. There is a strong and persistent call from the broader community for the forest industry to do more with respect to ongoing, open and transparent community engagement (CE). This raises the question of what methods of CE are best applied in the forestry context and what level of engagement is both practical and acceptable to both the forest industry and the communities in which they are operating. Important considerations in this debate include defining what CE is and why it is important that the forest industry commits to long-term CE strategies.

What is community engagement?

Community engagement (CE) is a term used to describe the multitude of ways in which members of the community can interact with and be involved in decision-making processes. CE may be considered as a catch-all term in that it is interpreted differently by individuals, depending on their level of concern, scepticism and the agenda they are bringing to the table. For many people, CE is another term for public participation or public involvement, with the terms often used interchangeably. However, others believe that CE involves a greater depth of involvement, or engagement, in a decision-making process [4].

CE in Australian forest management has been described as anything from providing contact information for people to use if they have a concern about plantation management, to long-term community advisory groups that advise local government and forest management companies on local concerns and measures to actively address such concerns [25].

As the meaning of CE is varied, it is important to ensure that the level of decision-making input associated with the CE process is discussed and acknowledged at the onset of any CE process. Unrealised expectations of decision-making power can result in participants being dissatisfied with the CE process and thus unsupportive of final decisions made.

Acceptance of the decision-making process is often more important than the final decisions themselves. If people understand how a decision was made and that their concerns were properly considered during the process, they are more likely to be accepting of the final outcome, even if their desires are not fully met [45, 59].

It is important to keep an open mind when considering CE, as it is easy to dismiss less ‘engaging’ options that may still be valid. The development of collaborative management committees and processes is often emphasised in public participation literature. In modern Australian plantation management, such collaborative processes are typically not required for day-to-day decision-making regarding plantation establishment and maintenance. These collaborative processes are better suited to larger scale management tasks such as strategic plans and policymaking, or the development of management plans for large tracts.
of public land. The plantation industry needs to utilise and develop CE tools that best suit their daily needs and fit in with both the complexities of forest management and the communities in which they are operating.

Experience in the field has shown that few people want an ongoing active role in decision-making. Most just want to know what is going on and who to call if they have a concern, enabling them to participate in the decisions that matter most to them. Less engaging techniques such as information signs may suit some people, while others may prefer more input and thus favour a form of two-way communication such as a face-to-face meeting.

Regardless of what technique is used, as long as stakeholders are comfortable with the process, their influence on the outcomes and the way they are treated, they are likely to consider it a good CE process.

**What is plantation forest management?**

Forest management is about more than growing and harvesting trees for commercial purposes. Modern forest management encompasses a variety of management objectives, including commercial, recreational and conservation-based outcomes. Forest management practices and priorities are based on both current science and prevailing social values, it is therefore subject to continual change as new knowledge and new priorities are reflected.

Plantation forest management relates specifically to the management of plantation forests, including tasks associated with land acquisition, planning, establishment, maintenance, roading and harvesting. Plantation forest management is largely similar to native forest management. While the emphasis is on the intensive growing and harvesting of trees, the social and environmental aspects are as important as they are in native forest management. While this handbook is designed to help plantation forest managers conduct effective CE at the operational level of plantation management, many of the concepts, processes, tools and techniques are equally valid for native forest management.

Plantation forest management refers to all operations from land acquisition and forest management planning, to the eventual harvesting and haulage operations.
When is community engagement used in the plantation industry?

Community engagement (CE) is used at many stages of plantation management, including planning, establishment, maintenance and harvesting. Continual communication with the interested and affected community is essential to discuss the perceived impacts of each forest management stage and to work towards minimising such impacts. Table 1 indicates the basic process of plantation development and what CE process may occur at each stage. The table depicts a generalised forest management process. This process may vary between states and individual plantation sites depending on regulations, environmental conditions and the forest management company’s internal policies and procedures. This table highlights the frequent occurrences of CE throughout the lifecycle of a plantation that is being grown for pulpwood. The level of engagement occurring at each stage is not depicted, as that will depend on needs and concerns of both the forest managers and the stakeholders involved.

CE is important for operational forest management, helping to build long-term relationships with those affected by forestry operations. It allows them an opportunity to express their concerns regarding forestry operations and enables information to be shared among forest managers and participating stakeholders, thus building local knowledge into management plans.

Some of the CE opportunities depicted primarily aim to satisfy a range of mandatory or voluntary regulations (e.g. local government notifications); however, most are designed to allow affected stakeholders an opportunity to contact forest managers with any concerns and arrange further engagement opportunities if required. One-on-one meetings with stakeholders help to build both relationship and trust between the parties, as concerns can be discussed openly and decisions made in partnership.

When such decisions are made in collaboration with stakeholders they are often more effective as they are accepted by the stakeholder and take into consideration local knowledge, forestry regulations and social concerns.
Table 1: Generalised pulpwood plantation management process and community engagement opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plantation management process</th>
<th>CE opportunities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land acquisition</strong></td>
<td>neighbour 1:1 communication</td>
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<td><strong>Local government approval</strong></td>
<td>local government notifications/advertisements, public meetings, local government councillor field tours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forest management plan development</strong></td>
<td>neighbour letter notification, environmental specialists notified, neighbour 1:1 communication (phone/visit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultivation</strong> (e.g. pre-cultivation spray, rip/mound soil, fire break establishment, windrow burning)</td>
<td>neighbour letter notification, neighbour 1:1 communication (phone/visit), media advertisements, state fire authorities notified, internet fire database (Tas.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planting</strong> (e.g. pre-plant spray, game control, seedling planting, fertilising)</td>
<td>neighbour letter notification, neighbour 1:1 communication (phone/visit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early maintenance</strong> (e.g. post-plant spray, refill seedlings, secondary fertilising, insect spray [if required], firebreak maintenance)</td>
<td>neighbour letter notification, neighbour 1:1 communication (phone/visit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Later maintenance</strong> (e.g. insect spray [if required], aerial fertilising, firebreak maintenance)</td>
<td>neighbour letter notification, neighbour 1:1 communication (phone/visit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harvesting</strong> (e.g. preparation of forest management plan, local government approvals, thinning and/or clearfall harvesting)</td>
<td>neighbour letter notification, neighbour 1:1 communication (phone/visit), local government notifications/advertisements, public meetings, environmental specialists notified, local government councillor field tours</td>
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Note: The operations shown are a guide only and may not occur for every plantation established.

Many land management concerns other than those shown in Table 1 may be discussed with adjacent land-owners on an ‘as needs’ basis. These may include concerns regarding fencing requirements, practicalities of shared game control operations, fire track maintenance and united actions regarding fire control if a fire incidence occurs. Greater community social concerns such as school bus routes or the impact of heavy log truck traffic on roads may be conducive to the use of several CE techniques such as face-to-face meetings with affected residents, public meetings, focused discussions with local government to overcome truck route issues and road conditions, or the establishment of long-term advisory committees consisting of a diverse range stakeholders.
What are the main principles of community engagement?

Several simple and practical principles underpin CE. As highlighted in the Principles for engagement with communities and stakeholders developed by the Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources (MCMPR) [47], engagement principles are a mix of basic common sense, good business practice and ethical considerations. The principles are essentially statements developed to provide a basis for acceptable standards and good practice of CE.

The principles do not typically prescribe actions to be taken, appropriate methods, techniques or behaviours. Context-specific factors – including the engagement process aims, scope and social context – create conditions that require the unique application of CE principles to achieve the most practical outcome [47].

There is no definitive set of CE principles; they vary depending on the industry, the society and the perspectives of the authors. This is beneficial for practitioners as it enables them to derive and apply principles that are applicable to their own circumstances.

For the purpose of forest management in Australia the authors have chosen the following principles, based on necessity, applicability and the evolution of CE within commercial forest management:

- inclusivity
- transparency
- clear and agreed purpose and process
- emphasis on mutual learning and sharing of knowledge
- building of relationships and trust.

Careful consideration of these principles is required prior to, during and after any given engagement process. While not all may be applicable in every situation, a greater understanding and practical acknowledgement of such principles can improve the practice of CE as well as the social and operational outcomes.

In order to clarify the meaning of each principle, a brief description is provided below; however, their importance and their practical applicability is embedded in discussion throughout the handbook.

Inclusivity

Relevant stakeholders need to be identified and involved in CE processes early in the decision-making process. Being inclusive not only requires that opportunities are provided for participation, but also ensures that a broad representation of the community is able and encouraged, to participate. This may require that diverse CE opportunities are provided so that people can participate at a time, or in a manner, that best suits their personal circumstances (e.g. many people cannot attend night meetings, hence it may be prudent to also hold daytime meetings. Alternatively, some people are hesitant in large group situations and prefer individual meetings).
For operational CE processes inclusivity often refers to ensuring that sufficient opportunities for involvement are provided, including the consideration of neighbours who do not reside on the property, people who work off the property and thus may require meetings out of hours and people whom are interested but not necessarily impacted by operations.

Considerations of the barriers that inhibit involvement can help to ensure a broad representation of people can participate.

Transparency

Transparency of the decision-making process is essential. In operational forest management, many decisions are made prior to the inclusion of the community during the rather closed process of preparing draft forest management or forest practices plans. Being open and honest about the decision-making process, including relevant considerations, regulations and assumptions provides a level of integrity in the process.

It is also important to ensure that concerns and criticisms raised by the community are adequately reflected in decision-making documentation so people can see that their concerns or ideas were properly considered and not simply dismissed.

Forest managers need to think beyond the boundary fence when including people in dialogue.

Clear and agreed purpose and process

Differing expectations of the process can be a common cause for contention when conducting CE. It is important to be honest and up-front about the purpose of the engagement and the process that it will follow.

Where possible, it may be beneficial to collaboratively determine the purpose and process to be used. Involving community participants early in the process can help to develop relationships that promote trust and respect and can help identify alternative management actions and knowledge gaps.

Emphasis on mutual learning and sharing of knowledge

CE should not only be about informing community members of upcoming forest management operations. Engagement processes should be designed and implemented in a manner that encourage open dialogue, allowing for diverse individuals to share their knowledge and concerns.

CE practitioners need to encourage all participants to actively contribute to discussions and ensure that people can do so comfortably, without ridicule, judgment or undue pressure. This may require expert facilitation in large-group situations or a more personalised approach in individual face-to-face situations.

Forest managers need to willingly acknowledge the information provided, actively (and transparently) considering new ‘facts’, values and alternatives in decision-making. Such acknowledgement does not necessarily mean that all the information must be accepted, as some information provided may be unrealistic in commercial circumstances, or inaccurate.
It means that the information is not immediately dismissed and instead is used in decision-making efforts by providing social context, an insight into community values and aspirations and, in some circumstances, a valid and important alternative.

**Building of relationships and trust**

Forest management is a long-term activity and therefore requires engagement processes that actively encourage the development of long-term relationships. While operations are typically short term, the care and maintenance of forests continues for some years and has varying impacts on the community that need to be properly considered and managed.

Relationships based on mutual trust and integrity are important for forest managers, neighbours and other interested parties for both practical and social reasons. Practical management issues such as boundary fencing, fire or pest outbreaks are easily dealt with when there is an existing relationship.

Social benefits of building relationships within communities include being accepted as part of the community, which further encourages open communication and allows for the easy identification of likely issues or concerns.

Changes in forest management personnel also need to be considered well in advance. In the event of forest managers leaving a region, it is often advantageous for new representatives of the organisation to be introduced to the local community by the existing forest manager, who will have established relationships and trust within the community. Such an introduction shows the commitment of the organisation to the community and provides vital context for the transfer of knowledge between forest managers.

**What are the benefits and limitations of community engagement?**

There are many benefits and limitations associated with CE that vary depending on the CE expectations and CE activities undertaken. The key types of benefits and limitations relevant to commercial plantation management within Australia are listed in Table 2. Further elaboration of this topic is provided in Section 3: Challenges facing community engagement (page 19).
### Table 2:
**Key benefits and limitations of community engagement within operational plantation management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of CE</th>
<th>Limitations of CE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Builds trust</strong> through dialogue and associated relationship-building</td>
<td><strong>Prior relationships influence CE outcomes</strong> – previous relationships of conflict and mistrust can negatively influence CE processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improves inclusivity and representation</strong> by providing opportunities for diverse citizenry involvement</td>
<td><strong>Inclusivity and representation can be limited</strong> to the few, typically well-educated ‘elites’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improves legitimacy of decisions</strong> made through transparent decision-making processes and the incorporation of public values</td>
<td><strong>Issues of power can limit effectiveness</strong> of CE – hesitancy to relinquish decision-making power and unrealistic expectations of power sharing inhibit CE outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Better utilises available resources</strong> through a pooling of knowledge and skills</td>
<td><strong>Requires considerable investment of resources</strong> including time, money and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improves quality of decisions</strong> by clarifying objectives, exploring alternatives, dispelling assumptions and incorporating diverse knowledge forms</td>
<td><strong>Can result in poor-quality decisions</strong> that are watered-down, compromised, lowest common denominator outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improves individual and social capacities</strong> through involvement, empowerment, skills development and information sharing</td>
<td><strong>Limited capacity of public limits CE outcomes</strong> due to lack of expertise and lack of understanding of technical aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provides operational benefits</strong> including compliance with regulations, reduced conflict, better use of resources, smother operations and improved corporate reputation</td>
<td><strong>Commercial realities restrict effectiveness of CE</strong> – decisions are often heavily influenced by external factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[7, 8, 9, 12, 22, 35, 37, 52]

### Why do community engagement?

The rapid expansion of plantation establishment in Australia over the past decade has changed the social environment in which forestry is being conducted. While encouraged by federal policies such as the *National forest policy statement* [15] and the *Plantations 2020 vision* [51], such expansion has drawn criticism from many. With contention occurring about whether plantation expansion affects water availability, rural land prices, rural landscapes, or has contributed to the demise of the quintessential country town, there is considerable focus on the plantation industry and its environmental and social impacts.

Regulations, effected through either forestry codes of practice, local government planning processes, or legislation, are increasingly applied to plantation operations in an attempt to mitigate the perceived environmental and social risks surrounding the industry. The regulatory framework does not satisfy everybody, however and there remains a level of community mistrust regarding the forestry industry that can extend to individual forest managers.
CE aims to not only make the day-to-day tasks associated with operational forest management easier, it also aims to improve ongoing forest management practices through better decision-making. Such decision-making takes into account the needs and wants of stakeholders and incorporates local knowledge of both the environmental and cultural context in which forest managers are operating.

“You know, being a neighbour to a logging company can be a fearful thing in a way” (community member)

CE also has the benefit of improving relationships and receptivity within the community through dialogue and information sharing, which may lead to reduced conflict and greater legitimacy in ongoing forest management practices.

Many economic and social reasons for conducting CE are described both within the literature and by research participants. These reasons are diverse and cover a breadth of operational and personal values:

- compliance with legislative and other regulatory requirements, including forest certification
- improving relationships and assimilation between the forest industry and the community
- overcoming historical management deficits
- improving trust, acceptance and legitimacy and thus achieve a ‘social licence to operate’
- identifying potential issues, resolving conflict, reducing negative publicity and complaints
- improving work/business efficiencies
- improving public understanding of the forest industry, performing an educational role
- improving personal wellbeing, satisfying a moral obligation
- appreciating and incorporating the community’s goals and values
- giving stakeholders access to forest management decision-making
- improving the quality of decision-making through the incorporation of local knowledge
- giving a voice to minorities such as Indigenous people.

Through improved relationships, CE can help to build trust and legitimacy, while also reducing conflict.
When best intentions go wrong

While CE is essential in forest management, it must be approached correctly or damage to the forest industry or to the individual company’s reputation may result. CE is not easy; it often involves conflict, personal values and beliefs, and concerns over people’s quality of life, livelihoods and health and safety. These are real concerns that invoke tension and raised emotions that may negatively impact on the ability to conduct open discussions.

Poor CE practices result from a lack of planning, resources, training and from a closed mindset regarding the importance of CE. A poorly conducted CE process can destroy the credibility of any future participation process. Once stakeholders have participated in an ineffectual CE process they may be unwilling to commit time and emotion to future processes, thus making it difficult to attract suitable stakeholders and to ensure full representation of community concerns.

Similarly, poor community participation may erode trust between communities and forest management organisations. Without trust, public scrutiny and calls for more intensive regulations governing the forest industry will increase; people will be less willing to contact the forest industry and may further succumb to misinformation, increasing social tension and disharmony.

Who is the community?

In any engagement process the community is crucial, yet there is often no clear definition of who the community is and therefore who should be included in the engagement process. ‘Community’ is a broad term typically used to identify groups of people such as local residents, or interested people and organisations. Common definitions of community include people within a defined geographic location (community of place, or community of impact), or people with similar interests or occupations (community of interest) where people may not live in close proximity, yet share a common viewpoint which they respond to as a group.

It is important to determine and clearly define the chosen community early within the engagement process to avoid confusion that can hinder its development and implementation.

The community is dynamic

When planning for CE it is essential to recognise that the community will vary between and within engagement processes. Factors that will influence the appropriate definition of community include:

- goals and objectives of the CE process
- local context including the issues and impacts
- the available time and resources
- geographic, political and cultural perspectives.
CE participants should have the opportunity to contribute towards the classification of community wherever possible. This will help reduce claims that the engagement process is not inclusive and will also provide important opportunities for the input of local knowledge regarding suitable or unsuitable people, the local politics and pre-existing community groups of interest.

It is also important that additional opportunities are provided for people to become involved during the engagement process. The defined community – in other words, the people with an interest in the issues being discussed, or the people living in a particular region that may be affected by operations – may change as the process brings up new issues, impacts or ideas. Thus, other people may need to become involved due to their relevant influence, knowledge or interest. Similarly, people may move into the impacted area and thus request to be included in the engagement processes.

Examples of community

The community could include any of the following:

- the neighbour with whom you are discussing a boundary fence
- the land-owners and regulating authorities with whom a collaborative pest control program is being devised
- representatives of the residents of a local area, local government, state government, trade unions and affected industry groups (forestry and non-forestry) who are all interested in the issue at hand
- representatives of local residents, local government, interested ENGOs, various scientists, state government departments and industry groups to discuss the strategic development of industry and/or related infrastructure programs.

Problems facing community definition within forest management

Increasing numbers of interested ENGOs

People’s acceptance of commercial forest management practices are typically based on their personal values and beliefs. Many people feel very strongly about the environment and, in recent decades, there has been an explosion of environmental organisations with a keen interest in various forms of environmental stewardship.
This has resulted in the emergence of new active ‘communities of interest’, including ENGOs that claim a legitimate role in decision-making surrounding forest management. The sheer number of interested environmental or social groups makes it difficult to include them all in relevant CE processes. Careful selection of those groups to include requires openness and transparency to limit alienation and criticism of resulting decisions made.

**Multiple points of operation**

Unlike other extractive resource industries (e.g. mining), forestry has multiple points of operation. Rather than single large sites of activity (e.g. a mine site), individual forest management organisations manage numerous plantation operations across the landscape, with various operations occurring in many places at any given point in time. Therefore, CE processes are repeatedly required to ensure that all communities affected by operations are adequately engaged.

In the plantation sector repeated CE processes in many locations and over time as operations occur across a large region means that they require a significant level of resourcing – in terms of time, money and investment in skills development.

The diversity of contexts and breadth of scale present a real practical constraint on the depth and scope of engagement processes implemented. Many forest management companies deliberately restrict their definition of community in an attempt to keep the task of CE feasible, focusing engagement energies on those members of the community directly affected by forestry operations. While this may be a practical option, it is important to ensure that alternative opportunities for engagement are also provided to enable broader communities of interest with an opportunity for dialogue.

**Choosing the engagement participants**

Defining the community requires setting a *boundary of inclusion and influence*. The accepted definition of community limits who can participate and influence the decision-making process and who can simply observe the process.

The process of defining the community does not necessarily identify the actual individuals who should participate, although many names will be known or obvious to the engagement practitioner and other participants, it simply identifies the ‘categories’ of people that should be involved (e.g. neighbours, regulators, emergency services).

Once the community is defined, it is necessary to choose which groups or individuals (stakeholders) to actually involve. This is discussed in Section 7: *Stakeholder analysis*, and is a significant element of CE design that is often overlooked.
The definition of community is crucial to ensure both the legitimacy and the value of the engagement process. Socially, a broad representation is desired; although in reality strict time and resource constraints often result in narrowly focused representation that predominantly includes individuals likely to be directly impacted by the operations being discussed. While narrow definitions of community can be beneficial in terms of enabling a fast response to changing conditions, they can also hinder the long-term efficacy of an engagement process as they do not effectively consider broader social relationships and interactions.

Many important underlying social characteristics such as power relations, the heterogeneity of stakeholder interests and the binding links between seemingly disparate communities can be concealed by narrow definitions of community [34, 44, 53]. These characteristics can significantly impact on the success of an engagement process, including the quality of the decisions made and the social acceptance of the process itself.

**Power relations**
Communities are political entities, where both obvious and subtle power dynamics interact as they do in all group situations. Participatory approaches therefore need to be developed with a greater understanding and consideration of the complexities of power and power relations. The power relationships that exist within people’s everyday lives have a considerable impact on their ability to actively participate in engagement processes. Expectations, relationships, institutions and meanings are not created independently in new social spaces, such as CE processes [20]. Pre-existing power relations, cultural biases and perceptions of accepted knowledge are brought from peripheral experiences and norms and are imposed upon the new space. It is important to recognise, acknowledge and accept what the community brings to the engagement process, then determine how best to utilise the strengths that exist and work as a group to overcome the weaknesses [30].

**Communities are not homogenous**
The inclusion of a narrow band of individuals does not allow for the fact that people within any defined group such as a geographic location, interest group or occupation, are not homogenous [53]. People within a defined community do not necessarily share the same values, beliefs or priorities. Communities are diverse in terms of social status, cultural origins, age, gender interests and socioeconomic characteristics. By limiting the breadth of people involved, a bias of interests represented could be introduced, thereby limiting the legitimacy of the process and the quality of decisions made.

**Community strengths and multiplicity**
Communities are not simple entities; they are dynamic, varied and often elusive. It is therefore important not to limit one’s conception and treatment of communities to a discrete set of policies and procedures. Communities should be continuously explored, reviewed and appreciated. When working with communities, one of the most important points to remember is that one person may belong to many communities simultaneously (see Cornwall 2004 [20]) and therefore engagement practitioners may unwittingly be working with many communities, depending on the person’s levels of influence and interests.

In addition to the multiplicity of communities, it is important to remember that perceived threats from outside the community can activate the development of a new community-based on a shared interests and understandings [14]. The actions and interactions within and between, like-minded communities that promote the wellbeing of a community, are a strong and formidable force that needs to be recognised.

**Key references**
3. Challenges facing community engagement

What is in this section?

- challenges linked to satisfying diverse expectations and ensuring a fair representation of the community
- being realistic about available resources
- community engagement training and skill development
- limitations of acceptance of local knowledge
- influence of organisational culture
- ongoing conflict
- stakeholder burnout

Key points

- Some stakeholders may have unrealistic expectations of power sharing that need to be discussed and resolved early in the community engagement process.
- Plantation managers need to experiment with community engagement processes to reduce the barriers that inhibit community members from participating in community engagement.
- Sufficient resources should be provided to meet and evaluate the engagement process purpose.
- Minimal formal training in community engagement for forest managers and ‘on-the-job’ learning can limit its potential success.
- The scientific background of forest managers may limit their willingness to accept local knowledge.
- Organisational culture is an important influence on community engagement. Unless engagement is an accepted norm within the organisation, community engagement risks being implemented with little substance or sincerity.
- Conflict may continue after an engagement process, but this does not mean that it was a failure.
- Increasing requirements for community engagement can result in stakeholders becoming fatigued and unwilling to participate. Collaborative engagement processes can help reduce the impact on stakeholders.
Satisfying a diversity of expectations

One of the main challenges associated with operational community engagement (CE) is the ability to design and implement CE processes that satisfy business, government and community expectations. It is often difficult to provide opportunities for engagement that are simultaneously inclusive, productive and cost-effective.

Stakeholders can have unrealistically high expectations of corporate engagement processes which, when they go unrealised, result in disillusionment, mistrust of the CE process and practitioners and an unwillingness to participate in future engagement opportunities.

Some stakeholders see an invitation for participation as a clear indication of increased decision-making influence, while the forest manager may believe the objectives of the process are simply to identify community concerns, or to develop suitable management alternatives, without giving others increased influence over decision-making. While information sought during engagement may influence final decisions, the CE process may not be a decision-making process in itself. It is therefore important that those conducting CE clearly communicate the goals and objectives of the CE process at the very beginning, including all individuals’ roles and responsibilities and who will make final decisions.

Achieving true representation is difficult

It is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve a true representation of the community in any given CE process [55]. While CE processes are important for forest managers, they are typically not important for the majority of community members due to general apathy towards plantation management operations, or constraints associated with time, family commitments, associated expense, perceived capacity to participate, etc.

Engagement processes often attract the ‘elites’ within any given community [37, 55] and those with entrenched positions that do not necessarily represent the general community. While the participation of local elites – those with power associated with social positions, wealth or education – can aid a decision-making process in terms of efficiencies and access to accepted decision-making systems, it is important to engage all sectors of the community, including marginalised groups such as Indigenous people, women, the poor and ethnic groups.

Plantation managers need to experiment with CE processes, finding approaches that reduce the barriers inhibiting the broad inclusion of the community from participation. The use of local connections, empathy and a diversity of engagement techniques can help to reach out to a broader range of people. This includes the use of informal CE techniques that help to develop relationships and trust, reducing inhibiting factors associated with group dynamics, power differentials and personal confidence [35].
Availability of resources

CE takes time and costs money, both of which are often limited within any commercial environment. Given the limited resources available, plantation management companies are not capable of responding to every concern or comment raised by stakeholders. Most companies utilise a strategic approach to CE, focusing resources on members of the community most likely to be affected by operations and on those engagement opportunities with the greatest potential for collaborative, long-term relationships that satisfy social and business objectives.

The decision of who to involve and on what issues often falls to the field foresters and their direct managers. Guided by corporate policies and prior experiences, forest managers need to make the difficult decision on essentially ‘who is important’. Such a decision is often based on the perceived risks associated with the forestry operation and the potential impacts on the community, the environment and the forest management organisation. A comprehensive understanding of the community in which forest managers are operating, the management activity proposed and the resources they have available is important when making these complex decisions regarding who to engage with.

Such decisions may be difficult as some ‘important’ people may have to be left out. People may not be included as they did not satisfy the ‘criteria’ set by the forest manager, the forest manager might not have been aware of their existence, or insufficient resources did not allow for additional people.

When limited resources impact on the inclusivity of the CE process it is important to actively consider who is currently involved, what interests or perspectives they represent and what perspectives are currently being missed. In that way the limited resources can be focused on ensuring that a broad representation of the community is achieved.

The available resources need to provide sufficient support for CE processes, but some funds should also be allocated to evaluating an organisation’s CE practices. Evaluation activities provide an excellent opportunity to follow up with community members, strengthen relationships and show a commitment to long-term CE. Evaluation of CE is further discussed in Section 9.

Practitioner skills and training

CE is an increasingly significant component of the role of an operational plantation manager; however, relatively little formal CE training is offered to plantation managers. While many employers aim to employ foresters who have good communication skills, the capacity to effectively implement CE is typically learnt ‘on the job’, limiting the development of key skills, understandings and the overall capacity of plantation managers to conduct CE.
The forestry staff involved in engagement processes often include individual field foresters or CE specialists, as well as other colleagues with specific knowledge and experience about the issues being discussed (such as specialists in fire management, pest control or harvest operations), or those with high credibility within the local community due to familiarity or previously developed relationships. It is therefore important to ensure that CE skills are developed across the organisation, broadening the engagement skill base and enabling flexibility of engagement design and implementation [2].

The skills required to effectively engage stakeholders are diverse and vary according to the social context and management decision being made. Key factors that influence an individual’s CE performance include personal traits (effective communication skills, ability to empathise), credibility within the community, expertise regarding the decision at hand and an understanding of the engagement technique being used [2, 17].

**Availability and acceptance of knowledge**

The primarily technical and scientific training of plantation managers may mean that they are less attuned to actively listening to diverse forms of knowledge, understanding the significance of that knowledge and then using it in decision-making. With a predominant focus on technical solutions that utilise scientific forms of knowledge, plantation managers may place less reliance on local knowledge and subsequently discount social concerns. Forest managers need to be aware of this limitation and actively seek, respect and acknowledge local knowledge. The dismissal of local knowledge can further fuel an ‘us and them’ mentality, thus limiting the capacity of forest managers to develop relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

The scientific training of plantation managers may limit their capacity to acknowledge local forms of knowledge.

**Business environment**

The business environment has a significant impact on CE processes, simultaneously encouraging CE through regulatory compliance and principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR), yet often inhibiting the scope of engagement through the primary focus on profit and shareholder returns.

Organisational culture has a major influence on CE practices. It is important to have a supportive culture that embeds CE within its everyday policies and procedures, provides adequate resources and promotes active collaborative learning and innovation. Unless engagement is an accepted norm within the organisation there is a risk that CE will be implemented half-heartedly, with little substance and sincerity (see Parker and Nielsen 2009 [49]).

The culture of the organisation influences the success of CE processes.
A significant challenge for plantation managers is to align CE efforts across company operations. Alignment will be beneficial in terms of providing more efficient use of community and corporate resources, enabling the sharing of information and developing social and business networks. Collaborative CE activities are currently limited in the Australian plantation industry. Collaborative engagement processes need to adequately reflect the industry’s commitment to the region and plantation management priorities.

Continuing conflict

There is no single method for engagement and there is no guarantee of success. Communities are complex and somewhat unpredictable, reacting in different ways to engagement opportunities. Some communities may be particularly concerned about plantation management. CE may not remove all of the conflict and tension associated with plantation management as community members and plantation managers will no doubt have some entrenched opinions.

The continuation of conflict between some members of the community, or an inability to solve all problems, does not render a CE process completely unsuccessful. Positive outcomes can be achieved, even if some or much of the conflict continues. These outcomes may include the sharing of information, a better understanding of the diversity of values that exist within the community and the opportunity for diverse groups to engage in constructive dialogue.

As discussed by Hammersley Chambers and Beckley (2003) [37], care needs to be taken in situations where deeply held value differences may result in destructive encounters that would inhibit constructive dialogue and the building of positive relationships [37]. In potentially antagonistic processes, the creation of safe spaces for participation is required, allowing for equality and fairness. Safe spaces are opportunities for engagement where all participants feel comfortable to discuss their concerns freely. Such spaces can be encouraged through open and transparent process design and the collaborative setting of engagement ground rules that permit all participants equal opportunity to share their concerns (see page 58).

Positive outcomes of CE may include intangible outcomes such as information sharing, the understanding of diverse values and the opportunity to actively discuss concerns.
Stakeholder burnout

The increasing requirement for CE embedded in regulations and corporate policies increases the risk of participation burnout, where stakeholders become overcommitted to engagement processes, resulting in an unwillingness to participate further. It is important that CE processes are designed and implemented with a full understanding of other processes being undertaken at the same time by other organisations. While little can be done to reduce the burden imposed by some legally required forms of CE, larger scale CE projects such as advisory committees are well suited for industry collaboration, reducing the impact on the community and the potential for stakeholder burnout.
Key points

Proper planning of your engagement approaches helps to ensure a more effective and efficient process.

- Community engagement approaches are context-specific, influenced by the purpose of the engagement, the location and type of forestry operation, the available resources, and the sociopolitical context.

- Community engagement may be approached as a series of steps; however, it is important to be flexible given the dynamic nature of communities and forest management.

- Basic logistical considerations (e.g. time and location of meetings, materials required) can help to improve efficiencies of engagement and allow the practitioner to concentrate on building relationships.

- Evaluation of community engagement processes is an important and often excluded component of community engagement (more detail in Section 9).

- The information shared by community members provides an early insight into their likely values and beliefs.

- The credibility of information shared within community engagement processes is influenced by the context, the authorship, individual’s values and beliefs and the transparency of the information.

- When delivering information it is important to ensure that content and format is suitable for the purpose and the audience.
Practical community engagement

The ability to effectively conduct a variety of community engagement (CE) processes in a timely manner is likely to be highly desirable for most readers of this handbook. It is essential that the engagement process is adequately planned to help identify risks and to ensure that basic practical logistics are adequately dealt with, allowing the engagement practitioner mental and physical space to conduct the engagement an efficient and professional manner.

Planning considerations

The simplest way to attack the planning of engagement processes is to break the planning down into two categories, context and structure. Table 3 details a list of the likely considerations that may arise under each category as described by Elliot et al. 2005, p.19 [27].

Table 3: Planning for engagement: context and process considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• the purpose and topic of the project</td>
<td>• identification and recruitment of the participants (see Section 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the geographic scope and focus</td>
<td>• preparation of any introductory material (see Section 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the legislative and jurisdictional contexts</td>
<td>• promotion of the engagement event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the timeframe and process for decisions</td>
<td>• implementation of the engagement event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• funding</td>
<td>• evaluation (see Section 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• influential cultural, political and institutional considerations</td>
<td>• final report printing and distribution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elliot et al. 2005, p.19 [27]

Context of the engagement process

Aims and objectives

The first step in any engagement process is to clearly determine and articulate the aims and objectives of the process. Clarity and acceptance of the aims and objectives is important as they will drive every decision made from this point forward [27]. Changes in aims or objectives during the engagement process can significantly affect the process outcomes, social acceptability and overall effectiveness.

In some engagement processes, community participants may be involved in setting the engagement aims and objectives. These more collaborative processes may take longer than internal processes but can reap substantial gains in terms of the social acceptance of decisions made, social networks developed and relationships built. Most CE undertaken at the operational level of forest management does not involve participants in the setting of engagement aims and objectives, however, it is still important to specify why the engagement is occurring (e.g. to advise them of upcoming operations, to provide an opportunity for them to express concerns).
Geographic scope and focus

Many CE processes conducted by forest managers are limited in scope – for example, they may simply be working with their neighbours on a one-on-one basis. Sometimes it is necessary to widen the scope and consider the inclusion of other people, whether impacted, interested or influential. In such circumstances, it is important to consider factors such as the topic or focus of the engagement process and the prevailing political decision-making powers surrounding the topic (e.g. regulations and governing authorities, community interest groups, media interest, company policies and procedures).

It is also important to consider and be practical about the resources available for the CE process and the associated resulting limitations of the process.

Legislative and jurisdictional contexts

CE is about the sharing of knowledge and, where relevant, the sharing of decision-making power. Often the sharing of decision-making power is limited due to the constraints imposed by existing legislation and regulations. While forest managers are typically well informed of relevant regulations and compliance measures, community participants may not be. It is therefore necessary to adequately plan and document CE processes around a realistic understanding of how much power participants will have to affect plantation management given the constraints imposed by existing legislation and regulation.

Funding and social speculation

Most CE processes conducted within forest management are funded internally, although some larger scale processes may receive some external funding. The funding of any form of public activity (including research such as that used to produce this handbook) results in public speculation regarding the ‘real’ purpose and ‘hidden’ agendas of the practitioner [27]. Concerns about the influence of funding sources on a CE process may have a negative influence, due to stakeholder hesitancy to participate in what they believe may be a biased process that lacks opportunity for genuine participation. This negative outlook can be reduced by ensuring that all decision-making processes are transparent, well documented and publicly available.

Cultural and political institutions

Every community has its own cultural and political context that must be considered when planning the CE process. It is important to fully understand the community (see Section 6) so that the engagement process includes the relevant institutions and is not (consciously or unconsciously) culturally insensitive.
The basic steps of community engagement

The implementation process of any given engagement activity is dependent on its purpose, the context, regulatory requirements and individual CE practitioner preferences. The flow chart depicting basic steps of CE given in Figure 1 on page 29 provides a useful guide to the design and implementation of CE, with further information regarding these steps given in Section 6: Designing the CE process.

It is important to recognise that the steps illustrated in Figure 1 are idealistic, providing a basic guide only. Many CE processes conducted within plantation management would not necessitate detailed analysis at each step; some steps are intrinsic, where following basic common sense is adequate. By outlining the steps we hope to encourage a greater understanding of the processes entailed in the design and implementation of CE, making explicit steps that many experienced plantation managers do naturally and sometimes subconsciously.

Using external facilitators or moderators

Much of the CE that is undertaken by forest managers involves one-on-one, personal interactions, or a small group around the kitchen table. In those situations, an external facilitator is rarely required, with the plantation manager and community members present usually able to develop a mutual relationship based on the sharing of ideas and knowledge.

In larger scale CE processes, however, it may be necessary to enlist the help of a professional facilitator either to undertake the activity wholly, in conjunction with the forest managers, or to provide expert assistance in the planning and design of the process. External facilitators are particularly useful in situations where there is distrust, intimidation or high emotion, as they provide an independent voice in the discussions and typically have no stake in the outcomes [2]. By providing focus and clarity and promoting meaningful participation, facilitators can assist credibility, transparency and in some situations, efficiencies in decision-making.
### Figure 1: The basic steps of community engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Create a project team</td>
<td>The project team may be a single practitioner, or a group of forest managers that bring different skill sets to the team. It may even include a professional facilitator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Define the purpose and goals</td>
<td>The purpose and goals of the process will determine the focus of the rest of the process and are therefore critical. Ensure they are realistic, well accepted and relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Determine likely available resources</td>
<td>It is important to be realistic about available resources including money, time and skills. Otherwise too complicated an engagement process can be designed, creating expectations that end up being unmet and resulting in disillusionment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Determine the scope and focus</td>
<td>The scope is the extent of inclusion that may be geographic, or may be based on impact or decision-making influence. The focus is the discrete issue, or combination of issues and concerns to be discussed (i.e. a particular road).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Understand the legal, jurisdictional and social contexts</td>
<td>Understanding the sociopolitical context in which you are operating helps to keep the CE process realistic. It is important to be mindful of social contexts – including existing social and power relations, history and cultural characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Determine relevant stakeholders</td>
<td>Identifying the relevant stakeholders is interlinked with the aims and objectives, scope and focus, and the socio-political-cultural context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Understand the time frame and decision-making process</td>
<td>Understanding and setting time frames and deciding on decision-making processes require a reflection on the decisions made previously, goals, scope, context, and stakeholders. This is an important step as it guides the design processes, restricting some methods due to practical realities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Design the CE process</td>
<td>Designing the CE process includes considerations of all of the previously made decisions to ensure a realistic, efficient and affordable process that achieves the goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Obtain the required resources</td>
<td>While previously considered, this step ensures that the appropriate resources are available for the CE process designed and, if required, further resources located.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Recruit relevant stakeholders</td>
<td>This is the time to recruit the participants, reaffirm previous contacts that may have been made at Step 6, ensure that stakeholders are happy to participate now that the process, time frame and decision-making processes have been determined. Some stakeholders may have been involved from the beginning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Promote and implement the planned CE process</td>
<td>For larger CE processes promotion through the media may be required to ensure participation (linked to Step 10). The CE processes is then conducted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Evaluate the process and results</td>
<td>Evaluation is necessary to promote continual improvements in all facets of CE planning, design and implementation – it can highlight limitations with process, representation etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Write report and disseminate</td>
<td>Outcomes of the process need to be appropriately disseminated to the relevant audience(s).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Elliot et al. 2005, p.19 [27]
Practical logistics

The necessary logistics depend on the CE design and methods to be used. However, it is important to make a few broad logistical considerations when planning, designing and implementing any CE process. These include considerations around dates, time of day, locations and the materials and technical equipment to be used, as comprehensively listed by Elliot et al. (2005, pp. 23–24) [27]. The logistical planning issues described below apply mostly to planning public meetings or other gatherings, but are also relevant to scheduling one-to-one meetings.

Time and date

- Consider other community activities that may be occurring such as fairs, arts festivals, school sports carnivals, etc. Try to avoid conflicts with community events to ensure that people have every opportunity to attend.
- Avoid holidays, including statutory, regional and school holidays.
- Weekdays are generally better than weekend sessions, although this depends on the community and topic at hand.
- People have busy lives that can often be difficult to work around. It is important to acknowledge that while night meetings suit many people, they are difficult for others such as those with young families, the elderly, etc. It is useful to provide alternative opportunities for involvement. This helps ensure that participation is representative of the diverse socio-cultural characteristics within any given community.

Location

- Consider the size of the meeting room. Too large an area can reduce participation as there is little atmosphere, while too small a space can become uncomfortable. The facility should provide a comfortable atmosphere, in which the participants can feel at ease.
- A flexible space, perhaps with extra breakout rooms, is advantageous if workshop-oriented CE techniques are planned.
- The facility should be centrally located and easily accessible.
- The facility should be neutral in all senses. Holding a public meeting in the company’s boardroom, for example, would not be suitable.
- The facility should have the appropriate furniture (table, chairs, etc.); conveniently located electrical outlets for lights and computers and Internet connections (if needed). Restrooms should be clean and tidy and heating or cooling appropriate to local conditions.
- If an onlooker audience is expected, there must be room and chairs for them. Consider whether microphones and speakers are required.
Materials and supplies

Materials that are commonly required or useful at participatory events include:

- butchers’ paper, flipcharts or a whiteboard
- tape, thumbtacks or Blu-tac to attach paper to walls (be sure you have the venue owner’s permission!)
- colour markers (check that they are not indelible or permanent)
- pens, pencils, paper, sticky notes
- tracing paper – for quick sketches, overlays
- computer/word processor and overhead projector
- a printer so that you can print summaries or take-home notes
- projector screen
- microphone and speakers
- telephone (especially if there is to be anyone participating by teleconference)
- video camera or audio recorder and tapes
- camera (but have permission from participants before you record or take pictures).

It is often useful to photograph the worksheets and whiteboards for easy data storage purposes.

Evaluation of community engagement processes

An integral component of CE that is often forgotten or neglected by operational practitioners is the evaluation of the CE process and its outcomes. Evaluation of engagement processes helps to facilitate learning through the examination and critique of both successful and unsuccessful processes [41, 60]. Information generated from an evaluation process is useful in informing future CE processes and improving practices to assist both industry practitioners and participating community members.

Evaluation of CE processes should not be left until the process is finalised. It is more effective to incorporate evaluation activities throughout the process to ensure that currently utilised techniques, information and participants are adequate for the purposes of the task and to determine whether a change is required to ensure a positive outcome [41, 60].

The proactive approach to the evaluation of CE processes not only promotes continual learning [47], but can also help to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the process through adaptive management. In addition, the strong commitment to evaluation can promote transparency within the engagement, thus improving the perceived legitimacy of both the process and its operational outcomes [41].

Evaluation of CE is discussed in further detail in Section 9, including a sample of suitable evaluation techniques and reporting considerations.
The importance of information and knowledge

Information is integral to any form of communication process. However, information should not be considered as basic facts or glossy brochures to be given to participants so that they are better ‘educated’ regarding forest management practices. In line with the principles of engagement, information should be designed and delivered in a manner that encourages inclusivity, open debate and mutual learning opportunities.

It is important to understand what we mean by information and knowledge, Hall (2001)[36] provides a useful summary:

- Information is data that has been given meaning – data that is understood by the individual.
- Knowledge is more complex than information; knowledge is information that has been validated by an individual’s personal experience, values and beliefs. Therefore knowledge applies meaning to information that is highly influenced by the individual.

Understanding knowledge is very important in CE. The knowledge that people share provides an insight into their values and beliefs. A greater understanding of who is participating in CE processes allows CE practitioners to better design and target information through explicit measures that help overcome issues of knowledge development and information credibility.

True communication is not about sharing knowledge, but about sharing meaning and achieving common understanding [23].

Types of knowledge

Knowledge is often categorised into knowledge types, which can be useful considerations for CE. Common knowledge types include local knowledge and expert knowledge. People may experience conflict and mistrust between such knowledge types with local knowledge often portrayed as simplistic or gossip and expert knowledge as idealistic and jargon [4].

Regardless of the conflict, each form of knowledge must be respected within CE processes in order to achieve effective CE. Rejection of individual knowledge types through lack of representation, lack of consideration or blatant disregard of knowledge legitimacy can contribute to the lack of social acceptance of the CE process and its outcomes.
Guidelines for effective community engagement

Theory box 2: Knowledge formulation

The process of converting information into knowledge is often overlooked by communication practitioners who are typically focused on information content rather than community engagement. As Jamieson [40] succinctly states ‘it is not the information itself that leads to understanding; scientific facts do not speak for themselves, they must be appreciated and interpreted’. The question is, therefore, how do we appreciate and interpret information, thus transform it into knowledge?

Hall [36] describes knowledge formulation as being a cumulatively staged development process, where we begin with simple stages and move to more complex stages as our capacity to understand, know and learn improves. Therefore, knowledge, being validated information, varies among individuals depending on the context and the individual’s stage of knowledge development.

Hall [36] describes four stages of knowledge development:

- **knowledge as data** – limited context and values, transactional-styled communication
- **knowledge as information** – information is put into a meaningful context
- **knowledge as understanding** – personal values and insight tailor information to meet individual needs
- **knowledge as wisdom** – values, insight and relationships use knowledge at a more global level.

The principles of community engagement place emphasis on mutual learning and the sharing of knowledge, but which level of knowledge should CE practitioners be aiming to share? CE practitioners should not be simply providing data or information, but should facilitate participants’ understanding of various forms of information, through the sharing of values, insights and interpretations.

It is therefore important for CE practitioners to consider the likely development stage(s) of participants within the given context. This can allow the information provided and the engagement processes used to be targeted accordingly, thus increasing the chances of effective outcomes.

Issues of information trust and legitimacy

Information is often highly contested; perceptions of the information and the information providers influence the acceptability of CE outcomes [10, 53]. Factors that may influence the perception of information include the following [10, 53]:

- **Sociopolitical context** – information pertaining to politically or locally contentious operations are likely to be more highly scrutinised than those viewed as more acceptable by the local community (e.g. the use of 1080 poison is often more contentious than a shooting-based game control regime).
- **Individual values and beliefs** – operations that may impact on highly valued social assets or are believed to be high risk or morally/scientifically wrong are likely to be highly scrutinised and alternative information sources sought.
- **Perceptions of information accuracy** – information that is publicly or scientifically contested may not be considered legitimate.
- **Authorship and origins of information** – these may impact on perceptions of information legitimacy. Information derived from independent sources is often sought, although not always available.
- **Transparency of information** – information needs to be transparent with references provided where relevant, alternatives discussed and assumptions clearly defined.

These factors need to be considered carefully by information providers to ensure that their information is given the best possible chance of being accepted by community participants.
Information delivery

The delivery of information is crucial, ensuring that every available opportunity is given to encourage knowledge development and understanding. The information provided has to be communicated in a way that best suits the audience, the information content, and with the source accepted as legitimate by the readers [53]. Further, the information needs to be designed to be widely accessible to suit the range of participants as well as matching the context of the engagement process. For example, sometimes glossy brochures may not be appropriate.

Due to the diverse nature of society, information needs to be suited to multiple stages of knowledge formulation (see Theory box 2). Information may need to be distributed in different ways, or basic information supplemented with additional sources that provide further detail.

The content and forms of information need to be carefully tailored to the literacy levels of the target audience and their access to technology in terms of both logistics and skill capacity. Many forest management companies place a large amount of information on their websites; however, this information is irrelevant to those sections of the community who do not have easy access to the internet, or who do not feel comfortable using it.

Important characteristics of information include [16, 38]:

- **content** – unbiased, relevant, adequate depth and detail
- **language** – open and accessible, free of technical jargon
- **authorship** – full disclosure of author’s names and affiliations
- **transparency of funding** – full disclosure of funding sources
- **transparency of process** – full disclosure of methods used to collate data
- **sources** – clear explanation of sources of information and where and how people can access original scientific reports on which your information is based
- **additional contacts** – information on who to contact regarding further information
- **additional information** – advice on alternative sources of information (e.g. websites, readily accessible articles)
- **production quality** – ensure printed information is well prepared to show respect for the individual and the engagement process. Avoid overly produced brochures or fact sheets that may be often inappropriate for personal CE approaches as they can be perceived as lacking sincerity and perceived as ‘spin’.
5. Conflict resolution

What is in this section?
- recognising early signs of conflict
- analysing underlying causes of conflict
- conflict resolution approaches

Key points
- Be alert to early signs of conflict and act on them before any escalation of conflict occurs.
- Always analyse the issues that are driving conflict as they may go well beyond the surface topics involved.
- Understand the underlying interests of the people involved and find solutions that meet them, rather than dealing with the surface issues of a conflict.
- Understand the varying emotional, procedural and outcome needs that different participants in a conflict have, and design responses that meet their different needs.
- Carefully consider whether an independent mediator is needed to assist discussions in a conflict situation – as a participant in the conflict, you may not be the best person to deal with the situation.
Community engagement (CE) is often used as a way of preventing conflict relating to the management of plantations. Ideally, the use of CE can identify and resolve issues before they escalate into conflict. However, in the field this ideal is not always achieved. What should you do if conflict has already arisen about the issues that need to be discussed? Can CE be effective in these circumstances and what can you do to respond to a conflict situation?

Conflict resolution techniques can be used either in combination with a CE process or separately. This section explores options for responding to conflict, as well as avoiding provoking or exacerbating conflict. It encourages the use of multiple steps when planning response to conflict. First, it is important to recognise when conflict is occurring, something we don’t always do in the early stages of an unproductive disagreement. It is very easy to ignore early signs and inadvertently allow conflict to escalate into a more serious situation. Second, it is essential to analyse what is likely to be causing the conflict, to look beyond the surface issues being raised. These steps can help identify suitable approaches to address conflict in a given situation, such as setting realistic goals and identifying the necessary tools and techniques that can transform unproductive and escalating disagreement into productive discussions.

CE is commonly used by forestry companies as a way of preventing conflict and of addressing conflict when it has occurred. As the use of CE is the focus of this handbook, this section focuses on conflict resolution techniques that can be considered in addition to the general CE techniques discussed elsewhere in the handbook.

It is important to recognise that forest managers, or any individuals, will not be able to overcome all conflict. As discussed throughout this section, some conflict situations will require additional support and resources, while others are more intractable. In many cases, engaging an independent person to assist in mediating conflict may be the best option.

**Step 1: Recognising when conflict is occurring**

What do we mean by ‘conflict’? Many people assume that conflict only occurs when there is litigation, violence, or threats and direct arguments between people. A conflict may be these things, but can also be more subtle. A conflict is any form of disagreement or clash of views that has unproductive outcomes. It may be active, where people are expressing their differing points of view and making others aware of them; or latent, where people have differing and clashing views but are not openly discussing or acting on them.

CE aims to provide a safe and effective mechanism for identifying latent conflict, enabling it to be expressed and acted upon before it develops into unproductive conflict. However, prior active conflict often creates challenges for the implementation of effective CE.

Active conflict may be expressed in many ways, not all commonly recognised as ‘conflict’. Forest managers need to be aware of the early signs of conflict that may include the expression of dissatisfaction or concerns about plantation management and clashes of opinions or views. It is tempting to dismiss these early concerns as ‘nothing serious’, but that is how most serious conflicts begin. Taking the concerns raised by stakeholders seriously and treating them with respect ensures you don’t inflame or escalate conflict by

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1 The material in this section draws largely on Schirmer (2006), a study examining what approaches have been successful and unsuccessful in addressing conflict over plantation management in Australia and Ireland.
making stakeholders feel ignored, disrespected or patronised. It is best to act on those concerns immediately, rather than waiting until they escalate into arguments, threats, or the implementation of legal action, letters to the media or other conflict behaviours.

A key challenge to recognising the early signs of conflict is that those who have concerns about plantation management may not raise them directly with a plantation manager. Instead, they are likely to talk about their concerns with neighbours, local government, or family and friends. This is often because they do not feel secure in approaching forest managers directly with their concerns. Ensuring that you are visible in the community, that people know how to contact you with any concerns and giving a sense of being available and willing to listen is essential when potential conflict situations are identified in their early stages (see the case study on informal community conversations, page 88).

Key techniques for ensuring that the community can easily contact you include:

- ensuring that you have met the neighbouring landholders of any operation face-to-face and they have sufficient contact information to be able to reach you
- meeting other key stakeholders, or at least letting them know how to contact you
- providing early notification of planned plantation management activities
- using CE to build positive relationships so stakeholders feel confident to come to you with any concerns.

More formal processes may also be necessary. Some forestry companies have established formal grievance procedures that include a formal process to be followed when conflict arises, involving notifying others within the business of the conflict and clear criteria for when mediation or other conflict resolution processes should be entered into [69]. Formal grievance processes may be required by law, by governance mechanisms (e.g. certification standards), or implemented voluntarily by forest management organisations.

Formal procedures, especially where they include some guarantee of the independent assessment of concerns, can improve stakeholder confidence that they will be heard and acted on appropriately. They therefore increase the likelihood that a stakeholder will discuss their concerns directly with the organisation, instead of through third parties such as local government.

**Step 2: Analysing the causes of conflict**

Once you have identified a situation in which conflict is likely to emerge or is already active, the next step is to analyse the conflict to better understand the issues involved. This involves analysing the underlying ‘interests’ in the conflict, which may differ substantially to the surface issues. Identifying the key interests is essential as it highlights those that must be addressed for each party involved in the conflict to consider the matter resolved.

Key interests can be diverse and complex. For example, a plantation company may purchase a property with the intention of planting trees. A neighbouring landholder objects to the purchase, arguing that the company should not be permitted to establish trees on land that could be used for traditional agriculture. In addition, he believes the trees will use a lot of water and reduce runoff onto his property. The plantation company disagrees, arguing that the plantation will be just another agricultural land use and that the available science does not support the landholder’s arguments about water use.
This is a typical example of initial conflict over plantation establishment. It may escalate, in some cases to the point of legal action or to illegal acts, such as seedlings being uprooted after being planted. Or it may be resolved by identifying the underlying causes of conflict and attempting to address them.

The underlying causes of conflict may include:

- competition over scarce resources such as land suited to specific agricultural purposes
- differences in values and worldviews between different individuals and groups, such as the purposes for which rural land should be used
- a failure to recognise or acknowledge the existence of differing values pertaining to a resource
- rapid social and/or land use change that leads to change in who lives in a region and the activities they undertake
- uncertainty in decision-making processes relating to natural resources, such as a lack of knowledge about the various factors contributing to a change in the availability of a resource such as water
- complexity in decision-making relating to natural resources, such as when the impact of an activity is highly complex.

In the case of conflict over plantations, any or all of these causes may contribute to a given conflict. Some argue that conflict regarding plantations is a symptom of broader conflict associated with rapid land use change in a given region; misperceptions about the social and environmental impact of plantations; or competition for agricultural land. Others believe conflict is a result of institutional failure and that such conflict could be reduced by improved regulation, governance and better process. Some have argued that the entire plantation establishment structure needs to change in order to end conflict, shifting from large-scale ‘wall-to-wall’ forest management to small-scale farm forestry management systems, while others argue this is an unrealistic idea [56].

In the example given previously in which a neighbouring landholder objects to establishment of a plantation, analysis of the underlying interests revealed that the neighbouring landholder needed to expand his farm enterprise in order to remain viable and had hoped to purchase the land bought by the plantation company. The key issues for him were whether he could access the scarce resources of land and water and differences in views about the complex scientific evidence that exists on issues such as plantation water use and its impact on regional water availability.

Solutions to the conflict need to address these underlying causes. This might be achieved through land management negotiations, including land swap or lease arrangements. This gives the neighbour access to key land parcels that assists them in maintaining the viability of their farm enterprise, while the plantation company accesses land suitable for tree growing less desirable by the neighbouring farmer. Or, the landholder may negotiate a stock agistment arrangement, benefiting both parties in terms of access to feed and reducing weed infestation and fire risk. Solutions to conflict may also require discussions about the scientific evidence on water use to develop an understanding about which information sources are trusted by each stakeholder and why and negotiation about what information can be used to resolve this issue.
In some cases, you may identify that the causes of conflict are ones that cannot be resolved at an operational level. For example, Schirmer [56] identified cases where conflict regarding plantation harvesting and road damage was ultimately part of larger social concerns over the perceived lack of funding for the repair of local roads. These concerns could not be readily resolved at an operational level; instead, they required negotiations at the state and federal government level to address the lack of funding.

In many regions it has been argued that concerns over the expansion of plantation estate on agricultural land are a symptom of the broader processes of agricultural sector restructuring. Rural restructuring has led to social and economic changes such as farm amalgamation and rural population decline in many rural areas in Australia. In some of these regions, there has been change in land use to plantations and this is argued to be at least partly a response to rural restructuring [3, 63, 65, 66]. Resentment relating to these overarching changes can be directed towards the new land use (plantations) that is expanding as a consequence of the broader processes of agricultural restructuring. This type of issue is difficult to respond to at an operational level as it involves broader social and economic change typically out of the control of those involved in the establishment and management of plantations.

Whether the issue is one of road funding or of major rural restructuring, it is important to identify the extent to which any of the people or groups involved in a conflict have the ability to act on the underlying concerns that are driving conflict. Where broader issues are involved, there is a need for realism about the capacity of those involved in the conflict to achieve change. Trying to resolve a conflict at the local level when the underlying issues are ones that need to be acted on at a larger scale can result in an escalation of the conflict as those involved become frustrated at their lack of success in addressing the issues at hand. A more effective response is to try to achieve agreement among all parties to the conflict about what the broader issues are and identify the additional resources needed to successfully address these.
Step 3: Responding to conflict

Plantation forest managers have tended to use a range of responses to conflict situations, including denying or ignoring that conflict exists, implementing CE, taking legal action, disseminating scientific information and making a range of changes to how plantations are established, regulated, or otherwise managed [56, 69]. Some of these are effective and others are not.

While denying the existence or validity of conflict is tempting, the dismissal of concerns raised about plantations as misinformed or mistaken almost inevitably leads to the escalation of conflict. It is important to think of conflict as something that has an important social function, although it needs to be managed in a positive way. People need to be able to express their concerns and negative feelings; the challenge is to find ways of doing this that do not take destructive paths and instead lead to constructive outcomes.

Similarly, adversarial responses to conflict, such as taking matters to court, may provide an outcome where one party wins and one loses. However, they will rarely solve the underlying issues. While they can provide a binding decision on an issue, they rarely result in improved relations between the people involved and further issues and conflict will likely arise.

It is imperative to try to achieve a cooperative response to conflict in which all those involved attempt to resolve the issues amicably, before any resort to adversarial solutions such as court action. Cooperative responses are based around the idea of encouraging positive communication between the people involved in a conflict, focused on ‘reframing’ the issues involved. Reframing, or problem-solving, encourages the different parties to share their views, interests, values and priorities, in order to build a new, shared understanding of the issue [42]. This leads to the likelihood of new and innovative solutions to the conflict being developed [43]. Reframing typically involves:

- breaking down the surface issues of the conflict to uncover the underlying issues and interests
- face-to-face interaction of the parties involved in the conflict to promote the building of trust and honest communication
- using a facilitator to assist the process
- analytical interactions where participants aim to generate alternative options to meet the interests of different parties without unduly disadvantaging any party.

For problem-solving to be successful, a range of alternative solutions to issues involved in the conflict needs to be identified, the pros and cons of different alternatives need to be adequately explored and the eventual ‘solution’ needs to include a detailed proposal agreeing how it will be implemented [26].

When considering how to respond to conflict, you first need to consider how serious the situation is and whether you are best placed to attempt to resolve it. In some circumstances, you should call in an independent mediator or facilitator to help resolve problems, as you may be too embedded in the conflict to successfully achieve positive change. To help you decide this, you need to consider the extent to which the conflict has escalated. Donohue and Kolt [26] provide a useful categorisation of conflict escalation:

- **level 1**: no conflict
- **level 2**: latent conflict in which at least one person perceives a conflict but takes no action
• **level 3**: problems to solve; participants remain focused on problems
• **level 4**: dispute; participants go beyond the issues to become overtly antagonistic, but continue communicating
• **level 5**: conflict in which antagonism has reached a point of communication breakdown
• **level 6**: fight or flight; parties decide to actively fight (verbally or physically) or to escape the situation
• **level 7**: intractable, where the conflict itself becomes subsumed into the needs and values of those involved.

Conflicts do not necessarily move uni-directionally through these stages [43]. When a conflict has reached level 5 or above, forest managers should consider bringing in external help in the form of a mediator or other trusted person to assist. Even at level 4, the assistance of professional help may bring about a more rapid positive outcome and will reduce the likelihood of the conflict escalating.

The independent mediator or facilitator needs to be someone agreed to by all parties. They may be someone who is trained in conflict resolution, or someone who is trusted to be impartial. All parties need to agree on the role the independent person will play: are they going to be a mediator who facilitates discussions but takes no part in making final decisions, or an arbitrator who is given the power to make a final decision by those involved in the conflict? It can be useful to make a written agreement about the role that is agreed to and to have it signed by all before the independent person is brought in.

If an independent facilitator or mediator is not used, it is important to consider some strategies for successfully responding to conflict. How will the engagement practitioners respond to various conflict dynamics, including the interests of each party; relationships between the parties; and clashes of values, external issues that are affecting the conflict and conflict about data validity? These are discussed next.

### Dealing with interests

Many guidebooks on conflict resolution advocate shifting conflict negotiations to focus on identifying the underlying interests of each party; in other words, the real issues they need to have addressed and preferably resolved. It is helpful to think of three types of interests that often need to be satisfied in order to resolve a conflict: 2

- **Result (substantive) interests**: What outcomes do each party want to achieve? For example: a commercially-viable plantation, to maintain and expand a farming property or to maintain a particular scenic vantage point in a rural landscape.
- **Process (procedural) interests**: How do different parties perceive the process used to achieve a result? What are preferred processes? Before trying to resolve substantive interests, you often need to negotiate and agree on the process that will be used to address the conflict.

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2 This model of types of interest, and subsequent discussion of data conflict and relationships, are largely based on the conflict resolution models proposed by Gary Furlong [33].
• **Emotional (psychological) interests**: What are the emotional goals of each party? These might be to win at any cost, wanting to be heard, wanting to achieve status, wanting to be appreciated by others, wanting to feel self-worth, wanting an apology, or many others. These emotional needs often need to be addressed before process and result interests can be achieved. Often this requires emotions to be communicated, acknowledged and for the stakeholder to know they have been heard and validated. This is often the most challenging part of addressing a conflict in which you and others may feel your knowledge and views have been belittled or ignored.

If you are having difficulties in successfully addressing the substantive issues of the conflict, or emotional challenges are getting in the way of achieving an outcome, a useful strategy can be to agree on a process that will be used to break the impasse of negotiations. For example, you may agree to let an independent arbitrator make a binding decision about the substantive issues of the conflict. Where participants cannot agree on a process to use, sharing how the conflict is affecting each person emotionally (for example, by contributing to high stress levels) can assist in encouraging parties to find new solutions and see that it is worthwhile to continue to try to find an outcome that can reduce the emotional burden of conflict.

**Dealing with relationships**

Conflict, by definition, involves negative interactions. A conflict that has gone on for some time will often result in increasingly hostile relationships, with those involved in the conflict stereotyping each other, poor communication leading to further conflict and repeated negative behaviours. When those involved in a conflict have been rude, denigrating or patronising to each other, the biggest issue in attempting to resolve the conflict can be getting past the problems in personal relationships.

To move beyond the accumulated history of negative experiences already occurring in a conflict, forest managers need to focus on finding out what would help each party change their view of the other party and to commit to making those changes. The identification of small actions that can help build trust and start changing people’s perceptions of each other may assist in building positive interactions. Shifting the conflict to focus on interests instead of relationships can also assist. This said, changing relationships that are often hostile or difficult is easier said than done. Patience is needed, as is the ability to set realistic objectives; for example, aiming to achieve a reduction in hostility rather than to become friends.

**Dealing with clashes of values**

Some conflicts are about differences in the core values people hold, about what is right and wrong, just and unjust. These are often ‘wicked’ conflicts, extremely hard to resolve as they involve the things that people hold most valuable and are least likely to change. Dealing with clashes in values requires the parties involved in a conflict to share and discuss their values and try to identify any common values. It can help to ‘agree to disagree’ about those values that are incompatible and shift discussions to interests where possible.
Dealing with external issues

It is important to be realistic about the extent to which conflict that is driven by external issues can be resolved. The best course of action is to try to reach agreement about the underlying issues among the local stakeholders involved, clarifying who can influence decision-making surrounding the issues of concern and what strategies are needed to achieve a positive outcome.

Consideration needs to be given to what can be achieved at a local level. A common problem in plantation management conflict is that stakeholders may assume plantation managers are able to make sweeping changes – for example, to take actions not allowed by current regulations, or to make changes that would render the plantation commercially unviable. Plantation managers can also make these types of assumptions about other stakeholders. In these situations, trying to find alternative solutions often requires first holding discussions in which all stakeholders come to understand the limitations of the actions each is able to take.

Example

As an example, in one plantation-related conflict studied by Schirmer [56], stakeholders who had been in conflict about the impacts of plantation harvesting traffic on local roads jointly agreed to lobby government for additional road funding. They had identified that unless they sought assistance externally they would not be able to resolve the problems at the local level. This required local stakeholders first accepting that forest management organisations could not provide the funding needed within their limited resources. While this did not resolve all the issues, as they did not achieve all the funding desired, it did enable improved relations between stakeholders at the local level, who could then act together to try to find a solution instead of being in conflict with each other.

Dealing with data conflicts

It is sometimes tempting to assume that conflict over issues such as pesticide use, water use, or the biodiversity impacts of plantations can be easily resolved by presenting the ‘correct’ scientific data. This assumption is based on the belief that some people’s views are misinformed or wrong and that they can be corrected with the ‘right’ information or data. The reality is that presenting scientific data to argue you are ‘right’ will not resolve issues unless that information is considered valid and trustworthy by the other people involved in the conflict.

Conflicting views about the validity or trustworthiness of data are common in conflicts in the forest sector, with scientific data often contested as part of the conflict. ‘Data conflict’ may result from a lack of available information – for example, a neighbour may raise concerns about the impacts of a proposed plantation on water flow on their property and there may be a lack of hydrological information for the region to use to examine this aspect.

The trustworthiness of data is often questioned, particularly where it was collected using funding provided by a stakeholder with a particular interest in the outcomes.
Ideally, data conflicts should be addressed by all stakeholders involved in a conflict by jointly assessing the available data, coming to an agreement on what data they all trust and developing an agreed, shared interpretation of its meaning. Gaps in available data can then be assessed and new data collected.

In reality, there may often be limited or no resources available to gather new information at an operational level. This means that it is often necessary to make the best of existing data, working to build a shared understanding of its validity, meaning and implications. Open discussions regarding the pros and cons of available scientific data can ensure that it aids discussions, instead of being used to inflame conflict with claims of superior credibility.

Resolving situations that have headed into conflict is difficult. Remember above all to set realistic expectations. You may not be able to resolve all issues. If you can resolve some of the concerns raised as part of a conflict, or achieve some improvement in relationships with people involved in a conflict, this will reduce the intensity of the conflict and reduce the likelihood of the conflict escalating.
Designing the community engagement process

Key points

• The goals and objectives of the community engagement process drive the process, and determine the stakeholders, decision-making processes, and the tools and techniques to be utilised.

• Knowing your community early in the process is important as it influences the community engagement design.

• The level of community engagement relates to the amount of decision-making power to be shared with engagement participants. Community engagement processes do not always have to share decision-making power.

• There is no right tool for engagement, usually a mix of tools and techniques is used to suit the context, the stakeholders and the engagement purpose.

• Ground rules are important in any engagement process, guiding the behaviour of participants to encourage respect and reciprocity.

What is in this section?

• determining the community engagement goals and objectives
• knowing your community
• choosing the level of community engagement
• choosing the engagement tools and techniques
• establishing ground rules
A successful community engagement (CE) process depends on many characteristics including the timing of the process, the receptiveness of participants, the transparency of the decision-making procedure and the tools and techniques used within the process. It is important to actively design the CE process, regardless of how simple you may think the process should be.

There is not necessarily a set procedure to be followed when designing CE processes. The process used will vary depending on the CE objectives and the time and resources available. However, it is often helpful to consider the following:

- the goals and objectives of the CE process
- the community you are attempting to engage
- the appropriate level of engagement
- the appropriate CE tools and techniques to use
- the ground rules of the CE process.

Having a strategic approach to the design and implementation of CE helps to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues and challenges facing forest managers, allowing a more proactive approach to CE, rather than a reactive approach aimed at conflict resolution. The flow chart shown in Figure 2 provides a useful overview of the sequence of events.

**Context and problem analysis**

The first step in the design of any engagement process is to consider and clarify the objectives of the process with all people involved. This is essential to ensure that the CE process suits the objectives and that resources are not wasted on inappropriate activities.

By identifying the purpose of the CE process, you can start to identify the key stakeholders to involve and the issues that may arise. Questions to consider include [2, p. 21]:

- Why do you need to conduct an engagement process?
- Who do you need to involve (and who would you like to involve)?
- What issues need to be discussed?
- What do you want to achieve from the engagement process?
- How will you know you are successful?

It is often useful to spend some time reviewing these questions, either by yourself or with colleagues and even with other stakeholders involved in the CE process. Writing down the responses and exploring your answers further through mind-mapping or brainstorming techniques (see page 48) helps you understand the process more fully, including likely limitations, constraints and resource requirements.

Prior understanding of management issues helps to promote responsive engagement processes. It is therefore important to take some time to understand the issues at hand, previous and current CE processes, constraints on the process and desired outcomes and the stakeholders to be involved. This includes understanding how the organisation currently manages such issues, as well as knowledge of existing policies and procedures and influencing regulations. Theory box 3 details the benefits of aligning CE objectives with existing business objectives.
While it is important to have clearly defined objectives for the scope of the engagement process, flexibility is also required. Often stakeholders will raise issues that are outside the scope of the current process – issues they may feel are more important to them. New issues should not be dismissed; instead, effort should be made to incorporate such issues into the current engagement process, or to develop an alternative process that will adequately deal with those issues.

**Figure 2:**
Flow diagram to highlight the CE process

| 1. Determine goals and objectives | • Why do you need to conduct CE?  
|                                  | • What do you hope to achieve from CE?  
|                                  | • What is the context of the issue you will discuss?  
|                                  | • What resources do you have available?  
|                                  | • How will you monitor and evaluate the CE process? |

| 2. Get to know your community | • Who are you going to invite to participate, and why?  
|                              | • Who won’t you invite to participate, and why?  
|                              | • What are the likely goals and objectives of your participants?  
|                              | • What history do you have with the participants?  
|                              | • What relationships exist among participants? |

| 3. Choose your CE technique | • Why do you need to conduct CE?  
|                            | • What do you hope to achieve from CE?  
|                            | • What level of CE is preferred (or required)?  
|                            | • What CE techniques best suit the participants’ skill levels?  
|                            | • What techniques are applicable given the available resources?  
|                            | • What needs to be completed to satisfy regulations?  
|                            | • What techniques will achieve the goals and objectives?  
|                            | • How will you measure whether you have achieved your goals and objectives? |

| 4. Implement the CE | • invite the participants  
|                     | • set ground rules  
|                     | • conduct the process  
|                     | • integrate monitoring and evaluation (see point 5) |

| 5. Evaluation and reporting | • decide at what points evaluation will occur  
|                            | • provide space within the CE process for changes as needed, based on results of monitoring and evaluation  
|                            | • design monitoring and evaluation methods, ensuring all points of view included  
|                            | • invite the participants  
|                            | • set ground rules  
|                            | • conduct the process  
|                            | • ensure results are reported back to participants |
Broader business objectives
Setting strategic CE objectives can help to develop a commitment to CE processes within the organisation, with effective CE processes typically being those that are relevant to and aligned with the organisation’s business strategy [2]. When setting CE objectives, it is important to consider the existing strategic objectives of the organisation, focusing on the implications that objectives have on stakeholder relationships, what are the drivers for engagement, and how engagement activities support existing business objectives and strategies.

A simple way to set strategic engagement objectives and incorporate them within ongoing management activities is to actively link them with business objectives. A list of sample objectives is provided by AccountAbility (2005) [2, p. 33]:

- “To manage the risks associated with...”
- “To develop a new approach to...”
- “To learn more about...”
- “To collaborate in addressing...”
- “To improve our relationship with...”
- “To find an agreement on...”
- “To develop our policy on...”
- “To inform our decision on...”

Issues material to long-term business success
It is useful to consider which CE issues have the potential to impact on the long-term success of the business. Important issues may include those where the organisation is perceived to have an impact on stakeholders, and where current management practices are not aligned with social expectations.

The following tests identified by AccountAbility (2005) help to recognise material issues [2, p. 35]:

- issues that have direct short-term financial impacts
- issues covered by agreed policy statements
- issues covered by peer-based norms
- issues deemed important by stakeholders
- issues covered by social norms (regulations, institutionalised standards etc.).

Analysing the maturity of the issue
The choice of which engagement technique to use is influenced by the ‘maturity’ of the issue and associated business risks and benefits, as described by AccountAbility (2005, pp 40–43)[2]. As illustrated in Table 4, the maturity of an issue can be classified into four levels, ranging from being a new or latent concern, an emerging issue, a consolidating issue or, at the other end of the scale, being an issue that has resulted in the institutionalisation of practices aimed at resolution of the issue.
Latent and emerging issues are common when conducting CE at the operational level, including issues relating to the individual impacts of operations on neighbours. Consolidating issues are also common, yet are often dealt with through corporate policy and procedures, such as the risk of water contamination by pesticides and resulting water sampling procedures. Institutionalised issues are often ignored, sometimes mistakenly thought to be ‘fixed’ even though a widely acceptable solution has not been found. An example of this might be the conversion of native forests to plantations in Tasmania. While several forest management organisations have ceased this practice, at the time of writing others continue to do so and there remains considerable concern about this in the wider community.

Knowing your community

A major benefit of CE is the development of relationships based on trust and mutual respect. In order for this to occur, plantation managers need to develop a connection with the community. Understanding community culture and history can help the plantation manager proactively identify likely concerns, expectations, existing conflicts, social networks and power structures, helping to make efficient and effective decisions.

It is important to have an understanding of the community early in the engagement process. Differences in community attitudes, expectations and capacities influence the appropriate levels of engagement and suitable CE techniques, highlighting the need to tailor individual CE processes to each community.

There are a number of processes a plantation manager can use to gain a better understanding of the community, including:

- reviewing and reflecting on previously collated information, including information known to colleagues or other people known to have engaged with the community
- community profiling to develop an understanding of demographics, employment, predominant land uses and so forth (detailed further on page 79)
- analysis of media reports to help identify likely issues, known ‘hot spots’, public perceptions and prominent community spokespersons
- analysis of active community interest groups to help determine likely issues and help ensure a balanced representation.

Stakeholder analysis and selection

Choosing the right people to participate in an engagement process can be simple (e.g. the neighbour), but in some cases it can be quite complicated. Issues around inclusivity, representation, power, responsibilities, impacted versus interested stakeholders, influential stakeholders and the sociopolitical environment, all interact to make the stakeholder selection process complex. Stakeholder analysis, especially when done thoroughly, can help to ensure that the CE process is not inadequate as a minimum, or derailed as a worst case scenario, through accidentally ‘missing’ a key stakeholder.

Because stakeholder analysis is a critical component of any CE process, a full description is provided in Section 7.
### Table 4: Overview of the four stages of issue maturity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of issue maturity</th>
<th>Issue description</th>
<th>Governance setting</th>
<th>Recommended response of a proactive company</th>
<th>Likely positive outcomes of response</th>
<th>Likely negative outcomes of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Latent                  | Minimal awareness of the issue  
Weak scientific or other hard evidence  
Largely ignored or dismissed by forest managers | No regulation or standards of practice | Develop an understanding of risks and opportunities through ongoing dialogue with stakeholders  
Use precautionary measures until further information is available | Highlights issues that may develop in the future  
Provides an insight into changing values and priorities  
Enables early dialogue that develops relationships | Effort may be spent on ‘one-off’ issues that do not evolve  
Unwillingness to acknowledge issue may result in negative perceptions and poor levels of trust |
| Emerging                | Political and media awareness of the issue  
Emerging but weak body of research  
Some experimentation with solutions | Public debate around business responsibilities | Work with stakeholders to develop and implement solutions | Forest management organisations can better focus solutions  
Increased information available | Increased public scrutiny and opportunities for ‘misinformation’  
Increased opportunities for negative perceptions of industry or individual forest management organisations |
| Consolidating           | Emerging body of business practices around the issue  
Sector-wide and issue-based voluntary initiatives are established  
There is litigation and an increasing recognition of the need for legislation  
Voluntary standards are developed and collective action occurs | Best practice approaches promoted and recognised  
Voluntary standards established  
Legislation proposed. Examples include ‘Good neighbour’ charters, forest certification | Work collaboratively within the industry and with interested stakeholders to develop best practice solutions | Increased attention to the issue strengthens solutions  
Opportunities for collaborative agreements help to develop trust and ongoing relationships with industry colleagues and with external interest groups  
Increased experimentation with solutions builds knowledge base | Negative perceptions associated with prior ‘errors’ can be hard to overcome, resulting in entrenched perceptions and difficult collaborative environments |
| Institutionalised       | Legislation or business norms are established  
The embedded practices become a normal part of a business-excellence model | Legislation and strong business norms established  
Examples include Forest Practices Code and forest certification | Formalise engagement processes where necessary to ensure compliance with commitments | Good information helps to develop solid solutions to issues  
Industry-wide solutions help to overcome social concerns | Non-compliance by some industry members negatively impacts on all industry members  
Derived solution may not stop the social debate entirely; hence ongoing monitoring and changes are required |

Adapted from AccountAbility (2005, pp. 41-42) [2]
Choosing an appropriate level of engagement

Public participation activities exist as a continuum, with the participating public having varying levels of decision-making control. Figure 3 shows the common CE activities undertaken within plantation forest management placed along the continuum.

When deciding on an appropriate engagement level it is important to ensure that the promised level of power sharing is realistic for the objectives of the CE process and for all the parties involved. Important questions to consider when choosing an engagement level include [17]:

- What are the objectives of the CE process?
- What resources do we have?
- What are our constraints (legal, resources, power sharing)?
- What information do we need?
- What community are we interested in involving, what do we know about them and what methods of participation will suit them best?

The ‘spectrum of public participation’ developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) [39] (Figure 4) is a useful continuum that describes engagement levels. The spectrum presents a simplification of the many levels of engagement that exist in practice, ranging from basic informing of the public, where people cannot influence decisions, to empowering processes where full decision-making power rests with the public. Each of the CE techniques presented in Section 8 includes identification of the potential level(s) of engagement achieved.

This, or any other spectrum of public participation, does not necessarily imply that greater public control over decision-making is better. Not every situation warrants high levels of decision-making control, nor may the public necessarily want it. While many people are interested in being informed, few are likely to commit the extensive resources required at the full decision-making power level of engagement [46]. Highly empowering CE processes are rarely conducted in Australia due to both the lack of capacity and interest in full decision-making control and the increasing private ownership of plantation forests. Hence, the community management form of engagement is shown in orange in the continuum of public participation in Figure 3.
### Figure 4: IAP2 spectrum of public participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increasing level of public impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inform</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public participation goal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promise to the public</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples of tools</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2007 International Association for Public Participation [39]
Information sharing

Information sharing is an essential component of every CE process. Information-sharing techniques aim to provide information that enables participants to build on their knowledge and understanding of the issues at hand. Used either proactively (for example, informing neighbours of upcoming fuel-reduction burning), or reactively (responding to complaints regarding excessive smoke pollution), information sharing, or informing, is typically a form of one-way communication.

General guidelines for information sharing include [16, 60]:

- Information should be written in a clear manner that is free of jargon and easy to understand.
- Information should be relevant to the purpose of the engagement process.
- Information should be delivered in a timely manner.
- Information should be delivered in a method suitable to the audience (reliance on internet access is not recommended).
- The sources of the information should be clearly identified, particularly when making claims about scientific evidence.
- Details should be provided about where additional information can be sourced.

Note that the provision of information to people does not guarantee their acceptance or adoption of it. As detailed in Section 4, information is viewed according to our prior knowledge and values and thus considerable effort may be required to ensure that information provided is interpreted in a way that promotes shared meaning. This may entail the use of other participatory processes such as involving, or collaboration.

Example:
Proactively informing neighbours of upcoming fuel-reduction burning, or reactively responding to complaints regarding excessive smoke pollution.

Consultation

Consultation is a form of two-way communication where the views of the interested, affected and influential community members are sought, enabling people to provide feedback on the information provided [16, 60]. Consultation can be an effective level of engagement, often allowing for the development of relationships through personal interactions. It is important that the level of decision-making control to be shared is expressed from the outset, helping to ensure that participants do not have unrealistic expectations about the extent of their influence. In consultation processes, the responsibility for final decision-making typically rests with the organisation, with participating members of the public having little or no say in final decisions, but providing their views to those who will make decisions [16].

Example:
A forest management organisation may be interested in people’s views on a new pest management system.
General guidelines for consultation processes are outlined in the Community Engagement Network introductory handbook (2005)[16, p. 33]:

- Consider whether there really is a need for consultation on the topic in question and that you are willing to listen and potentially change your approach on the basis of the findings.
- Ensure the engagement purpose and decision-making process (consultation) is clear in communications from the outset.
- Understand your stakeholders and how to reach them.
- Allow sufficient time for response.
- Ensure proper planning and coordination of the process to reduce the burden on stakeholders.
- Provide timely and relevant feedback and sincerely express your appreciation for the feedback.
- Provide evidence of the consideration of views in the decision-making outcome.

The provision of feedback and evidence of the influence of the consultation process in the decision-making is important, ensuring that participants understand the process and have a sense of ownership of the final decision [16]. For small individual processes this may seem excessive, however providing a letter thanking participants for their time and describing the resulting management outcomes is important to both build relationships and create trust.

For larger processes, such as those involving public submissions, it is important to be transparent in the decision-making process. For example, a forest management organisation may be interested in people’s views on a new pest management system. Due to the complexity of pest management and the diversity of people interested, when calling for public submissions it is important to provide sufficient time for people to develop a robust response (e.g. 60 days). Once submissions have been received and reviewed, the organisation should ensure that the decision-making process is detailed in a report (preferably publicly available) that highlights the concerns raised during the submission process and how they were dealt with, the range of alternatives presented and why the final pest management system was selected. Presentation at a public meeting can also help to disseminate the results of the submission process and clarify management decisions.

**Involving the public**

Involving processes typically encourage more participation from stakeholders as issues are discussed and alternatives developed; however, the final decision-making responsibility is still maintained by the organisation undertaking the engagement process [16]. Due to the considerable amount of input from stakeholders, it is very important to be clear about the final decision-making process so that participants do not become disillusioned due to unrealised expectations [16].

When involving people it is important to ensure that a broad representation of people is maintained throughout the CE processes. This may require consideration of likely impediments to ongoing involvement (cost, time of meetings, frequency of meetings) and consideration of the appropriate engagement processes that both suit the purpose of the process and the intended participants.
Many of the face-to-face meetings conducted by forest managers are involving processes. While the decision-making authority typically does rest with the forest manager, the opportunity to discuss concerns and alternative management practices with affected community members enables a level of shared decision-making, with ideas and values expressed by the community actively considered and, where suitable, included. Some forest managers provide detailed feedback after such meetings. A formalised letter is used to describe the outcomes of the meeting and why management options have been selected. This formalised approach is often well received by community members, highlighting how their local knowledge, concerns and aspirations have been considered and, where possible, included in forest management operations. The letter also provides a sense of security, clarification of both parties’ commitments, which is often useful in complex situations, or for those with prior negative experiences and low levels of trust.

**Collaboration**

Collaborative engagement processes aim to encourage a partnership with the community, where ownership of the process is shared [16]. While a level of decision-making control is delegated to the community involved, the overall decision-making power is often retained by the organisation [16].

Collaboration relies on strong relationships based on mutual trust; considerable effort is required to develop such relationships, including developing a shared understanding of people’s core values and management priorities [16]. The investment of time and resources required to establish such relationships is often high; however, the perceived benefits of partnerships include improved legitimacy, quality and social acceptability of resulting decisions [16].

**Empowering stakeholders**

CE processes that aim to empower the participating stakeholders place the final decision-making control in the hands of the stakeholders [16]. The organisation acts as one of many equal stakeholders involved in the process, sharing the responsibility associated with decision-making and resulting accountability of outcomes [16]. Such processes are thought to derive more innovative results through the incorporation of diverse knowledge and a greater commitment to and ownership of outcomes [16].

The research we undertook identified no examples of empowering CE within commercial plantation management. This may be due to the high prevalence of privately managed plantation forests and the highly intensive commercial nature of plantation management.
Choosing the appropriate engagement tools and techniques

The techniques and tools to be used for any engagement process are important to the success of the outcome and should be well considered prior to engagement commencing. The techniques that best suit an engagement process are determined by the issues at hand (including the available knowledge, complexity and controversy associated with the issue), the objectives of the process, the range of stakeholders likely to be involved, the sociopolitical context, the maturity of the issue (see Table 4) and the available resources (including time, money and skills) [2, 27, 60].

There is no right way to conduct an engagement process. The use of multiple tools for engagement is advised for many CE processes, rather than relying on a single technique [2, 6, 60]. The use of multiple techniques allows people to access the CE process at varying stages and in diverse ways [6]. By allowing access at different times of the day, through different avenues and over an extended period of time, more stakeholders can be actively involved.

This greater involvement may help to improve the decisions made through the sharing of information and the building of relationships, ultimately improving the perceived legitimacy of the CE process and the resulting forest management decisions.

In operational forest management, it is common for forest managers to use multiple techniques. For example, forest managers distribute letter notifications to inform affected people of pending forestry operations, then follow up with a consultative or involving technique such as face-to-face meetings.

There are some basic questions that you can ask to help determine whether the proposed CE tool is appropriate, as described by AccountAbility (2005, p. 99) [2] (see Table 5). The emphasis on the stakeholders within these questions highlights the importance of designing the engagement process to suit the people you want to involve, and therefore the importance of having a prior understanding of the community with which you are engaging. Information on communities can be gained by talking with people who know the stakeholders and/or who have conducted engagement processes with them previously.

Additional considerations regarding the selection of the appropriate tool may include the need to engage with stakeholder groups separately due to different needs, practical logistics, existing relationships based on conflict, or different stakeholder objectives.
Table 5: Questions to help determine the appropriate CE methods

| Organisational and stakeholders' objectives and needs | Can I use this technique given the resources I have?  
| Can we generate the required information and outputs to satisfy the objectives of the process and make the necessary decisions?  
| Can we build suitable relationships using this technique? |
| Stakeholder profiles | Does this technique suit the stakeholders in terms of their current understanding of the issue(s) and their capacity to take advantage of the engagement opportunity logistically?  
| How can I make this technique more open for involvement? |
| Relationship context | What are the existing relationships with the stakeholders?  
| Do current relationships suit this technique?  
| Is this technique suitable for the number of people we need to involve? |
| Issue context | What is the level of maturity of the issue and is this approach suitable for this level of maturity?  
| Is the issue too sensitive for this approach?  
| Is the technique compatible with existing policy and legislative requirements that apply to the stakeholder group or issue? |

Adapted from AccountAbility (2005, p. 99) [2]
Devising ground rules

Ground rules are negotiated and agreed-upon guidelines that set the standards for appropriate procedures and behaviour within the CE process or particular encounter. It is good practice to spend 10 minutes or so at the beginning of a meeting or workshop to document what the ground rules for the day will be. These should be written on a flipchart and put up on a wall for the duration of the activity so that they remain visible to all as a constant reminder and so that they can be referred to if there is a problem. It is important to always seek agreement with the participants on the rules and ask for their commitment to them. This helps to build trust among participants and improves the transparency of the process.

Some CE processes do not use formalised ground rules (e.g. face-to-face meetings) and instead rely on people’s tacit understanding of the process and through understood social norms and etiquette. Larger processes often require a procedure to set the ground rules, requiring that each participant accept the determined rules prior to discussions occurring.

Typical ground rules include the following [2]:

- honour the right for each person to participate or remain silent as they wish (but encourage all to contribute)
- show respect for other participants, do not disrupt them or denigrate their comments
- show restraint and self-control, defer to people who have not yet spoken, or speak up if you have not spoken
- respect confidentiality (Chatham House rules)
- stay focused on the issue at hand
- avoid making assumptions about people’s beliefs or motives
- be mindful of the facilitator and help him/her stay to time.

It is best when the ground rules are suggested by workshop participants themselves, but a good facilitator would make sure that the key ground rules above were raised and would suggest them if they were not already nominated.
Key points

- Deliberately analysing the stakeholders helps to identify, prioritise, contact and manage them within the community engagement process.

- Stakeholders include those people that are impacted by, interested in, or able to influence the decision-making process.

- There are many processes that can be used to identify stakeholders.

- Due to the often large numbers of stakeholders that can be identified and the normally limited resources available to engage them all fully, it is often necessary to prioritise stakeholders on the basis of attributes such as the maturity of the issue, the issue of concern, or extent of stakeholder influence.

What is in this section?

- What is stakeholder analysis?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- Stakeholder identification techniques
- Prioritising stakeholders
Stakeholder analysis is a fundamental part of any engagement process. Effective community engagement (CE) relies on having a clear understanding of who the stakeholders are and why they are important to the engagement process [2, 17]. Understanding and managing relationships with and between stakeholders helps to improve process outcomes by overcoming the barriers to communication associated with conflict, diverse management priorities and misunderstandings [16].

A stakeholder is “an individual or organisation, usually locally or regionally based, who has an interest in the forest management in the Defined Forest Area”. [Australian Forestry Standard Limited 2007, p.16]

Stakeholder analysis requires the detailed review of stakeholder group characteristics such as stakeholder power, legitimacy and values [17]. A better understanding of stakeholders provides a basis to design the engagement process, including the selection of appropriate tools and techniques. Although time-consuming, the use of a stakeholder analysis process will improve CE inclusivity and efficiency by focusing engagement activities on specific stakeholder groups, or specific issues and reducing the time and costs associated with CE processes.

Who are the stakeholders?

Stakeholders are typically considered to be those who have an interest in a particular decision, including those people who can influence a decision and those affected by it [16, 47, 60]. Similar definitions are used in the forest management regulations and forest certification standards, highlighting the importance of including a broad representation of stakeholders within CE processes conducted as part of forest management.

The term ‘stakeholder’ is often interchanged with ‘the public’, or ‘the community’, however this is technically incorrect. The public includes people in general, many of whom are neither affected by nor interested in the issue at hand. The community can refer to people within a specific location, or with a specific interest. The Involving people in forestry toolbox (2005) [32] describes these differences succinctly: ‘a community is a subset of all the stakeholders and the stakeholders a subset of the general public’, as shown in Figure 5.

Stakeholder analysis helps to identify and understand your stakeholders, improving the effectiveness of engagement activities.
Identifying and analysing stakeholders

There are many ways to identify and analyse stakeholders, ranging from a simple brainstorming process to extensive social profiling. There is little evidence of formal stakeholder analysis being conducted in plantation forest management, with forest managers relying on regulatory prescriptions, local knowledge and professional experience when identifying and managing stakeholders. While understandable, such an approach can limit the inclusivity of engagement processes, resulting in closed processes that may not be deemed acceptable by some stakeholder groups.

Stakeholders often present themselves to forest management organisations in response to rising concerns over forest management practices. Such reactive forms of stakeholder identification are not conducive to building trusting relationships that are beneficial for forest managers and the community, leading to goodwill and improved community capacity.

This section will not detail all of the stakeholder analysis processes available, instead focusing on those most applicable to CE within operational forest management and on those with the most potential to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diversity of stakeholders relevant to forest management operations.

Secondary data

Previously known information about a planned activity, prior engagement processes and the communities of interest can be used to help identify stakeholders. Sources such as correspondence files kept by the forest management organisation, historical records, newspaper articles and internet sources can be used [32]. While this information is often dated, it can provide a good start in identifying interested stakeholder groups and individuals.
Common techniques for stakeholder analysis

Self-selection

A simple way to identify stakeholders is to let them identify themselves [32]. Promoting a participatory process through the media, shopfront flyers, corporate websites, or direct mail can encourage interested people to come forward. While being open to inclusivity, a self-selection process may create a bias in representation, with predominantly educated and ‘opinionated’ people expressing an interest. Other forms of stakeholder identification may be required to help ensure a broad representation from a diverse range of stakeholders.

Letter notification may be considered as a self-selection technique, where those people identified as being potentially affected are informed on how to further participate in engagement activities (i.e. request a face-to-face meeting). When using letter notifications as a form of self-selection, it is essential to send the letter to all relevant stakeholders, ensuring that sufficient time is allowed for the stakeholders to receive, read and understand and respond to the letter. The content of the letter must be suitable for the purpose and intended recipients, as detailed further in Section 8: Community engagement tools and technique – letter notifications, page 90.

Snowball identification technique

Using stakeholders to identify other stakeholders is a common technique [32]. Accessing the variety of experiences and networks available among engagement participants can help to identify those stakeholders that have been inadvertently missed, or those stakeholders that may be required to fill a knowledge gap or represent a certain interest [18]. The use of snowball identification techniques can also improve the legitimacy of an engagement process, showing openness to a diverse range of stakeholders, rather than a constrained approach to stakeholder selection.

The use of the snowball technique simply involves asking existing participants and others (such as colleagues and acquaintances) who else they think should be involved in the engagement process, or who may be interested in the issue. For example, a forest manager talking face-to-face with a land-owner who accesses water from the creek downstream from the plantation may ask whether the land-owner knows of other residents who also use water directly from the creek – thus using the land-owner’s networks and local knowledge to identify potential stakeholders.

Brainstorming and mind-maps

The use of a group brainstorming activity is helpful, typically identifying more potential stakeholders than a single individual would have. It is beneficial to involve a range of colleagues and other contacts in the brainstorming activity, increasing the potential to identify a diversity of stakeholders by using the strengths of other people’s experience and networks [2, 32].

The use of a mind-map can help to identify stakeholders within a brainstorming session, using visual cues to prompt ideas and expand on lines of thought [18]. Due to the dynamic nature of stakeholders, it is important to conduct separate brainstorming and mind-map sessions for different issues (or locations) [2]. For example, Figure 6 depicts a mind-map
that may result from a brainstorming session around a proposed fuel-reduction burn, while Figure 7 depicts a proposed pesticide application operation.

Mind-maps help identify the complex interrelations that exist among stakeholders, highlighting the importance of relationships within any community. Stakeholder mind-maps are dynamic, evolving as issues evolve and relationships with stakeholders develop [2]. It is therefore important for managers to use such processes as a tool while concentrating on the development of relationships with stakeholders [2].

When brainstorming or developing a mind-map, it is useful to consider the different categories to which a stakeholder may belong [2, p. 24]:

- **influence** – people who are able to influence decision-making
  - legal/contractual/procedural requirements – people who have to be involved due to legal requirements, contractual obligations, corporate policies, or codes of practice
  - representation – people who represent important regulatory, cultural, or socially based organisations

- **impact** – people who are likely to be impacted due to proximity to the proposed management activity.

There are numerous tools designed to help identify relevant stakeholders, including various matrices [18] and checklists (see http://www.sas2.net/tools/social-analysis-techniques/actors). Using a stakeholder checklist helps to ensure that a diversity of stakeholders are identified. Table 6 provides a sample checklist that can be used when considering who needs to be involved in a CE process.
Figure 6:
Sample mind-map for a controlled burn operation

- **adjacent neighbours**
  - resident
  - absentee land-owners
  - national parks service

- **neighbours**
  - known concerned community members

- **stakeholders for a controlled burn-off operation**
  - fire services
  - smoke management agencies
  - transmission line operators

- **contractors**
  - water cartage
  - labour
  - machinery and equipment

- **local tourism operators**

- **other forestry organisations**

- **authorities**
  - media
Figure 7: Sample mind-map for a pesticide application operation

stakeholders for a pesticide application operation

local specialised farmers

organic

viticulture

aquaculture

down-stream water point users

known concerned community members

residents

adjacent neighbours

absentee land-owners

neighbours

local government

water board

state government department (e.g. spray referral unit)
### Table 6: Sample stakeholder checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impacted stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>What individuals may be impacted by the proposed operations?</td>
<td>neighbouring residents, absentee landowners, water users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What individuals (or groups) may be concerned that they may be impacted by the proposed operations?</td>
<td>nearby residents, downstream, water users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What groups may be impacted by the proposed operations?</td>
<td>Indigenous groups, community-based groups, historical groups, environmental groups, tourism operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What traditional owners exist?</td>
<td>Indigenous groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What authorities may be impacted by the proposed operations?</td>
<td>local government, state government, national parks, electricity generators, gas pipeline owners, phone cable owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What credit institutions may be impacted by the proposed operations?</td>
<td>banks, credit unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What company staff may be impacted by the proposed operations?</td>
<td>those that need to implement decision-making outcomes both now and in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What skills are needed to provide guidance on operations?</td>
<td>silvicultural experts, roading engineers, flora and fauna specialists, hydrologists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What businesses may be impacted by the proposed operations?</td>
<td>local suppliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What individuals or groups currently use the land for which operations are proposed?</td>
<td>naturalists, recreation groups, community groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What individuals or groups currently use the surrounding land for which operations are proposed?</td>
<td>naturalists, recreation groups, community groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interested stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>What groups may be interested in the proposed operations?</td>
<td>Indigenous clans, community-based groups, historical groups, environmental groups, tourism operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What authorities may be interested by the proposed operations?</td>
<td>local government, state government departments, elected representatives, infrastructure organisations, workers' unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What businesses may be interested by the proposed operations?</td>
<td>local suppliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who has the most knowledge about the land?</td>
<td>local residents, previous owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What company staff may be interested by the proposed operations?</td>
<td>those with decision-making authority or required expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who regulates operations on the land?</td>
<td>local government, state government, national regulators, industry groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stakeholder profiling

Stakeholder profiles help to learn as much as possible about the stakeholder and to develop a strong understanding of them [2] (either individuals or representatives of a community group). Secondary data sources can help with this, including internet sites, public reports, or talking with people who have previously interacted with the stakeholders [2].

Factors to consider when developing a stakeholder profile are given in Table 7. Using a stakeholder profile template (Figure 8) can help collate the necessary information to make informed comparisons and decisions regarding who to involve and how best to involve them.

While an individual operational-level engagement process is unlikely to use an extensive stakeholder profiling process, it could be beneficial to inform the numerous smaller processes that occur within commercial forest management activities.

Prioritising stakeholders

Current sociopolitical environments have resulted in an explosion of stakeholder interest in corporate resource management practices. It is impossible to engage with every stakeholder on every issue, making it necessary to prioritise which stakeholders to engage with and on which issues [2, 6]. The sheer number of stakeholders often results in forest managers having to carefully select which stakeholders they will engage with given their limited resources. This requires comprehensive knowledge of stakeholder values and priorities, current interactions between stakeholder groups, the level of stakeholder influence within decision-making processes and an understanding of the capacity of stakeholders to effectively engage with forest managers on the issue of concern.

Objectively comparing stakeholders and issues is difficult, making the process of prioritisation complex [2]. Setting clear prioritisation criteria that are linked to the forest management organisation’s processes and business strategies is important [2]. Using such criteria enables limited resources to be focused on the main priorities, rather than on rather than on those people who raise the most concerns [2].

As well detailed by AccountAbility (2005, pp. 40–47) [2], prioritisation can be undertaken according to the maturity of the issue (as discussed in Section 6, page 48), or by considering important stakeholder characteristics, including the influence and dependence of the stakeholders involved.

Prioritisation according to the maturity of issues

The maturity of the issue relates to how embedded the issue is in social consciousness and resulting management practices. Detailed in Table 4 (page 50), the more mature an issue, the more likely that significant attention has been paid to developing management practices to alleviate concern or risks of social or environmental damage associated with the issue.

The maturity of the issue influences the likely stakeholders that are interested, stakeholder expectations and external political or commercial pressures [2]. For example, latent (low-level maturity) issues are likely to fly under the radar of many stakeholders.
### Table 7: Key considerations within a stakeholder profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current views</th>
<th>Stakeholders have their own specific view regarding an issue, potential problems, their causes and solutions. Be clear about each stakeholder’s general view on the issue.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders’ expectations</td>
<td>Stakeholders will expect a ‘return on investment’ in terms of action and response. Be clear about the stakeholder’s engagement expectations. Some stakeholders only expect an open and honest conversation; others expect specific operational changes or adherence to certain performance standards. Compare your stakeholders’ expectations with what you think you can and want to actually do about an issue (given your resources and strategic objectives).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the issue</td>
<td>Be clear about the stakeholder’s knowledge of the issue. Some stakeholders know as much or even more about an issue than you. In such cases, you may wish to learn from them. Others know far less and you may want to inform or educate them. This may be particularly important if they are able to actively influence decision-making or public policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy of stakeholder representative</td>
<td>Be clear about assumptions or claims about who a stakeholder speaks for. Are they an elected or recognised representative? Do they have legitimacy in terms of broad support or acknowledged expertise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to engage</td>
<td>Successful engagement requires a willingness from both sides. Investigate reasons for unwillingness as it may be due to circumstances you can control and change. It is important to acknowledge the stakeholder’s right not to engage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible impacts (negative or positive) of the stakeholder</td>
<td>Be clear about the stakeholder’s possible specific impacts on your business. How can s/he contribute to your objectives? How can s/he stop you from achieving them? What are her/his indirect impacts on you via other stakeholders? Some representatives’ potential impacts on you or on the stakeholder engagement process may be so significant that there is a definite necessity to engage them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural context</td>
<td>Consider the specific cultural circumstances of the engagement, e.g. language, customs regarding social interaction, gender issues. Ensure the stakeholders selected are relevant to the methods you choose for engagement (and resource requirements). Use appropriately skilled people when considering cultural issues (may require external advice).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical scale at which they operate</td>
<td>The geographical scale at which the stakeholder/stakeholder group operates, or is willing to operate, should match your engagement plans and objectives. Ensuring that the stakeholders are interested in your localised issues, or have the capacity to engage with regional concerns is important and helps to focus resources and engagement efforts on the right stakeholders for the issue at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder’s engagement capacity</td>
<td>Stakeholders require the respectful treatment of their attention and time. Smaller organisations may have very limited financial means and staffing capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships of stakeholders with each other</td>
<td>Engaging with different stakeholders in the same activity requires an understanding of their views of and relationships with each other. Tension between your stakeholders can have negative influences on the outcomes of your engagement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from AccountAbility (2005, p. 66) [2]
Figure 8: Stakeholder profile template

The following template should be completed over time as you develop further understandings of stakeholder(s), not all information may be available at the beginning of the relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Name: (e.g. Northwest Coast Care, John Smith)</th>
<th>Date updated:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact information</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>Residential address:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobile:</td>
<td>Postal address:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why stakeholder is to be engaged</strong></td>
<td>(e.g. Neighbour to property, marron farm nearby, expressed an interest in activities in local region)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identified stakeholder objective</strong></td>
<td>(e.g. to maintain communication, to ensure appropriate notification is given prior to application of pesticides, to monitor vegetation management in district)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current relationship status</strong></td>
<td>(e.g. good, formal contact only, conflict is evident)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder relationships</strong></td>
<td>(Known conflicts or collaboration with other stakeholder groups. E.g. respected member of community, previous dispute with farmer group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement history</strong></td>
<td>(e.g. non-response to notification, in-field meeting was held yet did not overcome all issues of concern)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identified stakeholder views on issue(s)</strong></td>
<td>(e.g. against use of poison, member of collaborative fire protection committee)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder’s knowledge of the issue (please circle)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder willingness to engage (please circle)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willing</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical issues to engagement</strong></td>
<td>(e.g. absentee land-owner, time, location, skills, cultural considerations, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actual/potential impacts on stakeholder</strong></td>
<td>Positive impacts/opportunities:</td>
<td>Negative impacts/risks:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other comments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emerging and consolidated processes (refer to Table 4) are important; increased awareness and media attention can exacerbate perceptions surrounding the issue, which can make it difficult to engage people in a collaborative manner (e.g. as with the use of 1080 poison). Once institutionalised, issues may require less encompassing engagement as solutions have been derived and implemented. Engagement may still be required, however, either due to regulatory requirements, or ongoing social contention.

An example of this is the issue of water contamination due to pesticide application. This issue could be considered as a mature issue with prescriptive regulations and codes of conduct governing the application of chemicals within forest management. However, this issue continues to arise as a point of contention among the public and regulations such as codes of practices and forest certification standards require various forms of engagement when conducting chemical application operations.

Prioritising according to the influence and dependence of stakeholders

A common method of prioritising stakeholders is to focus on those stakeholders with the most influence on the goals and objectives of the CE process and those most affected by the proposed forest management activities [2]. This enables scarce engagement resources to be utilised more effectively, concentrating on achieving the necessary strategic and operational outcomes [2]. Impacted and influential stakeholders are treated with respect and given opportunities to understand the proposed activities, share concerns and help develop mutually acceptable solutions.

Prioritising stakeholders and issues

Sometimes it is necessary to engage with certain specific stakeholders due to their insistence, the strength of their growing concerns, political pressure, or because of the particular issue of concern. In such cases, priority can be given to particular stakeholders, or to particular concerns, depending on whether the engagement process is stakeholder driven or issue driven. For example, some stakeholders may live a considerable distance from plantation operations, yet constantly contact forest managers regarding operations. While these stakeholders are unlikely to be negatively affected by the operations, forest managers may prioritise engagement with them in an attempt to promote open dialogue and limit the potential for conflict to occur.

Some stakeholders may be prioritised due to their perceived inability to engage in prior processes arising from barriers such as language, literacy, culture, time, etc. Specific engagement opportunities may need to be designed to correspond with the stakeholders’ capacities, ensuring they do not become disengaged and disillusioned.

There is no perfect way to engage stakeholders; similarly there is no perfect list of stakeholders to engage [2, 32]. Stakeholders will change over time, change with the issue of concern and change with the location of management activity [2]. Over time, a ‘list’ may develop for certain forest management operations, or certain locations; however, such a list must be continually reviewed to ensure that new people have an opportunity to be involved and new interests discussed [2].
8. Community engagement tools and techniques

What is in this section?
- list of community engagement tools and techniques
- detailed description of common tools and techniques applicable to commercial plantation management

Key points
- Effective community engagement requires the implementation of a range of community engagement techniques.
- Community engagement tools and techniques should be selected to match the stakeholders involved, the purpose of the engagement and the resources available.
This section details individual community engagement (CE) techniques, their advantages and disadvantages, contexts in which they might be applied and the usual level of stakeholder empowerment. It must be noted that not all CE techniques are listed here, with the focus maintained on those techniques most suited to Australian forest management. Table 8 provides a more comprehensive list of CE techniques that may be of interest to some forest managers. Information regarding these techniques can be found in the handbooks listed in the References and recommended resources section.

Effective CE relies on a good understanding of the social environment in which you are operating. Every community is unique and such diversity should be acknowledged when designing and implementing a CE process.

What works in one community may not work in the next due to a variety of factors such as different perceptions of forestry, social demographics, the prevalence of ‘lifestyle’ residents and the social and economic impacts of other industry or environmental conditions (e.g. drought). Thus it is unlikely that a single CE method will work in every situation. A variety of methods are often used to ensure that a broad range of stakeholders have an opportunity to participate [6].

The tools detailed in this handbook were selected by the authors based on the current use of the technique (or a variant thereof) and/or the potential for the technique to be used within the forest industry. Selection was made based on their applicability within current operational forest management frameworks, the feasibility of adoption considering characteristics of the engagement technique (e.g. technology requirements, resource requirements and perceived business advantages) and the skills and CE understandings needed to implement such a technique.

In some instances the strengths and weakness of each tool may seem to contradict each other. This is due to the flexible nature of many CE tools and techniques and the diversity of CE goals and objectives that each tool may be implemented to achieve. For example, informal community conversations are classed as both inexpensive and expensive. If the goal was to resolve a minor issue with an immediate neighbour such conversations are inexpensive; however, if they were to be used to develop a broad overview of community concerns, the time-consuming nature of informal conversations would make it an expensive tool to use. Similarly, newsletters are inexpensive to prepare and distribute via email, yet expensive if they are to be printed and mailed out to stakeholders. Selecting the appropriate engagement tool requires consideration of its range of advantages and limitations in the particular context, including the consideration of whether other methods can be combined to help overcome limitations.

A guide to where the technique sits on the IAP2 spectrum (see Figure 4 on page 52) is provided for each tool. The diversity of levels identified for each tool reflects the flexibility in the application of each technique, and the consequent different outcomes.
Table 8: Tools and techniques for community engagement

As CE and the practice of public participation are continually evolving, this list is not exhaustive. Some techniques may be placed in several categories due to their capacity to adapt to varying levels of engagement. Those techniques marked with an asterisk (*) are described in this handbook. Further information on these and the remaining techniques can be found in the handbooks detailed in the References and recommended resources section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>21st century town hall meeting</th>
<th>Information flyers</th>
<th>Prioritisation matrix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to resources (analysis)</td>
<td>Information repository (i.e. field office)</td>
<td>Public hearing*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of tasks</td>
<td>Interactive backcasting</td>
<td>Public involvement volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research</td>
<td>Interactive television</td>
<td>Public meeting*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation-Influence-Control (AIC)</td>
<td>Interactive video display kiosks</td>
<td>Public submissions*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciative inquiry process</td>
<td>Key stakeholder interviews*</td>
<td>Referenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backcasting</td>
<td>Kitchen table discussions</td>
<td>Regulatory negotiation and rule-making process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary assessments</td>
<td>Learning circles</td>
<td>Relevance trees and morphological analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming*</td>
<td>Letter notifications*</td>
<td>Resident feedback register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefings</td>
<td>Mapping</td>
<td>Responsive summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charrettes*</td>
<td>Media*</td>
<td>Road shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens’ juries</td>
<td>• Advertising</td>
<td>Role-play*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens’ panels</td>
<td>• Media feature stories</td>
<td>Roundtable Samoan circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic journalism</td>
<td>• Media releases</td>
<td>Scenario testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community advisory committees*</td>
<td>• News conferences</td>
<td>Search conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community cultural development</td>
<td>• Newspaper inserts</td>
<td>Shopfront displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community fairs or events</td>
<td>• Television programs</td>
<td>Simulation (electronically generated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community indicators</td>
<td>Mediation and negotiation</td>
<td>Sketch interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community liaison officer*</td>
<td>Mind-mapping*</td>
<td>Social assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community profiling*</td>
<td>Multi-objective decision support systems/multi-criteria analysis</td>
<td>Speakout/soapbox (versions 1 &amp; 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community reference groups</td>
<td>Multi-stakeholder forum</td>
<td>Study circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community visioning</td>
<td>Multi-stakeholder partnerships*</td>
<td>Summits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference/symposia</td>
<td>Needs assessment exercise</td>
<td>Survey research*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensus conference</td>
<td>Negotiation tables</td>
<td>Surveys (questionnaires)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical/key technologies</td>
<td>Newsletters*</td>
<td>SWOT analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross impact analysis</td>
<td>Nominal group workshops</td>
<td>Systematic client consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberative polling</td>
<td>Objectives oriented planning (ZOPP)</td>
<td>Target group analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberative retreats</td>
<td>One-on-one interviews*</td>
<td>Task force/legislative committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delphi study</td>
<td>Open house (open days)*</td>
<td>TeamUp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design workshops</td>
<td>Open space technology</td>
<td>Technical reports and discussion papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion groups and workshops</td>
<td>Participant observation</td>
<td>Technology/community festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays</td>
<td>Participatory assessment, monitoring &amp; evaluation (PAME)</td>
<td>Technology sequence analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama workshops</td>
<td>Participatory editing</td>
<td>Telephone tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education programs</td>
<td>Participatory modelling (or Group-Model Building)</td>
<td>Telephone/information hotline*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email and listservs</td>
<td>Participatory appraisal (PRA)</td>
<td>Tree diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envisioning workshops</td>
<td>Philanthropy*</td>
<td>Turoff method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert panel fact sheets*</td>
<td>Photovoice</td>
<td>Visioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback comment sheet*</td>
<td>Planning cell</td>
<td>Vulnerability analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field trips*</td>
<td>Planning for real</td>
<td>Web-based consultation*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishbowls*</td>
<td>Pocket charts</td>
<td>Web-based online information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups*</td>
<td>Policy exercises</td>
<td>Web-based survey processes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forecasting (normative and exploratory)</td>
<td>Policy action teams</td>
<td>Webinars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future search conferences</td>
<td>Polls</td>
<td>Workshops*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Futures wheel</td>
<td>Poster competitions</td>
<td>World café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender analysis</td>
<td>Precinct committees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Charrettes are intensive multidisciplinary workshops designed to facilitate discussion between a diverse range of stakeholders [6, 18, 27, 60]. They identify critical issues, assembling ideas and viewpoints to help determine realistic solutions to particular issues [18]. The charrette is a highly structured and facilitated consultation process that occurs over a period of several days, incorporating group discussions and brainstorming activities [6].

Charrettes are useful where social, economic and environmental factors need to be balanced, bringing together a diverse range of people to incorporate a range of perspectives and expertise [6, 27]. This diversity can create a productive environment to identify and solve forest management issues. Upon completion of the charrette, a plan is prepared using both visual (e.g. maps) and written reports that summarise the identified issues and proposed solutions [6].

Charrettes may be too intensive for the operational level of forest management; however, they are suitable for detailed planning purposes such as the development of operational strategic plans where the charrette process can comprehensively elicit community concerns and attitudes.

**References and websites**

National Charrette Institute  


Victorian Local Government Association  
Consultation and Engagement Resource website  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotes collaborative working environment and creative thinking</td>
<td>Time-consuming as extensive planning may be required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent information sharing</td>
<td>Extensive time required limits the inclusion of some people due to other commitments or disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective for large collaborative projects</td>
<td>Expensive (especially when accommodation is required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates relationships and trust among participants</td>
<td>Requires a well-defined problem to solve. Little flexibility to change focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad community representation encouraged</td>
<td>Can be difficult due to the diversity of participant perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and cost-effective as intensive nature produces results quickly</td>
<td>Participants may not be representative of the community, with focus on ‘experts’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides an opportunity for people to understand the perspectives of others</td>
<td>Difficult to engage marginalised groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highly specialised tool, requires expert facilitation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[6, 18, 27, 60]
Community advisory committees usually involve a small group of community representatives selected from a diverse range of interest groups, or people with required expertise [6, 18, 32, 60]. Regular meetings are scheduled to discuss current and anticipated concerns or issues relating to the advisory committee’s interest [32]. Advisory committees are usually consultative, with the decision-making authority remaining with the forest management organisation [6].

Advisory committees are usually established to enable ongoing communications between the forest industry and stakeholder groups, providing broad-based input into planning and decision-making processes [6]. Advisory committees provide forest managers with an opportunity to continuously assess stakeholder views and priorities and are a proactive form of CE that assists in community capacity building and helps to build long-term relationships.

To be able to critically discuss forest management options, the advisory group members need to be provided with suitable information so that the committees are not reliant on experts. Information may be provided in varying forms and activities (e.g. field trips, workshops, presentations) can be conducted to further expose advisory group members to forest management contexts.

While community advisory committees can be an effective form of engagement that encourage the development of working relationships and the sharing of various forms of information, they require a high level of commitment from forest management organisations and community members. It is therefore important to consider the use of this technique. For example, you should take the time to identify existing committees, their capacity to work collaboratively with other resource managers and organisations and the benefits that such a resource-intensive technique will provide to both forest managers and community members.

**Things to consider when establishing an advisory committee**

- The selection of participants is important so that [18]:
  - a range of interests and perspectives ensure adequate representation of the community
  - the potential participants’ alliances, conflicts, capacity and willingness to work as part of a collaborative team are considered.

- Participants may need to be selected on the basis of their specific skills or expertise.

- Where members are representing a group, it is important to make sure they are representative and have sufficient time and capacity to consult their group and ensure support.

- Terms of reference and ground rules must be established from the beginning, including participant roles and responsibilities, timeframes, decision-making processes and rules associated with media contact [6, 18, 60].

- Committee effectiveness is best when the process is well facilitated, has a clear mandate and when strong agency support is provided [6].

- Ongoing communication and feedback with the advisory committee is essential, highlighting current activities, timelines and outcomes. Such feedback helps to keep the committee focused and on track and is useful if new people join the group [18].

- The organising group or agency should work closely with the committee during its formation and during the ongoing meetings.

- Use third-party facilitators to manage ongoing conflict. External facilitators may provide a credible and independent outcome.

- Constantly be forthcoming with necessary information to maintain transparency and commitment to the process (see Section 4).
## COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost-effective</td>
<td>Time and labour-intensive, requires ongoing support and commitment from forest management organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides transparent decision-making process that may result in decisions being more accepted</td>
<td>May be too formal and structured for some community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide range of views and information incorporated into decision-making process, including technical and local knowledge</td>
<td>Comprises only a small group of representatives hence it is difficult to properly reflect broader public values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases participant understandings of alternative views and values</td>
<td>Payment of participants may be required, which may impact on the perceived independence of stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing meetings provide ample opportunity for issues to be raised and critically debated and for alternative strategies to be explored</td>
<td>Consensus may not be reached, which may lead to tension within the group (note that consensus is not always the goal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates sense of ownership of outcomes, hence increased chance of successful implementation</td>
<td>Difficult to achieve full representation of all interest groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides an opportunity to disseminate information and decisions to members of the community</td>
<td>Legitimacy of process is dependent on forest management willingness to listen to group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for long-term and complex issues, as sufficient time and information is available to develop understanding of issues</td>
<td>Group members may have raised expectations on actual influence on decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides an insight into likely public reaction to a decision or forest management process</td>
<td>General public may not accept committee recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds social capacity and helps to develop trust and long-term relationships between participants</td>
<td>The diversity of opinion, knowledge, decision-making frameworks and other information can be difficult to manage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[6, 18, 32, 60]
Method to establish a community advisory committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Determine purpose of engagement</td>
<td>• Select appropriate tool/technique to achieve purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Stakeholder analysis             | • Conduct a community profile to identify relevant affected and interested groups and barriers to engagement  
• Identify currently active committees  
• Consider special interest groups  
• Analyse potential groups/individuals to ensure relevance, capacity, identify conflicts and alliances between stakeholder groups, provide an insight into likely perspectives  
• Provide ongoing opportunities for involvement as issues change, or new stakeholders become interested in/affected by operations |
| 3. First meeting                    | • Clearly state the role, purpose and objectives of the advisory committee  
• Conduct an icebreaker process to enable participants to identify themselves and share their broad values/perspectives  
• Collaboratively determine the terms of reference  
• Collaboratively decide the ground rules  
• Collaboratively determine the ongoing committee process, including reporting requirements, grievance processes, communication networks (e.g. email lists, newsletters, websites)  
• Collaboratively determine if any important stakeholders are currently not represented through a brainstorm/mind-map/snowball sampling technique  
• Determine current concerns/issues and where to gather more information for the next session |
| 4. Subsequent meetings              | • Summarise previous meeting, provide hardcopies of minutes, terms of reference, ground rules, etc.  
• Set agenda for current meeting  
• Work through issues and concerns  
• Set up working committees where necessary to focus on specific concerns |

Adapted from Community Engagement Network (2005) [18, pp. 15–16]

References and websites

Community Engagement Network (2005) Effective engagement: building relationships with community and other stakeholders Book 3 The engagement toolkit

NSW Government Department of Planning (2007) Guidelines for establishing and operating community consultative committees for mining projects
Community liaison officers (CLOs) are the predominant information contacts for the public. CLOs help community members find information or additional help quickly and easily, ensuring that good-quality and consistent information is provided [18].

Many forest management organisations in Australia use CLOs, focusing CLO activities on strategic activities within the organisation and the communities (e.g., identifying and talking with affected stakeholders prior to the commencement of harvesting operations, working with interested stakeholders/groups to conserve areas of cultural or environmental importance). Often CLOs provide support to forest managers, helping in skill development and broadening forest managers' social awareness of broader public values and concerns. CLOs are usually responsible for information dissemination (not public relations), establishing contacts with interested and affected community members and developing new or ongoing engagement opportunities that encourage active participation in forest management decision-making processes.

CLOs require a broad range of skills including [18, 38]:

- a comprehensive understanding of public participation concepts, tools and techniques
- an extensive knowledge of forest management practices and processes to be able to answer questions effectively, or identify the appropriate people who can answer the question
- a good knowledge of the community including relevant stakeholders.

Things to consider when using a CLO:

- the CLO needs information provided in a timely manner [38]
- details of stakeholder engagement, including contact details, need to be recorded. This helps to ensure consistency and provide history/evidence in case of a CLO leaving the forest management organisation, or ongoing conflict regarding management outcomes
- CLOs need to be well trained in communications and committed to providing good service for both the community and the forest management organisation [18]
- by providing the community with a name for contact purposes, rather than a position, familiarity is improved, further encouraging contact
- an ongoing feedback process to forest managers ensures that stakeholder information, concerns and strategies for future engagement are shared
- using a local person can be beneficial as they often have a greater understanding of the social history, stakeholders and credibility [38].

References and websites


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides efficient service with little ‘run around’, thus conveys image of accessibility</td>
<td>Can restrict public concerns from reaching field forest managers and senior decision-makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controls information being shared; provides consistency of information</td>
<td>Requires CLO to have strong interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links stakeholders with technical experts</td>
<td>Requires support from forest management organisation to ensure CLO is appropriately briefed and resourced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to design and implement future CE processes due to improved understanding of stakeholder concerns</td>
<td>CLO may not be able to adequately answer some of the tougher questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLO can develop a good understanding of stakeholder opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to build trust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[18, 38]
Community profiling is used to develop a strong understanding of the community in which engagement is to be conducted, including identifying the people, social institutions, social demographics, stakeholder groups and the social history [18].

Having a broad understanding of the community can help to effectively design and implement the engagement process, with engagement processes tailored to suit them [18].

Community profiling also helps to identify the range of perspectives that exist among community members regarding forest management practices, helping to determine whether community members may be willing to participate in an engagement process and what method of engagement suits them best [18].

Things to consider when developing a community profile:

- When collaborative methods are used to produce the community profile it is important to be clear about why the profile is being collated and how the information collected will be stored and disseminated [18].
- Communities change over time, therefore it is important to revisit the community to ensure that the profile is up to date and relevant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective information-gathering technique</td>
<td>Time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raises awareness of engagement processes, building an interest and capacity within the community</td>
<td>The complexity of communities may require a long and drawn-out process of data collection and analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages broader thinking about the ‘community’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies impacted, interested and influential community members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can develop relationships when completed in collaboration with community members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative development of profile over time helps to share information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[18]
### COMMUNITY PROFILING (cont.)

#### Method for developing a community profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Scoping            | • What is the purpose of the community profile?  
                          • How will the community profile assist?  
                          • What information needs to be in the community profile?  
                          • How will the community profile information be used?  
                          • Who will be involved in the development of the profile?  
                          • What resources/constraints will influence the development of the profile?         |
| 2. Research proposal  | • What are the key questions to be researched by the profiler?  
                          • What research approach will be taken?  
                          • What methods will be used to collect and record information?  
                          • How will privacy issues be managed?  
                          • Estimate the time/cost for development  
                          • Endorsement of activity from forest management organisation and community leaders |
| 3. Research activity  | • Conduct community profile process                                                                                                       |
| 4. Presentation of profile | • Presentation of profile to project team/community to get feedback on assumptions and outcomes  
                           • Determination of review process and responsibilities                                                                                     |

Adapted from Community Engagement Network [18, pp. 22–23]

### References and websites

- Community Engagement Network (2005) *Effective engagement: building relationships with community and other stakeholders* Book 3 The engagement toolkit  

- Department of Communities (2007) *Engaging Queenslanders: managing community engagement*  
Fact sheets are brief documents that summarise the 'facts' about a program or issue [60]. Fact sheets are a common information-sharing tool, used for purposes such as publicising engagement processes, or providing information on an issue [18]. Fact sheets can be distributed in a variety of ways including hand-delivered, made available to pick up from suitable, easily accessible locations, mailed out or distributed via the web [18].

Fact sheets may be directed at the broader public, involved stakeholders, or those people ‘watching’ a process who like to receive up-to-date information [60].

Fact sheets aim to provide easily accessible information that can be quickly scanned, informing the reader about an issue. They should be targeted to suit the audience and avoid editorial comment [60]. Fact sheets can increase the awareness of the issue and may provide information about where comment can be directed, or seek responses to an issue or proposal.

Fact sheets are a cost-effective method of disseminating information, although their impact is limited due to the predominantly one-way communication that does not encourage feedback or the development of long-term relationships. Fact sheets do not encourage the active inclusion of people in dialogue and therefore limit the capacity of community members to share concerns, information and ideas. However, fact sheets are a useful form of information sharing and can be a useful inclusion in an engagement process that uses other CE techniques to encourage ongoing dialogue.

Fact sheets are produced by many forest management organisations and made available either on the internet or to pick up from administrative offices. Often targeted at publicly sensitive topics such as fuel-reduction burning, pest and weed control, water quality and so forth, fact sheets provide a base from which stakeholders can start a conversation with forest managers.

Handy hints for fact sheets

- Make the fact sheet available from several locations.
- KISS – keep it simple and short. Use simple language that is easy to understand, don’t overload with information or make it look like ‘spin’.
- Q&A format often works well.
- Make it eye-catching (use colour, photos, cartoons).
- Provide points of contact (e.g. Community liaison officer, website details).
- Including opportunities for response such as comment sheets or questionnaires can increase credibility and provide relevant public feedback. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for a higher return rate.
- Keep mailing lists up to date and check for duplication.
- If distributing as a ‘bill stuffer’ (i.e., included with utility bills etc. to maximise dissemination), check requirements in terms of timing, size and likely chance of being read.
- Provide details regarding authorship.
- Provide additional information details [18, 38, 60].

References and websites

Community Engagement Network (2005) Effective engagement: building relationships with community and other stakeholders Book 3 The engagement toolkit

International Association for Public Participation
http://www.iap2.org

Fact sheets are a useful form of information sharing and can be a useful inclusion in an engagement process that uses other CE techniques to encourage ongoing dialogue.
## FACT SHEETS (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides publicity while sharing information</td>
<td>Allows for minor input only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaches a large number of people</td>
<td>Little capacity for detailed information to be shared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time- and cost-effective</td>
<td>One-way form of communication, little capacity for ongoing communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can allow for public input (if comment sheets/questionnaires included)</td>
<td>Requires good writing and design skills to present information effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to document participation processes, which is beneficial for technical and legal reviews</td>
<td>Difficult to ensure that the information is read and understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be developed in languages other than English, large text formats, etc.</td>
<td>Not suitable for those with low literacy levels or visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can be seen as publicity 'spin'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If mailed, the mailing list need to be maintained and updated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provided facts may be contested or mistrusted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[18, 38, 60]
There are several forms of engagement that refer to mechanisms encouraging public feedback. The level of engagement offered by the feedback system depends on the purpose and commitment of the forest management organisation; some may simply provide an opportunity for the public to provide opinion, while others may have follow-through processes where two-way communication is elicited.

Feedback systems include:

**Information hotlines** – telephone information hotlines provide accurate and consistent information through prerecorded messages, message-bank services, or access to relevant staff members [18, 38, 60]. Hotlines provide fast and efficient information and are highly suited to emergency situations. Feedback typically occurs with the forest managers calling back community members where required.

**Toll-free telephone numbers** – toll-free numbers provide a fast and effective form of feedback, allowing people to provide general feedback, report immediate problems, or seek personalised responses to their concerns [6]. The system requires a fast response from a forest manager to address any concerns raised. It is important to track and document calls and the company response to such calls [6].

**Resident feedback registers** – residents, or other stakeholders, provide ongoing feedback to the forest management organisation regarding community concerns, management practices, policies and ongoing community relationships [38]. They can be a useful way to obtain ongoing information from ‘normal’ people, rather than those who often participate or represent interest groups. Credible selection processes are required to ensure that residents are not hand-picked [38].

**References and websites**
- International Association for Public Participation
  [http://www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)
- URP Toolbox – Citizen science toolbox, [https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/](https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/)

### Strengths and Weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost-effective</td>
<td>Resource commitment can be high in some circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful to document public contacts and provide data to determine trends etc.</td>
<td>Requires commitment from forest managers to answer queries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can provide opportunities for publicity, information and public input</td>
<td>Predominantly negative comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables fast access to information without the ‘run around’</td>
<td>Needs to be adequately advertised in order to be used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to update information</td>
<td>If a designated contact is used they must have sufficient knowledge to answer questions effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrays image of organisational accessibility</td>
<td>Little opportunity for in-depth two-way communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily accessed by a large proportion of the population</td>
<td>Stakeholders may not be comfortable reporting sensitive issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows for anonymity if preferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables people to respond with minimal effort at a time and place suitable for them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controls information flow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables public input with people having to come to meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[6, 18, 38, 60]
FIELD TRIPS

Field trips provide community members and other stakeholders (e.g. advisory group members, elected officials, media) with an opportunity to access operational forestry site(s) [18]. Field trips provide an important learning environment where concerns and issues can be raised in a context that helps to visualise and understand impacts and outcomes [18, 57]. Through this personal experience and improved understanding of forest management practices, participants can provide more informed comment on concerns and issues [57]. Typically a means of informing, field trips are able to provide opportunities for public input and collaborative decision-making.

Field trips are often conducted as a personalised visit to the site to discuss concerns and develop management alternatives. They may also be larger group-based activities that involve a series of stops that highlight the many facets of forest management. Self-guided field trips are also possible, where people are provided with an itinerary and guide that incorporates relevant maps, questions and observations [38].

Often additional information is often provided on field trips, including printed handouts, fact sheets, presentations from specialists, contractors, or land management organisations and question and answer sessions.

Things to consider when conducting field trips [18, 38]:

- Field trips need to be well planned and resourced to provide adequate information and a comfortable experience.
- For extensive field trips, adequate food and drink may need to be provided. This is especially important in extreme weather conditions.
- Careful consideration needs to be given to occupational health and safety requirements, including the provision of protective clothing and clear instructions on expected behaviour when visiting operational locations.
- Planning the Q&A session can help ensure appropriate information and personnel are available.
- People like to ask questions, so make sure you factor in enough time for this.

Many forest management organisations conduct field trips, some are targeted at the general public (e.g. Rotary or school groups) and others at those with an interest in forest management (e.g. land-owners interested in establishing plantations, members of local government and business groups).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates transparency and credibility</td>
<td>Expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides first-hand learning experiences</td>
<td>Limited by time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often a fun experience</td>
<td>Safety issues are important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations are more effective than presentations</td>
<td>Access to some sites is limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to develop rapport between forest managers and participants</td>
<td>Resource-intensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces outrage over forest management practices by making the choices more familiar</td>
<td>Number of participants is limited due to expense and logistics (e.g. bus size)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves public knowledge of issues and processes</td>
<td>May attract negative attention from protestors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Field trips are a personal experience that helps stakeholders to understand the practical realities of commercial forest management operations.

References and websites
The International Association for Public Participation
http://www.iap2.org


URP Toolbox – Citizen science toolbox
https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/
The fishbowl name reflects the format of the discussion, with an inner group of ‘discussion’ participants seated around a table, being witnessed by a larger group of ‘listening’ participants around the outside, who can also have input and ask questions [18]. The first discussion group discusses the current question (only one question per discussion round), with the listening group taking notes. The groups then swap places with the initial listening group providing rebuttal or promoting further discussion on issues not raised previously [60]. This process can be repeated for a number of questions.

The dual listening and discussing functions of the fishbowl helps to increase people’s understanding of others’ perspectives [18]. Fishbowls are not commonly used in Australian forestry; however they have potential in forest management planning, strategic development and communicating the broad issues surrounding commercial forest management.

References and websites
URP Toolbox – Citizen science toolbox
https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/

While not commonly used in forestry, fishbowls have potential for forest management planning, strategic development and exchange of ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can build trust through transparent decision-making</td>
<td>Requires a commitment to creative approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative and focused dialogue can result in innovative alternatives being developed</td>
<td>Requires participants to operate outside their comfort zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables people to participate in group processes; however it does not require all participants to have an active voice in the participation process. Simple observation of the discussions and decision-making process is acceptable</td>
<td>Intensive to set up and adequately publicise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases awareness of issues through the sharing of information and diverse perspectives</td>
<td>Requires skilled facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables decision-makers to gauge public reaction to forest management practices</td>
<td>Roles and responsibilities of forest managers and participating public may not be clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explores complex issues in a short time frame</td>
<td>Limited amount of people can be included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes active listening, reflection and response</td>
<td>May require follow-up planning and reporting to ensure comments are adequately considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[18, 38, 60]
FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are an under-utilised technique within forest management. Focus groups are a facilitated discussion among a small group (4–12 people) of usually selected participants, where a specific topic or concept is comprehensively addressed, exploring opinions, knowledge, perceptions and concerns [27, 60].

Focus groups can be used to collect information, define issues, set criteria, test ideas or provide data [6, 18]. They are useful to obtain a snapshot of public opinion, gauging the nature and intensity of stakeholder opinions and identifying additional information requirements [27].

Focus group discussions use open-ended questions and probes designed to elicit detailed information from participants and enable participants to bounce ideas off one another. The facilitator usually guides the discussions, being careful not to lead answers and to ensure that all participants are able to provide input. Often multiple focus group sessions are held with different participants to validate information and provide insights into the influence of varying social contexts.

Things to consider when conducting focus groups:

- Representation of broad public values and interests is important.
- Focus group participants may need to be selected carefully to ensure that a broad representation is achieved and that participants are comfortable with each other.
- May require expert facilitation.
- Need to ensure that a comfortable venue is provided, with adequate lighting, heating/cooling and facilities.

- Power differences among focus group participants can impact on an individual’s willingness to participate. Active measures may be required to reduce the impact of power differences.
- Follow-up activities may encourage further comment not raised during the conversations. These may include informal discussions after the meeting, provision of subsequent written comment.
- Focus groups require cooperation from participants, it is therefore necessary to quickly develop trust and open lines of communication.
- An informal atmosphere is required to elicit the required depth of discussion; too structured processes may inhibit the inclusion of some participants.
- Recording the discussions is useful when analysing interview data.

**Strengths**

- Inexpensive
- Flexible format that allows for active dialogue rather than basic Q & A format
- Provides an in-depth exploration of people’s views in a more ‘natural’ social context
- Useful at various stages of decision-making (planning to evaluation)
- Can target specific groups
- Provides a snapshot of public opinion on issues and reaction to proposed management activities
- Security provided through presence of peer group
- Provides dependable data within a short time frame

**Weaknesses**

- Limited control over group process
- Some people may not feel comfortable to express ‘alternative’ views in group situation
- Risk of ‘groupthink’ if not well facilitated
- Small number of people involved limits true representation of broader public
- Requires skilled facilitator

References and websites

Community Engagement Network (2005) Effective engagement: building relationships with community and other stakeholders Book 3 The engagement toolkit


URP Toolbox – Citizen science toolbox
https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/

[18, 27, 60]
Informal community conversations are informal discussions where the forest manager talks with community members in a direct and personal manner [18]. Informal conversations are an important part of forest management, identifying key issues, attitudes, skills and knowledge [18], while simultaneously encouraging the development of relationships based on trust and respect.

The personal level of contact allows for a free-ranging discussion around the issues of concern, focusing on those issues important to the community member [18]. These informal conversations may provide insights into an individual’s values and beliefs, enabling the forest manager to understand and preempt preferred management options, thus reducing conflict and tension.

Informal conversations are common within the forest industry, with casual conversation occurring frequently over the fence, at community events, on the phone, etc. These informal, everyday conversations are perhaps the most important form of CE for operational forest managers, the personal nature and comfortable environment promotes honest discussions that reflect people’s values and priorities.

Things to consider when conducting informal community conversations:

- Forest managers are ‘the face of the industry’ to many people in the community, it is therefore important to be professional, yet approachable, at all times.
- Informal communication is relaxed; there is a need to participate in small talk, ask questions about the family, the dog, the ute and so forth to find the common link.
- Ensure you follow up on any actions that come out of informal conversations.
- Where relevant, document informal conversations to ensure that actions are traceable. This may be a simple file note stating that certain chemicals will not be used, or a more formal process that includes a letter to the community member stating the outcomes of the engagement process and reasons why decisions were made.
- Documentation should be provided to others affected by the decisions made (e.g. forest management colleagues, senior management) and may be useful for evaluation processes.

**References and websites**

Public conversations

http://www.publicconversations.org

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inexpensive to set up</td>
<td>Time-consuming nature may add to costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reveals unknown issues and aspects, facilitating the improvement in management practice outcomes</td>
<td>Requires good communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops relationships between forest managers and community members</td>
<td>Forest manager may not have decision-making authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves forest managers’ understanding of community members’ perspectives</td>
<td>Limited number of participants due to time constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable proactive changes to forest management practices, reducing conflict and tension</td>
<td>Difficult to transparently incorporate diverse discussions into outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to identify and understand stakeholders to include in CE processes</td>
<td>Not necessarily representative of broader public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[18] Everyday conversations are the most important CE technique for field foresters.
## INFORMAL COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS (CONT)

### CASE STUDY:
Informal community conversations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I usually go to the local market. I take my work vehicle with the logo on the side and multiple aerials, but I am not dressed in my work clothes. I go to a table and have a cup of tea and read the paper. Some people know who I am, others don’t. I just sit there in their environment. I might get 10 to 15 people who come across with their cup of tea to have a quiet chat with me, to find out what is going on and to tell me how they perceive the world.</td>
<td>By attending the local market, the opportunity for conversations is increased as people are ‘casual and relaxed’. The vehicle identifies that the person works for the forest management organisation; however, by not wearing the logo shirt, a more casual and comfortable environment is created, encouraging people to stop and have a chat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There was an old, heritage school site and we were going to haul logs down the road. A gentleman wanted to know what was going on and whether we were going to bulldoze the site. He told me that there was a significant cork tree there, which did not surprise me as I know that the gentleman has an interest in significant trees. We agreed to get the cork tree on the heritage register and to protect it. In addition, the local works depot had all their rubbish and stuff stored on the old school site. We cleaned it up and brought up all the old roses and made interpretive panels of the school days and everything. So the local historical society thinks we are the good guys and the roads department, who manage the site, are no good.</td>
<td>The forest manager here is a local and thus has local knowledge that is important when working with concerned community members, providing useful history and context. Having a prior knowledge of the people or the community helps to quickly assess likely management concerns and the local knowledge shared. In this situation, knowing that the gentleman has an interest in significant trees made it easy to accept his observations. While not always necessary or appropriate, going beyond minimum requirements to help the community can have long-term benefits for corporate and individual forest manager reputations. A good reputation is useful, reducing tension and emotions, thus enabling efficient CE process that can focus on future outcomes rather than initially spending time overcoming poor relations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key stakeholder interviews are used to elicit a detailed understanding of people's perspectives and feelings regarding a particular issue or concept [60]. Conducted over an hour or two, stakeholder interviews are an information-gathering exercise, useful for collecting details about key concerns and issues, selecting stakeholders for inclusion within committees, or evaluation processes [18, 60].

Key stakeholder interviews can be conducted over the phone, however it is better to conduct them in person where a more conducive environment can be created that encourages dialogue. ‘Casual’ conversations are typically used to generate a wide-ranging discussion rather than addressing a narrow question set [18]. This broad overview provides rich and contextual information and helps to reveal hidden concerns and ideas [18].

Currently key stakeholder interviews are not conducted in Australian forest management, however forest managers comfortable with informal community conversations would be well placed to conduct such interviews which are essentially a more structured and targeted conversation.

**References and websites**

International Association for Public Participation  
[http://www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)

Community Engagement Network (2005) *Effective engagement: building relationships with community and other stakeholders* Book 3 The engagement toolkit  

URP Toolbox – *Citizen science toolbox* [https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/](https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides detailed information not available through public forums</td>
<td>Requires expertise in qualitative analysis to analyse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-threatening forum</td>
<td>Expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for sensitive or complex issues</td>
<td>Limited number of people involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be conducted in languages other than English</td>
<td>Resource-intensive (time-consuming)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suited to people with low literacy</td>
<td>Interviewer needs to be able to engender trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be empowering or therapeutic for participants due to narrative response</td>
<td>Skilled interviewers required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful to evaluate potential committee participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves understanding of stakeholder concerns and issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targets stakeholders for specific knowledge or concerns</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

[18, 38, 60]
Letter notifications are a common form of CE within the forest industry [25]. Neighbour notifications (or letter drops) are a simple, cost-effective way of informing the people likely to be affected by impending forestry operations, typically the direct neighbours [25]. They are often used and are mandatory in many regulations.

Letter notifications usually provide basic operational information indicating what type of action is going to occur and who to contact regarding issues and concerns [25]. Notifications allow people an opportunity to contact the forest managers if they are concerned with the operations, or if they simply want to touch base and discuss other land management considerations.

Letter notifications are typically developed and distributed by administration staff through normal or registered mail, depending on the sensitivity of the issue. Some forest managers prefer to hand-deliver notifications to immediate neighbours. This personal approach allows for a two-way communication to proceed and builds a relationship between the community and the forest managers, although it requires significantly more time than mailed notifications. Hand delivering the notifications also overcomes the issues associated with state privacy laws where neighbour contact information is hard to obtain and ensures that residents of the area are informed, rather than absentee land owners who may not pass the important information on to rental tenants or land managers.

Considerations for the use of letter notifications include:

- **Timing** – letters should be timed to ensure enough opportunity for people to seek further information and respond.
- **Language** – letters should be written in a manner that encourages the reader to respond. Overly legalistic styling and language may inhibit some people’s capacity to understand the purpose of the letter and respond appropriately.
- **Content** – letters should only include details that are relevant to the purpose of the letter. Additional information can confuse some readers and thus reduce the effectiveness of the letter. Details regarding where to get further information can be provided.

Strengths vs. Weaknesses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost-effective</td>
<td>Privacy rules make it hard to contact the right people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>Literate people only may respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides opportunity to contact forest managers</td>
<td>One-way communication (initially)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only hear from people with concerns</td>
<td>Limits affected people’s involvement in active decision-making when used in isolation from other CE techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level of inclusivity, with selection of recipients usually limited to a specific distance from the proposed operation</td>
<td>Creates perception of increased chemical usage due to notification process, particularly where neighbours may be notified of several chemical applications within the first two years of plantation establishment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LETTER NOTIFICATIONS (cont.)

**CASE STUDY:**
**Letter notification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbours to a property being established as a plantation objected to the development with the local government and then tried to stop operations by challenging the forest practices being used and by taking all legal avenues they could to stop the plantation establishment. The neighbours did not contact the forest managers directly. The neighbours would have initially been notified of the operations by a letter notification sent through the mail. These neighbours were new land-owners and missed the initial notifications because they were addressed to the previous owner. By the time the forest managers started to address the concerns raised by the neighbours, the process was very formal. At no point in time did the neighbours indicate that they wanted to have a meeting with the forest managers, hence there was no opportunity for informal discussions, which can often readily resolve localised issues and concerns. The plantation was established, yet at a higher than usual cost, both financial and in terms of silvicultural quality. Letter notifications can provide an effective introduction to engagement; however, other forms of communication are also required to ensure all stakeholders are contacted, reducing the potential for embedded conflict.</td>
<td>Changes in land ownership can create problems for forest management organisations, as often people do not inform the appropriate authorities of the change in address and thus contact information can be significantly out of date. It is important to provide additional opportunities and/or forms of engagement to enable new land-owners to become involved. This is especially pertinent for those operations that are delayed or occur over an extended period of time. Some stakeholders will not want to engage with forest managers and instead seek external forms of decision-making control. While disappointing, it is important to continue to attempt communication with such stakeholders, utilising a variety of engagement techniques that may better suit the stakeholder’s circumstances. Informal communication is preferable to, but potentially less reliable than formal communication techniques. It allows opportunities for the development of relationships based on trust and respect. Poor CE outcomes can result in poor forest management outcomes, highlighting the importance of effective CE within operational forest management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The media is a very important tool for CE, providing avenues for information dissemination, generating public interest and promoting corporate activities [60]. While the media is primarily an informing tool, with very limited opportunities for involving people in decision-making, some recent innovations in technology enable increased levels of involvement.

Media stories can be an efficient way to distribute information on either a focused topic, or on general project-related issues. A range of media outlets should be targeted (e.g. radio and print media) to ensure that the information reaches the target audience [60].

Many CE practitioners recommend taking the time to develop a relationship with local reporters, especially in rural areas [32]. This encourages the reporter to have an interest in the issue and understand the relevant background.

We have included the following media-based CE activities:

- **Feature stories** – Media feature stories need to be of interest to the newspaper’s readers, typically sharing key aspects of the engagement activity, including how people can become involved and the importance of people’s opinions and inclusion within the decision-making process [32, 60].

- **Press releases** – Press releases provide an official summary of the project or activity being undertaken and include background and contact information [18]. Used either to disseminate results or raise awareness of a new activity, press releases are short and to the point [18]. Press releases are sent by email or fax to the relevant editors and reporters, with those interested following up with the relevant contacts. The Community Engagement Network handbook (2005) [18, p. 49] provides a detailed method on how to develop a media release.

- **News conferences** – An announcement regarding a topic or concern from a senior manager to stimulate public interest. Usually conducted in front of a range of media outlets. Usually undertaken for significant, newsworthy events.

- **Newspaper inserts** – Inserts aim to inform a large number of people about an issue or proposal [60]. Providing detailed information, inserts can include mail-back response sheets and thus contribute to public involvement. Inserts can provide high-level publicity for a project or engagement activity. The information should be presented in a clear and objective manner and kept focused on the target audience.

- **Television programs** – Television programming to present information (and elicit audience response where available) (e.g. **Going bush** – Forestry Tasmania). Provides a more visual form of data dissemination that people are perhaps better able to understand.

- **Advertising** – Uses various media formats to share specific information packages. Brings issues and activities to people’s attention quickly.

It is important to evaluate the outcomes of all forms of CE, especially media-based informing techniques. A lot of money, effort and time can be spent on informing people through the media, yet it is often unknown as to whether such information has been received by the target audience, their understanding of the key messages and how such messages can be improved for the future.

**References and websites**

*The guide to effective participation* by David Wilcox  
http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/  


URP Toolbox – *Citizen science toolbox*  
https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox

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Television programming can present information (and elicit audience response where available) (e.g. **Going Bush** – Forestry Tasmania).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media tool</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feature stories</strong></td>
<td>Cost-effective and time-effective</td>
<td>Requires good writing skills and understanding of media industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories written by journalists have ‘independence’</td>
<td>Relies on good relationships with journalists and editors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News content may be seen as unbiased, hence more credible</td>
<td>Journalists may control content, key message may not be delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engages a large number of people</td>
<td>Timing of publication is controlled by editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can be arranged quickly</td>
<td>Target group may not access media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can be written in multiple languages</td>
<td>Limited amount of information conveyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can heighten the perceived importance of the project</td>
<td>One-way form of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Article within a newspaper about a new processing facility that will generate employment within the community, or infrastructure works undertaken to protect a known cultural heritage site (e.g. old tram line, Aboriginal artefacts)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Media release</strong></td>
<td>Informs media of activity</td>
<td>Low media response rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Press release language/content often used in media articles</td>
<td>Often results in poor placement of press release in newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fast dissemination of information to many people</td>
<td>Difficult to retract if changes occur</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raises public awareness of activity</td>
<td>May be amended by reporters and lose key facts or change emphasis</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides the public with information about who to contact with a concern, or to be included</td>
<td>Limited amount of information can be conveyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helps to build a relationship with the media</td>
<td>Increased chance of acceptance when risk/controversy involved, which may not be the focus of the activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Generate media interest around important policy (e.g. cessation of conversion of native forest to plantations), management outcomes (e.g. awards for environmental programs, attainment of forest certification accreditation), or CE opportunities (e.g. upcoming public workshops, formation of advisory groups) where you would like to use to use the media to spread the information across the general public.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Press conference</strong></td>
<td>Arranged and conducted quickly</td>
<td>Little control over final content, key message may be lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No cost</td>
<td>No guarantee that news conference will be aired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaches all media in one setting</td>
<td>Target group may not access media outlet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited to newsworthy events</td>
<td>Media-trained presenters required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Announcement of organisation’s achievement of forest certification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media tool</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newspaper inserts</strong></td>
<td>Easily customised to suit target audience and engagement purpose</td>
<td>Can be expensive in urban areas due to the large number of inserts required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can reach large numbers of people</td>
<td>Target group may not access media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Published and distributed quickly</td>
<td>Not suited to people with low levels of literacy, visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achieves high level of publicity</td>
<td>May require professional design services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outlines engagement opportunities</td>
<td>Expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easily crosses geographic boundaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Distribute information to general public regarding proposed infrastructure facilities (e.g. pulp mill)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Television programs</strong></td>
<td>Many people will watch rather than read information</td>
<td>Difficult to gauge impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can control information</td>
<td>Showing times are often when few people are watching television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Can be seen as propaganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Forestry Tasmania’s Going bush program which talks about a range of forest management issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advertising</strong></td>
<td>Can be cost-effective</td>
<td>Can be expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaches a large and diverse audience</td>
<td>One-way form of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can target media outlet to suit audience</td>
<td>Only limited amount of information can be conveyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can include visual images</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can be written in other languages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Advertising of CE activities (public seminars, public meetings, submission processes, etc.)</td>
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</table>

[18, 32, 38, 60]
Multi-stakeholder partnerships involve companies and their stakeholders working together towards a common goal. Such partnerships may be with single or multiple stakeholder groups. Partnerships may work towards the development of voluntary regulations (e.g. Good Neighbour Charters), agreements between government and forest management companies (or whole of industry), or specific community-focused goals.

While often initiated informally, partnerships usually require a formal process and governance that helps the objectives of the partnership to become embedded within the organisation.

It is important to maintain relationships within partnerships, thus a variety of activities that encourage open and informal conversations are often used (e.g. networking functions, sharing meals).

Principles for effective partnerships
There are several key principles for effective partnerships, as documented in the Engaging Queenslanders – A guide to community engagement methods and techniques handbook (2005) [60, p. 39]:

- **Trust** – often established through previous relationships, shared actions will help to generate trust.
- **Mutual respect** – commitment to respect should be communicated through verbal and non-verbal behaviour and through collaborative actions (e.g. establishing partnership ground rules).

- **Clarity of roles and responsibilities** – roles need to be clarified and communicated in a number of forums (e.g. at meetings, in written material).
- **Agreement to listen** – there needs to be a commitment from all players to active listening.
- **Power sharing** – structures and agreements have to be put in place to acknowledge how power will be shared between partners.
- **Accessible and transparent decision-making structures** – decision-making structures need to be agreed, respected and communicated by all participants.
- **Empowerment** – an environment needs to be provided where there is conscious sharing of activities and learning opportunities and decision-making power.
- **Training, skills development and education for all partners** – conscious skill development creates meaningful community capacity, which contributes to personal, organisational and community change.

**References and websites**
Improvement Service Community Planning
http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/community-planning/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shares resources</td>
<td>Some stakeholders do not want to operate within partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be adapted to suit a variety of contexts</td>
<td>Power inequalities are always present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps build trust and long-term relationships</td>
<td>Requires significant effort to develop relevant terms of reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves acceptance of decision-making outcomes</td>
<td>Resource-intensive due to longevity of partnership and the need to maintain partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can help to identify and source additional funding (where required)</td>
<td>Diversity of represented perspectives and goals can result in a difficult working environment if not well facilitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops community capacity</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

[32, 60]
NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters are a useful form of communication that helps to inform stakeholders of ongoing activities, provide information regarding certain topics and provide a forum where stakeholders’ concerns are reflected and discussed [32, 60]. They are often developed on a regular basis and provide an opportunity to maintain contact with stakeholders and simultaneously maintain stakeholder awareness of issues and relevant projects.

Information is provided in a short and sharp format, using plenty of visual aids to grab the reader’s attention (e.g. photographs, tables, charts). Newsletters often include details regarding who to contact for additional information [32].

Newsletters are distributed predominantly by mail or online, therefore the effectiveness of newsletters is reliant on the mailing list that determines distribution [32]. It is therefore important to ensure that the mailing list is maintained and all interested stakeholder groups or individuals are included.

Handy hints for newsletters
- KISS – keep it simple and short. Use simple language that is easy to understand, don’t overload with information or make it look like spin.
- Q&A format often works well.
- Explain role of public (stakeholders) in content (where applicable).
- Make it eye-catching (use colour, photos, cartoons).
- Provide points of contact (e.g. Community liaison officer, website details). [18, 32, 38].

References and websites
The guide to effective participation by David Wilcox
http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/

The International Association for Public Participation
http://www.iap2.org


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relatively inexpensive to produce</td>
<td>If large numbers are produced can be costly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily distributed to a large number of people</td>
<td>No guarantee newsletter will be read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote direct contact between stakeholders and forest management organisations</td>
<td>Limited by the quality of the mailing list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps build community awareness and understanding</td>
<td>May require professional design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates commitment to engagement and listening to stakeholders</td>
<td>Not suited to people with low literacy levels or visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can include information from a range of stakeholders and perspectives</td>
<td>Limited amount of information can be conveyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-cost form of publicity</td>
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</table>

[18, 32, 38, 60]
Face-to-face meetings are a common form of CE within the forest industry, used to gain information regarding concerns, issues, perceptions and to develop relationships, trust and open lines of communication with stakeholders [32]. One-on-one meetings not only provide forest managers with a good understanding of community concerns, but they also help to develop relationships with the community and thus build trust and general goodwill [32]. People are able to put a face to the forest management organisation and thus are more comfortable in contacting the forest manager when a concern or issue arises in the future.

Typically arranged after a concern is raised by an affected community member, face-to-face meetings are often conducted on a one-to-one basis either at the kitchen table, or at the site of operations. The use of surroundings familiar to the community member provides a more comfortable and non-threatening environment, as opposed to a meeting in the forest manager’s office [32].

Some forest managers will conduct one-to-one meetings proactively prior to operations commencing. This can help explore in detail the likely social concerns expressed by affected residents and thus provide adequate time to work towards mutually suitable outcomes.

Issues of authority are important to consider, with junior forest managers often being ill-equipped to address the key questions raised and having little authority to provide direct responses to those concerns. This may result in stakeholders feeling perplexed or unsatisfied with the company’s response to their concerns.

Face-to-face meetings require the forest manager to have good communication skills in terms of conveying the proposed forest management options and then actively listening to stakeholder concerns [32]. It is important to provide feedback to participants following these meetings, with many participants requesting written feedback to confirm meeting outcomes. The timing of the feedback is essential, as too long a delay can result in mistrust and thus negate the benefits of the meeting. It is also important to ensure that feedback from these meetings reaches the planning team so that any concerns raised can be considered in the early phases of forest management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides detailed two-way information sharing, often targeted at real concerns</td>
<td>Time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatively easy to conduct</td>
<td>May require expertise in qualitative analysis to generate quality reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assists in the building of relationships, trust and goodwill</td>
<td>Can limit the range of stakeholders included within forest management decision-making process, hence important to ensure a breadth of stakeholder perspectives is included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable surroundings (non-threatening environment) help to break down communication barriers</td>
<td>Need appropriately skilled forest managers with suitable authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access views from broad range of community members, not only the key community members</td>
<td>Can exclude people affected by forestry operations due to narrow stakeholder selection criteria. For example, residents who live outside the immediate operational area but along the haulage route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases efficiency of forest management by identifying and, where possible, solving conflict early in management process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be used to evaluate potential community advisory committee members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective when working with people with low literacy levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be empowering or therapeutic for participants due to narrative response</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CASE STUDY:  
Face-to-face meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I actually walked around the neighbourhood over a period of three days and did 56 personal calls. I told them I was informing them, I wasn’t consulting them. I said, ‘We are going to be logging down your road and this is what we are planning to do. Do you have some needs? What are your needs?’ And we sat down, literally, in people’s kitchens, in their garages, on their front lawn and we were successful, we had no angst at all. That was a smaller resource, but the approach was not getting the masses together in a public hall down the road, it was one-on-one over three days. A face to a person and a card to show that we are a person and that we would take their concerns into consideration, but we were going to be logging”. (Forest manager)</td>
<td>Intense engagement activities are resource-intensive and thus not suited for all forest management organisations. However, the comprehensive coverage of the community may be seen as a commitment to the community, thus engendering trust and respect. In addition, the intense coverage improves inclusivity, with a significant proportion of the affected population being given the opportunity for involvement, at least in terms of having their concerns heard and addressed. The objectives of the engagement process were made clear, as was the limited level of decision-making influence being given to the community. This is important; while some participants may be unhappy with the informing process (perhaps preferring greater involvement), at least they knew where they stood and there was opportunity for them to realign their expectations. This intense process is well suited to localised operations. Showing that forest managers are people too is important in breaking down barriers to communication. Perceptions associated with the impersonal corporate face of plantation management can inhibit communication. Initial mistrust and negative perceptions can be overcome through informal personal interactions that encourage mutual information sharing and relationship development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References and websites


http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-5xmds8

“You know, on lots of issues you can use a very simple process. It is just one-on-one; stopping and doing the letter drop, getting to know the people and having cups of tea, and that is really successful for probably 70 to 80 per cent of the time.”  
Workshop participant (Vic.)
Open houses provide members of the community with an opportunity to meet and talk with forest managers, to ask questions on any issue and to make comments on various alternative management options [18, 32]. An open invitation is extended to all interested people to come and talk about a particular project, or general forest management issues [6]. Open houses are informal, designed to enable people to come and get information at their own convenience [18]. Primarily an informing technique, open houses can become more involving through the use of comment sheets and the incorporation of stakeholder comment in forest management decision-making.

Open houses are usually held in a large space (such as a hall or similar location, although sometimes a house, caravan or trailer), enabling a series of displays or work centres to be set up [32]. Usually incorporating several different forms of information (e.g. maps, GIS programs, posters, fact sheets and oral presentations), open houses can help provide a wealth of information to the community, which can be accessed by individuals at their own pace, with or without a forest manager guiding them through the exhibits [6, 38]. An ‘open day’ tends to infer that a particular facility is open for inspection on a particular day (i.e. a limited amount of time), whereas open houses tend to be open for extended periods. In other respects, there is little difference between open house and open day.

A range of forest managers (with varying management levels and expertise) need to be present in order to satisfy the range of enquiries, enable forest managers to learn first-hand the concerns and perceptions of the community and promote the development of relationships [32]. If only public relations staff are present, there is the chance that the open house would be perceived as spin [6].

Taking the open house to the people increases the chances of people coming through; hence open houses are often well suited when arranged in conjunction with other community events (e.g. agricultural shows, sporting events, markets, shopping malls) [6]. A range of advertising formats is required to ensure that a broad range of people are informed about the open house (e.g. radio, shopfront flyers, newspaper advertising, television and internet).

Forest managers should take notes to help remember comments and suggestions and follow-up activities should include a debrief session where notes can be compared and forest management strategies discussed [32]. An evaluative comment sheet for attendees can be useful to provide extra comment on both concerns and the efficacy of the open house [32, 38].

References and websites
International Association for Public Participation
http://www.iap2.org


URP Toolbox – Citizen science toolbox
https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/
## OPEN HOUSES OR OPEN DAYS (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost-effective when well attended</td>
<td>Expensive to resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful when the issue is of concern to the wider community</td>
<td>Difficult to predict numbers attending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can easily fit in with people's timetables as they are open for extended</td>
<td>Consideration of occupational health and safety issues is required,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>period of time and should be open at various times to allow for different</td>
<td>especially if innovative approaches are being used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groups to visit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a relaxed forum that is good for contentious issues</td>
<td>A list of concerns can be obtained by having feedback sheets and by staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>present writing notes, but little ability to know how widely held each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>view is. (Attendees are not a statistical sample)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group and one-on-one conversations have the opportunity to provide</td>
<td>Informality (low-key format) may inhibit people from asking questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>detailed comment</td>
<td>unless prompted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puts a face to forest managers</td>
<td>Protesters may disrupt the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds credibility</td>
<td>Requires significant planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides information in a range of formats (written/verbal)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of a range of forest management skills helps to answer difficult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or complex questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well suited to people with low literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful to increase awareness of issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[6, 17, 32, 38, 60]
While not always considered as CE tools, philanthropic donations and strategic community investments are important within local communities and can provide benefits to both communities and forest management organisations.

Philanthropic donations are the planned and structured giving of money, time, information, goods and services, voice and influence to improve the wellbeing of humanity and the community [50]. They include sponsorship arrangements and the in-kind donations of time or resources. Examples of philanthropic giving are donations to local sporting clubs and charities. Here, the driver is primarily about building reputation or a presence in the area. Strategic community investments, on the other hand, are investments that focus on adding value to the business in addition to society [28, 29]. They are longer term in nature and driven by core business needs. Potential examples of what forestry organisations could do include partnering with schools and educational institutions to build a local employment base; working with vulnerable, dependent communities to reduce their reliance on any one industry and attracting social and physical infrastructure to an area to enable the further development of the forestry industry.

While not usually involving the public in decision-making activities (although this is possible), philanthropic donations provide opportunities for forest managers to communicate with the public. Strategic community investments, on the other hand, are reliant on stakeholder involvement in their design and implementation.

The increased public awareness of forest management organisations that can result from corporate sponsorship of sporting clubs, community events, capacity building opportunities, and can provide a starting point for conversations. Creating a sense of familiarity with the organisation, people are more likely to ask questions when they meet with forest managers in social situations, or more formalised engagement events. As relationships strengthen, so does the willingness of people to work together with industry to address more pressing issues affecting the sustainability of their community.

Most forest management organisations have significant sponsorship budgets, some of which is distributed to large-scale events or causes by public relations personnel and some is made available for localised community activities. Trends in philanthropy are changing, with some companies moving away from general sponsorship towards strategic investments, focusing on activities or events that create community capacity such as youth training and multi-sector partnerships that combine resources to generate long-term significant outcomes for the community and the organisation. Other companies are focusing their sponsorship dollars on local groups that staff are involved with, thereby directly supporting their staff and encouraging community discussions through the presence of forest managers in these social settings.

**References and websites**
Philanthropy Australia


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can be cost-effective</td>
<td>Can be resource-intensive and/or costly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes forest management organisation to the broader public</td>
<td>Difficult to predict effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports local communities</td>
<td>Can be perceived as ‘buying out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deciding who should benefit and/or which options to support can be difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can be difficult to establish where investments made result in real change to the community or real benefit to the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little communication occurs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public meetings are a common form of general public consultation, often well accepted by the community due to familiarity with the process and expectations [18, 32, 60]. Public meetings provide an opportunity for people to meet, be informed on a project and express their concerns and opinions [32, 38]. While useful to increase people's awareness of an issue or proposal, public meetings have limited capacity to provide for interactive communication between forest managers and the concerned public. However, they are suited to basic information-sharing and as a starting point for more engaging CE techniques [18].

If a public meeting is to be used, it is best to be well planned. Public meetings can be effective if their purpose is stated clearly and the original agenda adhered to closely. It is important to ensure that well-trained facilitators are available. The availability of posters and other forms of information before and during the meeting can assist in both further clarifying the topic and providing additional information to assist attendees.

Often facilitated by external, independent facilitators, public meetings may require a panel of forest managers to respond to concerns and a person to record the concerns raised [6]. Questions that panellists cannot answer immediately can be recorded and addressed later through a public feedback mechanism such as a report of the outcomes of the public meeting, or a responsive summary.

Although a common form of public involvement in the past, public meetings are not often used in forest management in recent times due to their perceived ineffectiveness. Information-sharing at public meeting is often limited due to the impersonal nature of the technique and the diversity in concerns and goals shared by the audience. In addition, public meetings can often become difficult to manage due to highly vocal attendees restricting the capacity of others to participate effectively. This may occur in situations where community members feel that they have not had adequate opportunities to express their concerns, or in those situations where the issue maturity is at a well-publicised level (see Table 4, p. 38).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost-effective</td>
<td>Can be hijacked by vocal attendees, or get out of control due to conflict and emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful to gauge public opinions on issues or management options</td>
<td>Raised expectations of decision-making input at public meeting can result in dissatisfied attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information provided to a wide audience efficiently</td>
<td>Not suited to controversial topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raises public awareness of issues and future CE processes, may start community discussion</td>
<td>Provides little opportunity for constructive debate and decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible structure can be adapted to suit a range of purposes</td>
<td>Requires highly skilled facilitators to reduce perceptions of ‘us and them’ mentalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can provide social networking opportunities</td>
<td>Cannot guarantee full representation of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicly perceived as being a fair and good form of public involvement</td>
<td>Neutral environment is difficult to establish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May satisfy legal requirements</td>
<td>Facilitators/panel need to be well informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can target stakeholder groups and individuals for invitation</td>
<td>Can place high stress on company staff, leading to burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides opportunities to explore alternative strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[6, 18, 32, 38, 60]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We told the local shire that we were about to start log haulage down a road and they decided we'd have a public meeting, the shire and our company. I went along with all the facts, with the maps and said “This is what we would like to do. This is why we need to do it. These are some of the parameters that usually occur. This is your community.”</td>
<td>While taking a proactive approach in holding the public meeting prior to haulage beginning, there was little space left in the planning process for the community to significantly influence operations. The ‘facts’ and the maps were presented to the community and may have been perceived as ‘a done deal’ rather than as a good base from which to start communications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The community were outraged, to say the least. Some 261 residents were involved and over half showed up at the meeting. They hired a consultant to do a report and they got Worksafe involved. Worksafe tried to slap a notice on our company. We hadn't even moved one log truck down the road yet. They wanted to film a log truck to show all the dangers and we said “Yeah, we'll do that, that’s fine”. So we’ll work it out.</td>
<td>Such outrage may be resulting from the perceived narrow space left for the community to influence decision-making and express their concerns. The strong reaction of the community as an organised whole often occurs in situations where people feel they are fighting a common threat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So, we went through a long process asking them what their needs were. I welcomed their report. I sat down with the residents, I went to their kitchens and did all of that. The end result was that they actually lobbied the local councillors and the council actually voted to close the road to log trucks. The other options are uneconomical, 60km longer of dirt road to get this wood down.</td>
<td>CE is resource-intensive, often requiring the use of a significant number of engagement techniques to encourage the active participation of a range of people. However, engagement doesn’t always work regardless of the time and effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So it sounds great, early consultations, but some communities use it to make an issue very political. In this case, it moved the issue from the community right to the shire councillors basically. (Forest manager)</td>
<td>Early engagement may be beneficial in terms of providing sufficient time to develop relationships and share information. However, it may also provide sufficient time for community groups to form, and to and attract political interference. It is important to consider the positive and negative implications of all forms of engagement and the risks associated with early or late engagement opportunities. Once the risks are identified it is easier to openly discuss them and perhaps pre-empt potentially negative behaviours and outcomes and so that adequately designed engagement processes can be structured to reduce negative outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**References and websites**

International Association for Public Participation
http://www.iap2.org


URP Toolbox – *Citizen science toolbox*
https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/
The call for public submissions to proposed projects or forest management plans is a common form of public consultation. Providing an opportunity for detailed feedback, public submissions enable people to have their say without attending meetings, improving the information base available to decision-makers. Submissions can take many forms, including a letter, a short document or an extensive paper, with some submissions including appendices and supporting documents [18]. Good submissions are well prepared with justifications provided for arguments [18].

Public submission processes are a form of involving; however, the final decision-making power usually rests with the forest management organisation. It is beneficial for the organisation to provide detailed feedback to the public regarding how public comment was considered and included in the final decision-making process. This can be incorporated within the final report, or in the form of a responsive summary that specifically replies to concerns and comments raised, thus improving the transparency of the decision-making process.

Public hearings are a formal process where representatives of the public comment on a proposed plan, process and so forth [32]. Public hearings typically follow a strict schedule with predetermined speakers working from a prepared speech [32]. Typically, a panel of experts and/or decision-makers listen to and consider the arguments presented [6]. Public hearings formally record comments; however, such comments are usually non-binding [32]. In addition to oral presentations, public hearings usually provide an opportunity for written submissions. This may suit those community members who are not comfortable with public speaking in a formal environment.

Public hearings require good quality rooms, microphones and often a moderator. Unlike public meetings, which are a more open format, considerable work is required to identify speakers (both invited and interested stakeholders) and schedule venues, presentations, publicity and so forth.

Public hearings are not a typical CE tool used within the forest industry, where public submissions are more common.

References and websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public submission</td>
<td>Provides an opportunity for public input without having to attend meetings</td>
<td>Low response rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to build a mailing list of those people interested in further engagement</td>
<td>Poor representation of general public with often the same people/groups responding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May satisfy legal requirements</td>
<td>Data are not statistically valid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides detailed information on the broad range of concerns that exist within respondents</td>
<td>One-way information flow, little opportunity for constructive dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resource-intensive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not suited to people with low literacy levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public hearing</td>
<td>Formalised structure may satisfy legal requirements</td>
<td>Limited number of people can submit/present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a safe environment for comment, no opportunity for rebuttal</td>
<td>Raised expectations of decision-making input at public meeting can result in dissatisfied attendees and further conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicly perceived as being a fair and unbiased method of public involvement</td>
<td>Provides little opportunity for constructive debate and decision-making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorded comments provide useful information for planning</td>
<td>An ‘us and them’ mentality may form in the audience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often high-profile events that increase public awareness of process/understanding of issues</td>
<td>Formality can be daunting for some and thus limit opportunity for people to participate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited representation of general public, with mainly experts and vested individuals/groups presenting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[6, 18, 32, 38]
Role-play is when people take on designated roles (e.g. activist, forest manager, local government officer, neighbour) acting out characters to suit a predetermined scenario, followed by a critical discussion of the learning from the activity [18]. Role-play activities may seem flippant, or a little childish, however they provide a valuable opportunity for individuals to develop empathy and increase their understanding of another person’s perspectives that are likely to be present in forest management decision-making [18]. Such activities are often useful as an ‘icebreaker’, encouraging participant interactions in a fun, yet relevant exercise [18].

Role-play activities are usually facilitated to ensure that people participate fully, respecting their role and the roles of others. Props (e.g. clothing, hats, etc.) can be used to assist in getting participants to act and into character [18].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risk-free environment</td>
<td>Limited by people’s appreciation of other’s perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables participants to view situations from</td>
<td>Some participants may be insulted by other’s comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the perspectives of others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great icebreaker exercise</td>
<td>Some participants are not comfortable ‘acting’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves broader understanding of issues</td>
<td>Confusion may occur if there is not a clear line between the role-play and discussion activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun activity that promotes team-building</td>
<td>Requires skilled facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful to scope issues and conflicts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[18]

References and websites

International Association for Public Participation
http://www.iap2.org/

URP Toolbox – Citizen science toolbox
https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/

Community Engagement Network (2005) Effective engagement: building relationships with community and other stakeholders: Book 3 The engagement toolkit
Surveys collect information from the public in relation to a particular issue or project. Using a standard set of open and closed questions, surveys target either a specific group, or the broader population to provide a snapshot of community attitudes and ideas [18]. Typically used to help inform forest managers, surveys provide little opportunity for more detailed communication between forest managers and the survey participants.

Surveys can collect quantitative data (figures) or qualitative data (responses to open-ended questions), using questionnaires delivered face-to-face, over the phone, by post, or electronically [18]. Large-scale surveys may use a random sample to improve the statistical validity of the results, while others may use opportunistic sampling that may introduce forms of sampling bias (see [6] for a comprehensive overview of sampling bias and survey design concerns). It is important to understand the intended use of the survey results prior to designing the survey, thus ensuring an appropriate method of data collection and data analysis. Survey questions should be written in a clear, unambiguous manner that is impartial and relevant to the topic [60]. It is often useful to test the survey on a subset of the target audience prior to distribution [60].

Good survey design is important in order to obtain honest and defensible results, otherwise money may be wasted and credibility damaged.

Surveys are often impacted by low return rates. The inclusion of prepaid return envelopes can help improve return rates, as well as using follow-up letters and telephone calls to encourage the completion of the survey.

**References and websites**
The International Association for Public Participation http://www.iap2.org/


URP Toolbox – Citizen science toolbox https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides data that are easily traced</td>
<td>Poor results when done incorrectly (e.g. bad sampling, poor wording of questions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-designed and implemented surveys can reach a broad, representative sample of the public</td>
<td>Expensive when large numbers are surveyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can provide information regarding the views of the ‘silent majority’</td>
<td>Representative samples are difficult as only those interested in topic will complete surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May provide input from those people unlikely or unable to attend meetings</td>
<td>Tends to have low response rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistically valid results are credible to government and the general public</td>
<td>There is a limit to the level of detail that can be obtained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can elicit feedback from large and diverse groups of people</td>
<td>Participation fatigue may limit survey response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables comparisons between different community ‘groups’, between stages of forest management and can assist in long-term monitoring when conducted at regular intervals</td>
<td>Not suited to people with low levels of literacy, or visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can provide a large amount of data</td>
<td>May require expert design and data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can help to improve mailing lists</td>
<td>Not flexible due to design of questions and limited ability to provide additional information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent can complete at a time convenient to them</td>
<td>Limited capacity for two-way information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymity may result in more honest answers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost-effective for large amounts of data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[6, 18, 32, 38, 60]
The internet provides an excellent opportunity to share information and invite public comment on issues or projects of concern. With the Web 2.0 interface rapidly expanding (includes interactive and collaborative web applications such as social networking sites, blogs, etc.), a diverse range of consultation and dialogue opportunities are available using the internet. The internet enables the community to contribute their views in a non-threatening and comfortable environment. In addition, forest management organisations can distribute large amounts of information to the public in a controlled and cost-effective manner.

People can access information and participate in decision-making using a variety of available mechanisms including [38, 60]:

- **Information-based websites** – provide highly accessible information and links to other websites. Requires a good, well-designed home page.
- **Interactive websites** – interactive websites use modern technology to enable online involvement and consultation.
- **Online discussion boards** – providing a space for online conversations regarding public concerns and can promote transparency and the forest management organisation's approachability. Discussion boards offer opportunities for forest managers to learn more about community perceptions and concerns.
- **Internet surveys and questionnaires** – surveys and questionnaires can be used to gauge public opinion or obtain information from the public.
- **Listservs/email** – listservs are automated email lists that enable subscribers to send messages to the list. They provide opportunities for discussions like online discussion boards and also enable information to be disseminated to a large number of people quickly. Alternatively, email feedback forms can be easily set up within websites.
- **Internet forums** – similar to discussion boards, participation can be limited to particular stakeholder groups, or open to the public. Internet forums provide an opportunity to openly discuss a particular concern or project within a given time frame.

**References and websites**
The International Association for Public Participation
http://www.iap2.org

URP Toolbox – Citizen science toolbox
https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology is well advanced</td>
<td>Results may be skewed by multiple responses to online surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides an opportunity for people who are uncomfortable with group meetings to participate in a non-threatening environment</td>
<td>Requires resources to adequately respond (monitor/moderate) in a timely manner and maintain information (information updates, email lists, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A large audience can be reached quickly</td>
<td>Due care and consideration regarding privacy and confidentiality is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can participate at a time that suits</td>
<td>Limited to those people with access to the internet and capacity to use the internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost-effective</td>
<td>Difficult to gauge effect of information or engagement opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information is controlled by the forest management organisation; changes can be made easily</td>
<td>Too much available information can make it difficult to find relevant details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can provide publicity, information and limited forms of public input</td>
<td>Email listservs can generate too much information, limiting what information is read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information is easily disseminated by readers to other interested people</td>
<td>Online information is not trusted by all community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information is available all the time</td>
<td>Large files can take some time to download</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saves on printing and mailing costs</td>
<td>Representation of stakeholders is important to consider, with online users often higher educated and wealthier than ‘average’ community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information can be presented in multiple languages</td>
<td>Difficult to manage the large volumes of feedback generated through the internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides access to information for those in remote areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[6, 18, 38, 60]
WORKSHOPS

Workshops are informal meetings that promote the mutual learning and sharing of information between a diversity of participants, drawing out a range of views and opinions [18]. Workshop participants are often invited based on their knowledge and expertise, or to ensure a diversity of perspectives [18]. Workshops can be used for a variety of outcomes, including to set future strategies (visioning or brainstorming), or to develop solutions to problems [6].

Working together in large and small group formats, workshops usually focus on a specific goal or concern [6]. Used to involve participants in information development and building solutions; workshops can be designed to suit a range of engagement levels, from consulting to collaboration.

Workshops can take a variety of forms depending on the purpose and expected outcomes. Often incorporating a mix of communication formats including presentations and group activities (including a variety of engagement techniques) workshops are effective in building relationships through informal and personalised interactions [18].

If using workshops with community members, it is important to clarify how their input and efforts will be used in decision-making processes. Often expert facilitation is used to ensure that all participants are involved in the discussion and that basic ground rules of participation are followed (mutual respect, participants are not intimidated by others, etc).

References and websites
The International Association for Public Participation
http://www.iap2.org
URP Toolbox – Citizen science toolbox
https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can be adapted to suit a variety of contexts</td>
<td>Small-group work may be difficult for some participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps build long-term relationships</td>
<td>May require several trained facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides detailed comment through small group and one-on-one interactions</td>
<td>Difficult to ensure fully representative participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The diversity of participants helps to draw on other people’s knowledge when discussing complex problems, promoting innovation</td>
<td>Qualitative outputs may require expert analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds credibility</td>
<td>Difficult to summarise outcomes and document the process/results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters participant ownership in solving the problem(s)</td>
<td>Requires considerable planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximises participant feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables detailed discussions regarding forest management issues and the development of alternative practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be designed to target specific groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds community capacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[18, 32, 38]
Evaluation of community engagement

What is in this section?

• why evaluation is an important part of community engagement
• how to conduct an effective evaluation

Key points

• Evaluation can help determine whether an engagement process met its objectives in an efficient and effective manner.
• Evaluation is a multi-stage process with phases relating to the design of the evaluation program, data collection, data sharing, and actioning evaluation results.
• Evaluation is useful at all stages of the community engagement process and should be considered as a form of feedback to further develop both the individual community engagement process and the forest management company’s community engagement practices over time.
Evaluation of community engagement (CE) processes helps to improve future engagement processes by examining the perceived successes and failures of the process [6, 41]. Using performance standards or known expectations to judge CE processes and outcomes, evaluation can foster learning from previous experiences, inform the planning of new CE activities and enable the reporting on current practices [41].

Johnson [41, p. 4] describes three important roles or purposes for undertaking the evaluation of CE processes, with a good evaluation process providing for all three roles:

- **summative evaluation** – considers performance monitoring and reporting against objectives (“did we do a good job?”)
- **formative evaluation** – looks at CE management and aims for continual improvement (“what can we do better?”)
- **evaluation research** – develops shared knowledge base for good CE practice (“What have we learnt to help improve our practices?”).

While each of these roles provides some benefit for forest managers and the development of improved CE practices, it may be unrealistic to pursue each role in every evaluation process. Carefully considered and designed evaluation processes will help to ensure an appropriate balance of the three evaluation roles is achieved, while satisfying the overall evaluation objectives.

Evaluation processes require all parties to critically review the outcomes of CE processes, and their actions within the process and how they can improve their own interactions in engagement situations.

Benefits of evaluation may include [41, 47, 60]:

- improved CE practice and capacity through shared learning and feedback (reflexivity)
- better understanding of the factors that support or hinder CE
- enabling best practices standards to be developed
- developing stronger relationships through clear feedback and a commitment to open processes
- providing a focus for future actions through a better understanding of key insights and agreements
- improving business processes and strategic goals through better aligned policies and action plans.

Well-planned evaluation procedures ensure that data collation is efficient by proactively understanding what information is needed. Evaluation is most effective when incorporated into normal operations, enabling ongoing feedback and opportunity for early intervention where required [17].

---

3 This section of the handbook draws significantly on the work completed by Johnson [41] from the Queensland Government Department of Communities.
When planning an evaluation process the following questions should be considered [17, p. 37]:

- What is the purpose of the evaluation (desired outcomes)?
- Who wants to know what (evaluation audience)?
- What evidence will need to be collected and how (data needs)?
- What resources are required and when (resource needs)?

**Example:**
You undertook a series of public workshops to work towards a new strategic plan for an area of forest and want to know if this format enabled participants to share their views and whether they accepted the decision-making processes offered. Senior managers want to know if the process worked and if it was worth the associated costs in terms of time, money and management concessions. CE practitioners want to know how to improve future workshop processes to benefit forest managers and community participants. You will need to know what participants liked/didn't like about the process. Given the low participant numbers, key informant interviews are an applicable form of data collection yet this will require trained staff to collect and analyse the data.

**How to conduct an evaluation process**

Johnson [41] describes an excellent process for the design and implementation of an evaluation process and this underpins the following recommendations. Evaluation can be approached as a staged process including: (1) the development of an evaluation plan (deciding what data collection tools to utilise), (2) collecting and analysing data, (3) interpreting and sharing the data through reporting procedures, and (4) acting on the data.

Naturally, the scope of the evaluation process depends on the context and objectives of the initial CE process [41]. A minor CE process that involves discussions and action over a boundary fence is unlikely to warrant an extensive evaluation process. Simple observation and recording of outcomes in a relevant database is suited to such an activity, and useful for subsequent evaluation of overall CE programs within forest management organisations.

**Developing an evaluation plan**

Like the CE process itself, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation, with the design of the evaluation process adapting to suit the CE objectives, the significance of the forest management activity, and the anticipated evaluation audience [41].

For evaluation to work effectively, it is best if it is part of the ongoing management of CE activities [17]. The primarily small operational CE activities undertaken by plantation managers do not need expensive evaluation processes. Tools such as questionnaires or short interviews may be adequate when such information is appropriately collected, recorded and analysed.

The social context of the CE processes is an important consideration when designing evaluation processes. Understanding the community context can help to recognise influencing external factors, interpret results, identify the risks and benefits associated with different forms of data collation [41].
An evaluation plan needs to consider the following [17, 41]:

- **The CE activities that have been undertaken** – It is important to be clear about what the goals, objectives, processes and desired outcomes of the CE activity were, as this is what the process will be judged by. Note, however, that different participants in the CE process, including the community members themselves, will have different expectations. This clarification helps to guide the evaluation, including helping to develop the evaluation questions and performance criteria and indicators.

- **Potential external factors that may influence the CE outcomes** – These may include sociopolitical influences such as extensive media attention, environmental factors such as wildfires or extreme weather, or personal influences such as family tragedy, change of workplace, or illness.

- **Why evaluation is required and who is the intended audience** – The purpose of the evaluation influences the likely audience and the evaluation participants.

- **Who are the important stakeholders for the evaluation and what are their requirements** – Some stakeholders have particular requirements that need to be considered when planning evaluation processes (e.g. government agencies, funding bodies).

- **Who will conduct the evaluation** – Some evaluation may be conducted by internal staff, while in other situations it may be prudent to use external evaluators. Factors to consider when choosing who to conduct the evaluation include: its purpose, political and personal considerations, available resources, scale and significance of the CE process, and the proposed evaluation outputs [41].

- **What questions need to be answered** – Evaluations typically address four key topics that guide the development of specific evaluation questions, and data collection and analysis methods [41]:
  - What happened in the CE process? Describe the process and outcomes (e.g. What were the outcomes? Did community perceptions change? What factors influenced the process or outcomes?)
  - What can we improve in future processes? Compare what happened with what should be happening (e.g. What has worked and how can we build on it? What has not worked and how can we fix it?)
  - Was the process successful? Consider the overall performance of the CE process and identify learning (e.g. Were the process objectives met? In what way was the process efficient?)
  - What have we learnt from this process? Build the knowledge base about CE practices. Includes broad overviews of critical factors influencing CE outcomes (e.g. Why did people participate or not and what factors influenced their participation efficacy?)

- **What information is required** – This is typically categorised into quantitative data in the form of numbers, or qualitative data in the form of words (see Theory box 4, page 117).
What are the performance criteria and indicators – Performance criteria are used to judge outcomes, providing a standard based on the objectives of the CE activity (including desired outputs and outcomes, principles of process, and the efficiency of the process) [41]. Indicators are used to measure the quality of CE activities against the performance criteria. When determining indicators it is important to consider the external influences on proposed indicators, and how readily and reliably the proposed indicators can be measured [41]. For example, a common measure of process effectiveness used in evaluations is how many people attended meetings – but low attendance may mean many things, including lack of ability to attend, little concern, or an unwillingness to attend despite holding significant concerns. Some qualitative indicators such as participants’ perceptions of fairness, or of the quality of the decision-making process are difficult to measure reliably, with external influences potentially affecting their perceptions (e.g. entrenched values against plantation establishment may result in negative perceptions of any CE occurring during plantation establishment phases).

What data is available – What existing data sources will provide the necessary information to answer the evaluation questions?

What new data is required and how can it be collated and analysed – What are the gaps in knowledge and can the required new information be gathered in a manner that reflects available resources and complies with privacy and ethical regulations [41]? When designing data collection methods such as questionnaires and interviews, it is important to consider the characteristics of the respondents (age, location, literacy, etc).

When data should be collected – Evaluation data can be collected at various points before, during and after the CE activity, with the best data collection points dependent on the purpose of the evaluation [41], although continuous feedback and adaptive management is always useful.

For many small operationally based CE processes, such a large-scale evaluation plan could be considered excessive. In these instances, a practical review of the CE process could be undertaken, asking the basic questions used to determine whether a process was successful [2]:

- What aspects went according to plan?
- What aspects didn’t go according to plan?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Did the engagement make an impact on stakeholders’ views and/or behaviour?
- Did the engagement make an impact on the company’s views and/or actions?

The appropriate documentation of these basic questions can help when analysing CE trends and outcomes, thus the use of a template as shown in Table 9 can be helpful. Additional templates for evaluation are provided in Table 11 and Table 12.
Collecting and analysing data

Collecting evidence to determine the effectiveness or outcomes of a CE process is difficult due to the often subjective nature of CE outcomes, the intangible nature of outcomes such as improved relationships and collaboration, and the long-term focus of many CE benefits with some effects not obvious until some time after the CE process is completed [17].

The common tools used within CE evaluation that are well suited for use by forest managers are listed in Table 10. These tools have been selected based on the common CE techniques applied in forest management and the perceived capacity of forest managers to conduct evaluation in terms of both resources and aptitude. The tools listed here can be adapted to suit the intended purpose and audience of the evaluation.

Each tool used to collect data for evaluation comes with a range of strengths and weaknesses that need to be considered when designing an evaluation process. Such weaknesses include the time-consuming nature of some tools (e.g. interviews), which make such tools expensive, and the potential influence of the interviewer on responses with poorly designed interview questions or poorly conducted interviews potentially resulting in restricted answers that simply reflect social desirability rather than individual's perceptions. Many weaknesses can be overcome with careful selection of appropriate tools for your evaluation purpose, careful question design, and adequate training for those undertaking the evaluation process (e.g. specialised interview training).

Interpreting and sharing the data

Interpreting and reporting of evaluation results is determined by the evaluation's purpose and audience, and the existing reporting framework (e.g. regulatory compliance, internal company policies, forest certification requirements) [41].

Interpreting the results of evaluation processes can be difficult as people interpret information in different ways, and external factors can influence evaluation results [41]. For smaller operational engagement processes (e.g. face-to-face meetings), in-house interpretation may be adequate. However, for larger engagement processes (e.g. public submission processes), it may be useful to encourage a more participatory approach to evaluation, where engagement participants are actively involved in interpreting evaluation data. If resources are limited, the use of a reference group can be useful to discuss the findings of an evaluation and help identify the multiple meanings.

Results of evaluation programs can be shared though internal and external mechanisms, including websites, research reports, professional publications, field days and workshops, public and internal staff seminars [41]. It is important to consider the following when sharing evaluation results [41, pp. 37–38]:

- Ensure results are reported appropriately by:
  - using an accurate and unbiased manner
  - having explicit assumptions and value judgments
  - presenting data in a comprehensive, rather than selective way.

- Make reports user-friendly, be concise and use plain English with little jargon.

- Make sure results are reported in a timely manner, providing information within a timeframe that is useful to decision-makers.
• Make sure results are shared as widely as possible. This does not need written forms of feedback only, often verbal feedback is appropriate especially for informal forms of engagement and when working with people with low literacy levels. Verbal feedback should also be recorded by forest management organisations (e.g. within databases) for inclusion in whole program evaluation and analysis.

• Consider the ethical and political sensitivities and risks attached to evaluation. Evaluation results are vulnerable to misuse and misinterpretation, ensure reports provide clear guidance on the reliability and applicability (scope) of results and how they should be interpreted.

• Avoid over-generalising results. Ensure that results specify to whom they apply and the likely timeframe for which they hold true.

• Avoid making value comparisons between situations.

**Acting on evaluation results**

It is important to use evaluation results proactively, learning from past experience and promoting continual improvement in CE practice, developing a better understanding of communities, and broadening the knowledge base used within the broader scope of plantation management.

Evaluation procedures typically produce a list of findings and recommendations that are used to develop strategies for improved future CE practices [41]. Such strategies include the problem being addressed, desired management changes, personnel responsible for implementing change, appropriate procedures to facilitate change, follow-up monitoring and communications with stakeholders, and the appropriate timeframe within which change is to delivered [41].

**References and websites**


Table 9: Engagement evaluation self-review template
To be completed by community engagement practitioners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement process: (e.g. name of stakeholder, advisory group, planning process (Smithsville Estate Management Plan 2010-2015 Public Consultation))</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall engagement assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process targets/ signals of success.</td>
<td>(e.g. on attendance, progress, stakeholder satisfaction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What targets did you set?</td>
<td>To what extent did this engagement meet its process targets?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement objectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you want to achieve?</td>
<td>To what extent did this engagement meet its process objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall how well did it go?</td>
<td>Worst case scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What went according to plan?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What didn’t go according to plan?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you do differently next time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the engagement make an impact on participants’ views and/or behaviour?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the engagement make an impact on the company’s views and/or actions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AccountAbility [2, p.133]
When determining what information is required to answer evaluation questions, the following considerations are important [41] (p. 22):

- Is the question better answered by qualitative or quantitative data or a mixture of both?
- What type of information is the proposed evaluation audience likely to understand and accept?
  - A preference for statistics suggests quantitative data is best
  - A preference for stories of personal experiences suggests qualitative data is best
- What type of information are the evaluation participants willing to provide?

Often a combination of qualitative and quantitative data is used in evaluation. Qualitative approaches evoke ‘stories’ that help to identify significant issues of concern and external influencing factors, helping to create a shared understanding of the meaning of the data. Quantitative approaches create data in the form of numbers and statistics and often include a broader range of people due to less intensive research techniques [41]. The table below provides the basic differences between qualitative and quantitative data, including the advantages and disadvantages of each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of quantitative and qualitative data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantitative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data is in the form of numbers and is analysed statistically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require variables to be predetermined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data often includes closed-responses (yes/no, frequencies, and responses to Likert scales¹).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to provide snapshots for comparisons against criteria &amp; indicators, capture trends, and identify cause and effect relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data is in the form of words and is analysed using a range of qualitative data analysis methods, often with the assistance of software such as NVivo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not require predetermined variables as it predominantly uses open-ended and exploratory questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to gather perceptions on experiences, identify influencing factors, and provide evidence in the form of ‘stories’ to illustrate outcomes, patterns, or insights.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ A Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly used in questionnaires, requesting respondents to specify their level of agreement to each of a list of statements.
Table 10: Evaluation tools suited to the evaluation of community engagement processes conducted by forest managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strengths/Weaknesses</th>
<th>Best suited to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structured interviews</td>
<td>A face-to-face discussion with an individual. Predominantly closed standardised questions are carefully ordered and worded in a detailed interview schedule. Each subject is asked exactly the same questions, in the same order.</td>
<td>Strengths: closed and identical questions enable aggregated data analysis. Weaknesses: time-consuming, expensive, influenced by interviewer skill and characteristics, closed questions limit the sharing of additional information and meanings, prone to ‘response sets’ (e.g. ‘yea-saying’ &amp; ‘nay-saying’, and answers that reflect social desirability rather than individual’s perceptions).</td>
<td>Preliminary evaluation of community concerns (or engagement processes) to identify key concerns, concepts and influences for further investigation exploration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>A face-to-face discussion with an individual. Uses a loose, informal interview guide where question topics are predetermined, yet the question wording may vary with the interviewer using probes for more information.</td>
<td>Strengths: open questions and probes encourage the sharing of more information and meaning. Individual meanings, context and interview cues make it difficult to aggregate results. Weaknesses: time-consuming, expensive, influenced by interviewer skill and rapport with interviewee, prone to ‘response sets’ (e.g. ‘yea-saying’ &amp; ‘nay-saying’, and answers that reflect social desirability rather than individual’s perceptions).</td>
<td>Evaluation processes that require ‘stories’, or context around answers. Can be used to inform the development of questionnaires etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys/questionnaires</td>
<td>Includes face-to-face, phone and mail questionnaires. Often used in formal surveys.</td>
<td>Strengths: can involve a large number of people efficiently, data may be suited to generalisations, anonymity may encourage honest answers. Weaknesses: requires high level of literacy, may require extensive follow-up activities to ensure adequate response rate, diversity in the interpretation of question meaning influences data quality, wording of questions is crucial, prone to ‘response sets’ (e.g. ‘yea-saying’ &amp; ‘nay-saying’, and answers that reflect social desirability rather than individual’s perceptions), inconsistencies between stated behaviour/perceptions and actual behaviour/perceptions reduces data quality.</td>
<td>Gauge ‘public’ opinion of engagement activities including what worked and what didn’t.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10: Evaluation tools suited to the evaluation of community engagement processes conducted by forest managers (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strengths/Weaknesses</th>
<th>Best suited to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Involves the gathering of people to discuss a topic. A facilitator is used to pose questions and help the discussion stay on track.</td>
<td>Strengths: participants can be selected to suit the purpose/topic of the discussion, interactive in-depth discussions can be held with a diversity of stakeholders around specific topics, interactions may result in innovative ideas, relationships can be developed among participants. Weaknesses: issues of power can influence focus group discussions and outcomes, required skilled facilitation, participants may not be comfortable in a group environment, can be time-consuming and hence expensive.</td>
<td>Preliminary evaluation of concerns (or engagement processes) to determine key concepts and influences for further exploration (e.g. to inform the development of questionnaires). Can be used to derive future strategies that implement learnings from CE or evaluation processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer/expert review</td>
<td>Refers to different processes conducted at different project stages with different purposes involving review of:</td>
<td>Strengths: provides detailed ongoing review of process effectiveness thus allowing for alterations/improvements to be made early, flexible technique that can be adapted to suit small or large-scale engagement processes Weaknesses: may slow engagement processes down, resource-intensive.</td>
<td>Any engagement process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10:
Evaluation tools suited to the evaluation of community engagement processes conducted by forest managers (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strengths/Weaknesses</th>
<th>Best suited to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct measurement</td>
<td>Information is collected directly during the engagement process using various methods (e.g. being involved in the process and observing other participants).</td>
<td>Strengths: direct involvement provide crucial context knowledge, ongoing data collection enables alterations to the process to occur early thus improving likelihood of success, ongoing measurement reflects commitment to engagement and its outcomes Weaknesses: role of evaluator can be clouded by participation/observation, ongoing data collection may result in too much data and too little resources to adequately respond.</td>
<td>Any engagement process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project records</td>
<td>Review of available documentation from and about a project. May include documentation regarding process design, purpose, outcomes, or process, or information record by participants in the form of diaries, records and learning logs.</td>
<td>Strengths: when planned properly encourages detailed documentation of process and outcomes, transparent form of review Weaknesses: retrospective review may lack context and hence explanatory capacity.</td>
<td>Larger scaled engagement processes that have sufficient documentation (much operational ‘ad hoc’ engagement will not have sufficient documentation for such a review).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary sources</td>
<td>Use of information that already exists. For example, media stories, publicly available reports, demographic data, industry-based data, meteorological data and environmental data.</td>
<td>Strengths: may enable a mix of qualitative and quantitative analysis, has the potential to provide a rich contextual background to the review Weaknesses: quality of information may be unknown, can be costly to obtain some data sources (e.g. census data), various data scales and ‘boundaries’ can make analysis difficult, purpose of the initial data collection may not suit/limit the new purpose.</td>
<td>Supporting data for analysis and explanatory purposes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from [17]
### Table 11: Stakeholder evaluation of completed engagement processes

To be completed by stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement process: (e.g. name of stakeholder, advisory group, planning process)</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant name (optional):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you want to achieve from this engagement process? (please tick those appropriate and provide comment if necessary)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An opportunity to raise my concerns regarding forest management operations</td>
<td>An opportunity to discuss alternative forest management techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An opportunity to participate in decision-making that may affect me</td>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An opportunity to participate in decision-making processes I am interested in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An opportunity to meet the forest managers working in my local area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How well did the engagement process enable you to share your ideas and concerns?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Were you satisfied with how you were treated during the engagement process?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied at all</td>
<td>Fully satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How satisfied were you with the information and feedback you received during the engagement process?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied at all</td>
<td>Fully satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall how well did the process satisfy your objectives?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied at all</td>
<td>Fully satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you like about the engagement process?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you dislike about the engagement process?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What would you like to see happen in future engagement activities?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


### Table 12: Sample questions for evaluation of engagement using semi-structured interviews with stakeholders

The following questions may be useful as a guide to the types of open-ended questions you could ask stakeholders following an engagement activity. Open-ended questions allow the participant to use their own words, which encourages a richer description of their perceptions of the engagement process. While more difficult to analyse than closed responses that can be quantitatively scaled or ranked, open, narrative-style responses can result in a more comprehensive understanding of their engagement experience. Such interviews may be completed over the phone or in person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Probe (if required)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Can you please describe for me the engagement process that you were</td>
<td>Where did this take place?</td>
<td>Gets a description of the process from the participant’s perspective, which may include contextual information such as background to the problem. The probe identifies the location, which helps understand likely power relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recently involved in.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How did you become involved in the process?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Helps identify the influences that trigger involvement in forest management engagement processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Were any other people involved in the process?</td>
<td>Who else was involved? Do you know why they wanted to be involved?</td>
<td>Helps determine social context and likely power relations, group dynamics and other factors that may influence CE outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What did you want to achieve from the engagement process?</td>
<td>Why did you want to achieve this?</td>
<td>Individuals’ expectations heavily influence their perceptions of the engagement outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you feel that you achieved this?</td>
<td>Why do you feel this way?</td>
<td>Highlights influences on achieving expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What did you like the most about the engagement process?</td>
<td>Why did you like ‘x’?</td>
<td>Identifying positive aspects of CE processes helps to ensure such aspects are included in future CE activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What did you dislike the most about the engagement process?</td>
<td>Why did you dislike ‘y’?</td>
<td>Identifying negative aspects of CE processes helps to ensure such aspects are not included in future CE activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you feel that you were treated properly during the process?</td>
<td>Can you explain this further?</td>
<td>CE relies on the build of relationships, negative perceptions of stakeholder treatment restricts the capacity of CE to promote positive relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Did you trust the forest manager during the engagement process?</td>
<td>Did your trust in the forest manager change during the process? Why?</td>
<td>Trust is integral to CE and may be developed during the CE process. Understanding changes in trust development helps to better design and implement future CE processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What would you like to see happen in future engagement processes?</td>
<td>Why would you like to see this?</td>
<td>Identifying preferred CE approaches can help to design and test new methods of CE that suit both forest managers and stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Would you become involved in future engagement processes with this company?</td>
<td>Why?</td>
<td>Helps to identify the overall success of the CE process in terms of relationships and trust.</td>
</tr>
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Handbook for operational community engagement within Australian plantation forest management
Forest management is a complex mix of changing and often competing social values. Encouraged by multiple levels of government, commercial plantation management draws considerable attention from local, regional and even international audiences. Community engagement (CE) offers an opportunity for forest managers to actively discuss social concerns, while showcasing positive forest management practices and a willingness of forest managers to actively work with their communities. In addition, CE can help to improve forest management practices through an ongoing commitment to shared learning among colleagues and communities, continued reflection on personal behaviours and outcomes, and the development of relationships and social networks.

Unfortunately, many forest managers have little experience or training in CE, which results in only shallow approaches to CE being used. While vocational training and professional development in the forestry profession is undergoing change, it remains predominantly focused on environmental and occupational health and safety concerns. This handbook provides a much-needed resource for forest managers conducting CE in operational plantation forest management. Australian plantation forest management organisations are committed to socially responsible practices, as highlighted by the high proportion of plantations certified by third-party forest certification schemes.

This handbook has attempted to synthesise the many excellent resources available regarding CE, and the shared experiences of forest managers working with communities on a daily basis. Many handbooks are written with a generic government or community development framework, whereas this handbook has focused on the commercial environment of Australian plantation forest management. It is hoped that such a focus is helpful for forest managers, providing sufficient background and detail to enable forest managers to properly consider the social environment in which they are operating, and consequently design, implement and evaluate a successful engagement process.

It is important to recognise that CE is about more than simply talking with the community. Good CE also requires an ongoing commitment to follow-through on agreed actions, and seeking continuous improvement facilitated through ongoing evaluation and reflexive practice.

While this handbook has attempted to provide a comprehensive resource for Australian forest managers, the diversity of forest management contexts, and the dynamic nature of social values, commercial markets and international politics, may result in a need for information not provided here. The authors therefore encourage forest managers to actively seek additional information and, where possible, to share such information with colleagues, thereby encouraging the development of a range of skills and understandings.


References and recommended resources


Useful websites


David Wilcox, The guide to effective participation http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide


Improvement Service Community Planning http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/community-planning/

International Association for Public Participation http://www.iap2.org/index.cfml

National Charrette Institute http://www.charretteinstitute.org/


Public Conversations http://www.publicconversations.org


Social Analysis Systems http://www.sas2.net/

URP Toolbox – Citizen science toolbox https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Glossary</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity building:</strong> The ongoing development of skills, knowledge, expertise, networks and relationships within and between individuals or groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborating:</strong> Working with other interested people, sharing knowledge, experience and ownership of outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication:</strong> The use of verbal or written messages to share knowledge or information.</td>
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<td><strong>Community:</strong> The term used to describe a range of social situations where people interact. Can be grouped or categorised, such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Geographic location – describes a common form of community where all residents of an area are considered a community (community of place)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interest-based – describes communities reflecting their common interest such as environmental or social activism, sporting interests (community of interest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identity-based – describes the sharing of a common identity such as age, ethnicity, culture, lifestyle, occupation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within commercial forest management the definition of community can vary depending on the purpose of the engagement process. Predominantly, those people most impacted by forest management operations are involved in the community of place.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community capacity:</strong> Includes the social institutions, networks, organisations, leadership and skills that enable individual communities to manage change and actively lead the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community consultation (consulting):</strong> The process whereby people are invited to share their concerns, ideas and general feedback on management plans or proposed activities. Consideration of information received may be fed back into planning development processes; however this is not always the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community engagement (CE):</strong> A social process that includes the active identification of and communication with communities and stakeholders who are affected or interested in management activities (such as forest management, silvicultural operations, harvesting, log transport, etc.). CE enables decision-makers and community members to have an opportunity to share concerns and knowledge and to derive mutually acceptable outcomes. CE includes the variety of interactions among decision-makers and the community, ranging from basic information sharing to more empowering, community-based management processes where decision-making control is shared with (or given to) the community, as opposed to the usual arrangements where government or large management organisations retain decision-making control.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Corporate social responsibility (CSR):</strong> The business decision-making that goes well beyond compliance with legal requirements, to connecting corporate practice, to ethical values and to respect for people, communities and the environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogue:</strong> A conversation between two (or more) people that enables the exchange of views and opinions, encouraging the exploration and understanding of each other’s different needs and perspectives. Creates an opportunity to build relationships through the development of trust, cooperation and mutual understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENGOs:</strong> Acronym for Environmental non-government organisations (e.g. WWF, Greenpeace, The Wilderness Society).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation:</strong> A process of assessment that generates information regarding the processes and outcomes of CE activities, facilitating learning through the examination of what worked, what did not work and why.</td>
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</table>
**Forest certification:** a voluntary process that independently audits the planning, procedures and performance of forestry operations.

**Forest management:** a term used to encompass the variety of management objectives and techniques required to ensure that forests are available for a range of commercial and non-commercial purposes.

**Forest Practices Code:** a document (either voluntary or legally binding) that guides forest managers in appropriate forest management practices. Often includes detailed prescriptions regarding standard forest management operations such as road building, silvicultural operations and prescribed fire burning.

**Inclusivity:** ensuring that a broad range of public perspectives are represented by actively identifying and providing adequate opportunities for a range of stakeholders to be included within CE processes.

**Informing:** one-way information-sharing processes where facts are provided to interested people, yet no (or little) opportunity for public feedback is given.

**Involving:** a two-way form of CE where stakeholders are encouraged to actively participate in decision-making processes.

**Operational foresters:** those foresters who typically supervise forestry operations (or in some cases undertake minor tasks such as marking, inventory, etc.). Rather than being the ‘loggers’, truck drivers, planters and so forth they are basically the forest management company’s people on the ground looking after the harvesting, cultivating, spraying crews (normally small-medium businesses, not direct employees of the forest management company).

**Philanthropy:** the planned and structured giving of money, time, information, goods and services, voice and influence to improve the wellbeing of humanity and the community.

**Plantation:** a planted forest often comprising a single species grown in rows.

**Public participation:** the involvement of individuals or groups that are interested in or affected by a proposed management activity. The level of involvement can vary and may potentially influence decision-making through the sharing of information, concerns and priorities.

**Reflexivity** and reflexive practice: a philosophy and mode of practice in which the practitioner constantly reflects (thinks about) on their practice to consider how it can be improved.

**Social capital:** the networks and norms existing between people that create social bonds and enable a society to function effectively.

**Social licence to operate:** achieving a public reputation that is sufficiently positive to enable the company to be accepted by local communities, facilitating the company’s ability to operate within those communities.

**Stakeholders:** those who have an interest in a particular decision, either as individuals or representatives of a group. This includes people who can or do influence a decision, as well as those affected by it.

**Stakeholder burnout:** the unwillingness of community members to participate due to excessively frequent, overlapping or poorly designed participatory processes.

**Triple bottom line (TBL):** a framework used by business managers to measure and report management activities against parameters pertaining to economic, social and environmental parameters. TBL approaches focus on minimising harm and maximising value resulting from management practices.

**‘Wicked’ problems:** problems that are complex, highly resistant to resolution, requiring non-traditional measures that recognise the social complexity of the problems.
About the Authors

Melanie (Lain) Dare

Lain is a research fellow with the Australian National University, and undertook her doctoral studies (on which this research is based) at the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research at the University of Tasmania.

Lain conducts social research within the CRC for Forestry’s ‘Communities’ project. While focusing on public participation, Lain is also interested in the impacts of resource management on the wellbeing of rural residents and their communities.

Lain worked as a forester from 1998 to 2006, and was involved with land acquisition and plantation establishment for a private forest management organisation. In this role, Lain gained considerable experience in working with forest workers, community members and interested community groups.

Jacki Schirmer

Jacki is a research fellow with the Australian National University and has been undertaking research on the social dimensions of natural resource management for more than ten years. Jacki is the leader of the CRC for Forestry’s ‘Communities’ project.

Jacki’s research interests include:

• improving understanding of the human dimensions of impacts of, and adaptation to, changing natural resource management in rural and regional communities;
• engaging in co-learning processes with members of rural communities, government and industry, to inform debate and discussion over management of natural resources;
• integrating social science, economic and biophysical data to provide a more informed understanding of socio-ecological systems; and
• developing effective monitoring of the social dimensions of natural resource management, to ensure that the understanding of human-environment interactions supports policy development.

Jacki has published more than ten journal articles and book chapters, and approximately forty reports.

Frank Vanclay

Frank is Professor of Cultural Geography in the Faculty of Spatial Sciences at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. Previously he was Professor of Rural Sociology in the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research at the University of Tasmania. Frank specialises in social impact assessment; social aspects of agriculture, farming and natural resource management; and social aspects of place.

Frank is a former president of the International Rural Sociology Association (www.irsa-world.org) and has also had a high level of involvement with the International Association for Impact Assessment (www.iaia.org).

Frank has published more than sixty journal articles and more than thirty book chapters, and has co-edited many books on social impact assessment and the social implications of land management.
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Authors
Melanie (Lain) Dare
Jacki Schirmer
Frank Vanclay