



Open Government Partnership Submission | 31 March 2016

Natural Resources

Improve public access to information and increase public participation

OGP category - Legislative Openness, Access to Information, Open Data and Openness in Natural Resources areas

Suggestion:

To help better manage natural resources, the Government could improve transparency and community engagement by proactively publishing useful information about extractive industry and energy projects. To make it easy for citizens and industry to engage with natural resource development decisions, ensure open access to important information such as locations of activities and environmental reports.

Successful implementation

This could be achieved by creating a **single open, national platform for mining and resources project information** that contains up-to-date information about:

- the type of resource and project
- locations of proposed and current activity and infrastructure
- the decision-making process and applicable legislation
- status of projects
- links to public environmental and economic impact reporting
- company details
- links to community consultation events

Data and content on this platform will be available in a uniform, open, shareable format with permissible licences.

Context:

Most people don't understand government and industry processes and rules. Information from government and industry is siloed, lacks context and not written in plain english. Current delivery mechanisms rely on domain knowledge and specialised software. Interrelated legislation is complex and varies by location.

Company documentation and environmental reports are difficult to access. People feel they are not part of, and cannot contribute to, decisions relating to their community or projects of national significance. When people do discover information either through the media or word of mouth, it is often too late to participate and have an impact on decisions. Situations escalate and clashes occur.

Companies and governments at all levels struggle with communicating to many stakeholders across large distances. The lack of public participation and access to information impacts industry development and divides communities. Confusion around decision-making process impedes projects and diminishes trust in industry and government.

A single open, national platform for mining and resources project information will be beneficial in enabling community, government and industry to engage in informed dialogue around the sustainable development of Australia's natural resources.

The service could assist with the implementation of the Australian model of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) standard by capturing and displaying the relevant industry data in one place, in context with locations of activities and other company information.

Strategy:

- Develop a national, whole of government service publishing up-to-date project data.
- Service to aggregate relevant state and federal data.
- Develop contextual and educational content detailing process and legislation for each state/territory.
- Create a consistent, visual approach to displaying related data and content.
- Connect project data with existing environmental and economic reports.
- Connect projects with community consultation and engagement platforms.
- Republish data and content in open formats with permissible licences.

Tracking progress and measuring outcomes:

- Currency of data published
- Usage of service
- Engagement with stakeholders, published insights
- Increase in participation of community in decision making, earlier in process
- Industry engagement with and contribution to the service
- Number of projects listing community consultation/engagement actions

Agencies required to implement the idea: The idea will require a lead agency. Each of the followings agencies can commit data and content to the idea, as well as being part of the implementation process:

- Industry, Innovation and Science (Mining and Resources/Innovation)
- Prime Minister and Cabinet (Whole of government)
- Department of Communications and the Arts (Whole of government)
- Department of Environment
- Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
- National Energy Resources Australia
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (EITI standard)

- CSIRO
- Geoscience Australia
- Chief Scientist
- Chief Economist

Proposed by Mel Flanagan, Simon Wright of Nook Studios, and Andrea Lau, Jack Zhao of Small Multiples.

Nook Studios and Small Multiples were the producers of and service design team of the NSW Government web service called Common Ground. It is a community engagement tool to help communities easily access maps and other useful information about exploration and mining activities, including the place of community in the decision making process for any potential activity in NSW.

The team is currently working on open data and digital storytelling and community engagement tools to help governments deliver on their objectives to be open and more responsive to citizens.