Community Consultation and Engagement Process

7.1 Overview
SGM is undertaking a comprehensive program of community communications and engagement for the Project during the preparation and exhibition of the EES. This program is focussed on the Stawell community and relevant interest groups and will continue throughout the EES exhibition period. The aims of the consultation process are to give the Stawell community opportunities to:

- access information on the Project
- provide input into the EES technical studies
- provide input / feedback on the Project
- express and discuss any concerns / questions they may have about any component of the Project.

The overall goal of the community consultation process is to effectively engage with stakeholders in an open and transparent manner to ensure they understand and contribute to the Project’s processes, progress and outcomes.

Community consultation for the Project has been undertaken using a range of engagement and communication initiatives and channels. The methods and schedule of activities align with technical project phases. These are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

7.2 The Community Consultation Program
Consultation with the community, including the provision of accessible and factual information during the preparation of the EES, is a key component of the EES assessment process. The consultation program undertaken by SGM was designed to ensure community members were updated regularly about the Project and input was sought from stakeholders throughout the EES investigations.

SGM is committed to ensuring its community consultation program is ‘best practice’ and goes above and beyond requirements. The community consultation program has involved nearby residents, council, special interest groups and the broader Stawell community.

The consultation program began after the announcement of the Project by SGM and will continue during the EES preparation and exhibition phases. This process was delivered in accordance with the EES Scoping Requirements and Consultation Plan.

7.2.1 Consultation Plan
An EES consultation plan was required under the EE Act in order to demonstrate how SGM intended to inform the public and consult with stakeholders during the preparation of the EES. The purpose of the plan was to set out the process and requirements for consultation as part of the EES preparation. The plan sought to clearly set out the engagement and communication tasks required as part of the broader project methodology to the EES process.

An EES consultation plan was developed during the preparation of the EES and is included as Appendix E to the EES report. The plan was reviewed and endorsed by the TRG.
7 Community Consultation and Engagement Process

7.2.2 Communications Program during EES Preparation

The aim of the communications program was to ensure the preparation and release of timely, factual information on the progress of the EES, including the EES technical studies and the Project design. A brief outline of the key methods used during the EES preparation is given below.

**Project website**

A project website (www.crocgold.com/bighill) was established to provide the community with access to all publicly available information about the Project. The website was updated regularly with Project bulletins, media releases, frequently asked questions and other information about the Project. Information about community information sessions and how to join the mailing list as well as a link to the feedback form and all contact details were also provided on the Project website.

**Project overview brochure**

A project overview brochure was published in January 2013 to provide the Stawell community with an overview of the Project, including a visual representation of the key stages and the technical studies to be undertaken to inform the assessment process. The brochure was provided to landowners and residents during interviews, distributed via local retailers/clubs and at community information sessions and stakeholder workshops. A total of 1,000 brochures were distributed. The brochure was also uploaded to the Project website.

**Project update**

A project update was published in March 2013 to provide the Stawell community with the initial results from the community information sessions and stakeholder workshop and more detail about the scope of the technical studies. The update was mailed directly to all Stawell households and businesses (3380 postcode) and uploaded to the Project website. Approximately 3,000 project updates were distributed.

**Project bulletins**

Six project bulletins were produced at regular intervals (May, June, July, August, October, and November/December 2013 and January/February 2014) throughout the EES preparation process. These provided information about topical issues of the Project, the EES process, findings of the technical studies and opportunities for community engagement/how to obtain further information. The Project bulletins were posted directly to all Stawell households and businesses, emailed to the Project contact list and published on the Project website. More than 3,000 copies of each of the Project bulletins were distributed.

**Advertisements**

Important information was provided to the Stawell community via approximately 30 advertisements (both during the preparation of the EES as well as the exhibition period) placed in the local newspapers (Stawell Times and The Wimmera Mail-Times). These took the form of questions and answers so as to address key community issues raised during consultation events, council forums and expressed in local media. In addition, advertisements were used to notify the community about forthcoming consultation opportunities and key project milestones.
7 Community Consultation and Engagement Process

**Media releases**
Media releases from SGM were issued at important milestones throughout the EES preparation phase. These included milestones in the EES process as well as preliminary findings of the technical studies. Media releases also addressed community concerns raised during the Project.

**Direct mail-outs**
Letters were mailed directly to Stawell landowners and residents in close proximity to the Project area periodically throughout the preparation of the EES. These included letters informing the community about the geotechnical drilling program undertaken during the planning phase; the outcome of the EES referral and the release of the draft Scoping Requirements for community feedback. A total of three mail-outs were sent to Stawell residents.

7.2.3 Engagement Program during EES Preparation
An extensive program of engagement activities were conducted to ensure members of the Stawell community were provided with opportunities to meet with the Project team and technical study leads conducting the EES studies. This engagement program provided opportunities for two-way conversation; enabling information to be given to stakeholders and gain their input into the studies and to seek further information or clarification on issues of concern to them.

A brief description of the key components of the consultation program is given below.

**Resident interviews – January - February 2013**
During January and February 2013 one-on-one interviews were conducted with:

- residents whose properties may be acquired by SGM
- residents and commercial property owners in nearby streets surrounding the Project area (Crowlands Road, Byrne Street, Gordon Street, Main Street, Fisher Street, Crudace Street and Holt Street).

The purpose of these interviews was to directly discuss the Project with the owners and occupiers of surrounding residential and commercial properties following the Project’s announcement and to provide accurate and consistent information about the Project.

The interviews involved an overview of the Project and completion of a qualitative questionnaire.

A total of 139 landowners and occupiers of 118 properties were invited to be interviewed and a total of 97 interviews were completed. The data collected was analysed as part of the *Initial Consultation Summary Report* (URS, March 2013). A copy of this report is included in Appendix F.

All properties of which landowners and occupiers were invited to be interviewed are shown in Figure 7-1.

A total of 34 landowners or occupiers that did not initially take up the opportunity to meet with the Project team were sent a follow-up letter to provide a further opportunity to complete an interview. A copy of the Project Bulletin was also included with this letter.
7 Community Consultation and Engagement Process

Figure 7-1  Properties consulted during initial interviews
7 Community Consultation and Engagement Process

**Resident meetings – June-July 2013**

The 134 landowners and occupiers approached to participate in the one-on-one interviews conducted at the beginning of the EES preparation process were invited to meet with the Project team again during June and July 2013. The purpose of these meetings was to provide the community with an update on:

- the status and approach of the technical studies underway
- progress on the overall EES assessment preparation
- refinements made to the Project description.

These meetings also enabled the Project team to ensure the Project Bulletins, mail-outs and other communications materials were being received and an opportunity for landowners and occupiers to seek clarification on issues of concern.

A total of 32 resident meetings were conducted during June and July 2013.

**Community information sessions – February 2013**

Two community information sessions were held at Stawell RSL on 16 and 20 February 2013. These sessions provided an overview of the Project description and EES assessment process and provided attendees with an opportunity to ask questions and raise issues with SGM staff and representatives of the consultant team. Feedback forms were available at these community information sessions to capture data from the community regarding the perceived benefits and concerns of the Project. Approximately 210 people attended the two sessions and 76 feedback forms were completed. These provided a valuable insight into community issues.

**Community information sessions – July 2013**

Two community information sessions were held at Stawell RSL on 24 and 25 July 2013 to provide an update on the EES process and to provide attendees with an opportunity to ask questions and raise issues with SGM staff and representatives of the consultation team. Attendees were able to ask questions of the relevant regulators, with representatives from DTPLI and DSDBI in attendance. Approximately 30 people attended the two sessions.

**Business and traders breakfast briefing**

A business and traders breakfast was held on 25 July 2013 to provide all traders and businesses operating in the Stawell community with an opportunity to provide comment on the preliminary findings of the Economic Impact Assessment as part of the EES preparation process. The Project team was available to answer questions from attendees. 238 businesses were invited to the breakfast, with approximately 50 people attending.

**Stakeholder briefing sessions**

SGM has regularly responded to requests from community organisations to update various interest groups on the Project and emerging findings. This has provided targeted opportunities for the community to ask questions about the Project and provide informal feedback. Presentations have been made to groups including:

- Stawell Secondary College
7 Community Consultation and Engagement Process

- Men’s Probus Club of Stawell
- Probus Club of Donald
- Uniting Church Men’s Group
- MacPherson Smith Nursing Home.

Additionally, SGM made quarterly presentations to NGSC in order to update councillors on the preparation of the EES.

**Stakeholder workshop and briefing**
A stakeholder workshop was held on the 21 February 2013 at the Stawell RSL. A total of 235 local businesses, community organisations, schools, churches and clubs were invited to attend. The main purpose of the workshop was to:

- explain the Project to key stakeholder organisations and businesses in Stawell
- provide an opportunity for early and meaningful stakeholder input.

Approximately 50 stakeholders attended the workshop.

The aims were to gain feedback from the community about current values in relation to Big Hill, what the Project would need to achieve in order to deliver a good outcome for the community and how this might be achieved. A summary of this feedback is provided in the Initial Consultation Summary Report (Appendix F).

Attendees at this stakeholder workshop were invited to a follow-up briefing 26 March 2013 at the Stawell RSL. The purpose of this briefing was to present the results of the initial consultation activities and provide another opportunity for feedback on issues pertaining to the Project. Representatives from 40 businesses and organisations were invited to attend this briefing.

**Feedback forms**
A feedback form was developed to capture the thoughts and concerns of the Stawell community in relation to the Project. The form was available at all community information sessions and stakeholder workshops and an electronic copy was available on the Project website.

A total of 76 forms were completed and analysed as part of the Initial Consultation Summary report.

**Free call telephone number**
A free call telephone number (1800 771 729) was established and widely publicised prior to commencement of the EES process to provide the Stawell community with free and direct access to the Project team. The 1800 telephone number was maintained throughout the entire EES preparation process and will continue to be available throughout the EES exhibition period as discussed below.

**Project email address**
A project email address (SGM.enquiries@crocgold.com.au) was established and publicised widely to allow direct communication with the Project team and was monitored throughout the entire EES preparation process and will continue to be available throughout the EES exhibition period.

Approximately 30 email enquiries were received via the email address.
7 Community Consultation and Engagement Process

Both these communication tools provided the Project team with the opportunity to answer questions and receive information and opinions from the community. The email address was also used to disseminate project information electronically to subscribers on the contact database.

Social media
A Facebook page was established in July 2013 to enable sectors of the Stawell community who may not engage with other consultation initiatives to participate in the consultation program. The Facebook site was updated weekly with newsworthy project information and promotion of consultation opportunities.

A total of 200 people are currently following the Project Facebook page.

A Twitter account was also established in July 2013.

7.2.4 Community Communications and Engagement Program during EES Exhibition
During the EES exhibition, the EES documents will be exhibited for 30 business days (i.e. excluding weekends and public holidays) and will be available to the public at the following locations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stawell library</td>
<td>Sloane Street, Stawell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Grampians Shire Council office</td>
<td>63-65 Main Street, Stawell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Victoria</td>
<td>20/80 Collins Street, Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Development Victoria Grampians Region</td>
<td>111 Armstrong Street North, Ballarat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The EES documentation, including the technical appendices, will also be available online via the Project website at [www.crocgold.com/bighill](http://www.crocgold.com/bighill).

Dedicated computers will also be made available at the Stawell library to enable those without access to a computer to view the EES documents online.

Printed copies of the EES Report and EES technical appendices will also be available for loan from Stawell Library, Sloan Street.

A CD containing all the EES documents will be available from SGM free of charge. Hard copies of the EES Report as well as the technical appendices will also be available for loan or purchase from SGM.

Questions about the Project and exhibited documents should be directed to freecall number 1800 771 729 or email SGM.enquiries@crocgold.com.au

Community information day
A community information day is scheduled for April. The key technical study leads, SGM staff, URS (lead technical consultant) and DTPLI representatives will be available. This will allow the Stawell community to ask questions of the Project team after having an opportunity to read the EES documentation and to gain assistance with the preparation of submissions during the exhibition process.
7 Community Consultation and Engagement Process

Residents who added their contact details to the Project database during resident interviews, community information sessions, stakeholder workshops and other consultation activities will be invited directly. The community information day will also be advertised in local media including the Stawell Times and The Wimmera Mail-Times as well as on the Project website.

**Project website**

The Project website will continue to be updated regularly with all EES documentation to ensure the public has another avenue to directly access this information.

**Project bulletins**

Project bulletins will continue to be distributed during the EES exhibition process. The purpose is to inform the community about the public exhibition process of the EES, the findings of the impact assessment, the community open day and the next steps once the Minister makes an assessment. The Project bulletins will be posted directly to all Stawell households and businesses, emailed to the Project contact list and published on the Project website. SGM intends to distribute more than 3,000 copies of each of the Project bulletins.

**Q&A**

A number of Q&As will be developed relating to the EES Exhibition period and uploaded to the website.

**Advertisements**

The EES exhibition period and the community information day will be advertised and promoted in the local media including radio, television and print media such as the Stawell Times and The Wimmera Mail-Times. As required, the EES exhibition period will be advertised in metropolitan media.

**Media releases**

Media releases from SGM will be issued at important milestones throughout the EES exhibition phase.

**Direct mails**

Two direct mails will be distributed during the EES exhibition period. Direct mails will be distributed to nearby residents, the business community, StawellBiz, community groups, council and the existing database (consists of people who have attended workshops or expressed an interest to be kept informed). A direct mail will be distributed the week the EES public exhibition is launched to provide instructions on how to make a submission and advertising the EES information day. The second direct mail will be distributed the week prior to the exhibition closing to remind residents that this is their final opportunity to make a submission.

**Summary brochure**

An eight page summary brochure will be distributed to all Stawell residents (about 3,000) during the EES public exhibition period. The brochure will contain information on where to locate the EES and how to make a submission. This brochure will be available at the EES information day and at the Stawell library and council offices.
7 Community Consultation and Engagement Process

**Free call telephone number and project email address**
As outlined above, a free call telephone number was established prior to the commencement of the EES process to provide the Stawell community with free and direct access to the Project team.

Similarly, a Project email address was established and published widely to allow direct communication with the Project team.

Both these means of contact provided the Project team with an opportunity to answer questions and receive information and opinions from the community and they will be maintained throughout the EES exhibition period.

**Social media**
The Project Facebook page and Twitter account will be maintained throughout the EES exhibition process to facilitate an alternative source of ongoing access to project information through these media and to maintain online conversation about the Project.

### 7.3 Key Issues Raised during Community Consultation Process
From consultation activities undertaken to date, several issues have been identified within the Stawell community.

It is clear from community feedback to date that the most significant concerns are in relation to potential air quality/dust, noise, vibrations from blasting, financial (including property values), health impacts and the future rehabilitation of Big Hill.

The key potential benefits of the Project as understood by the community are the contributions to the local and regional economy and the opportunity for ongoing employment for the duration of the Project. In addition, the potential for Big Hill to be returned to the community as an improved community asset is viewed as a potential benefit of the Project.

The majority of those consulted to date believe a ‘good outcome’ of the Project would be that there are minimal disruptions to the community during the Project, economic and employment opportunities are realised by the community and an enhanced recreational resource is returned to the community at the end of the Project.

All of the issues raised during the comprehensive community communication and engagement process have been used to inform the EES technical studies, as key input to the social impact assessment and in the development of mitigation measures that address community issues and concerns.

The potential social impacts of the Project are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8, Section 8.18, and in the Big Hill Enhanced Development Project Social Impact Assessment, which is included as Technical Appendix 17.