

Courageous conversations when engaging stakeholders – how to make them happen

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At times we need to have raw and courageous conversations with stakeholders about the projects we are working on in order to get better results and enable our projects to move forward. At other times we are engaging with stakeholders who are expecting more than what is viable or even possible – how do we manage those awkward conversations? How do we get started? What do we base them on? How do manage the needs of the project and the needs of the stakeholders in a respectful way when we are both feeling vulnerable?

This paper will explore the essential elements of preparing and delivering effective and authentic stakeholder engagement when the situation is complex and emotive. The presentation will include a case study involving a flood mitigation project for one of the most complex levee systems in the southern hemisphere, potential property land resumptions involving up to 25 property owners, the threat of disrupted water supply for crop farmers and a group of stakeholders who hired their own hydrologists to fight for their land.

The presentation will include a framework for engagement practice based upon the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) framework to guide professionals embarking on similar projects and complexities – there is a way!