

# VOICES OF OUR COMMUNITY

Meet the Dialogue's long-serving community representatives, Di Sneddon and Ken Bray.

Community representatives play a vital role with the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue by bringing the community's voice to the discussion.

With the aim to bring community and the mining industry together in a collaborative effort, the Dialogue was formed in 2011 following a community meeting the previous year at which community concerns about the cumulative impacts of mining were aired at a public forum. Today, the Dialogue's Joint Working Groups and Joint Advisory Steering Committee include strong community representation and their voices at the table are integral to the ongoing discussion that takes place in the Dialogue. In this edition, we talk to two of the Dialogue's long-serving community representatives – Di Sneddon and Ken Bray.

Di's involvement dates back to the very birth of the Dialogue as she attended the first public meeting in 2010. She has been involved since the Dialogue's inception and was appointed to the Joint Advisory Steering Committee in 2017. A fourth-generation Singletonian, Di is a former journalist and editor of the Singleton Argus and continues to be deeply involved in the Upper Hunter community.

Ken was raised on a dairy farm in Wybong and has spent much of his life working with vineyards and tourism. As a representative of the Hunter Valley Water Users Association which counts

many water users as members across the Lower Hunter Wine Country, he has a strong interest in water quality and water use by mining companies, viticulture and agriculture. He joined the Dialogue's Joint Environment Working Group in 2013 at the invitation of then Dialogue Chair Dave O'Brien.

Both Di and Ken agree the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue is a valuable forum which allows not only the community voice to be heard but also provides the opportunity for the community to share the input into possible solutions to issues.

They both joined the Dialogue to be involved with issues that mattered to them.

"Because mining is an integral part of Singleton, I believed the community should have an avenue for open, honest discussion about issues," Di says. "The coal industry is the major economic driver of the Upper Hunter. It is important that the community is kept up to date on developments and also has the opportunity to provide input to the industry."

A few years down the track, both Ken and Di's interests have grown with the Dialogue's achievements.

Ken still maintains his strong interest in water issues, but also points to the Dialogue's "work on life after mining, rehabilitation and the future of mine voids" as personal areas of interest.

Di says: "I am interested in environmental impacts but I am also interested in the tremendous opportunities for developing new

technologies and new rehabilitation potentials that the Dialogue is always developing."

She counts the growth in communication between the community and coal industry as a major Dialogue achievement and points to the School Mine Tours Program and the focus on connecting local businesses with the mining industry as examples.

"The School Mine Tours Program is a connection through education; it was initially seen as an impossibility but is now one of the Dialogue's greatest achievements," she says. "There is also now a much greater connection with local businesses through procurement initiatives."

Ken encourages community people to get involved in the Dialogue.

"People should participate, contribute and better understand the mining operations in the Hunter Valley," Ken says. "At times, we do not necessarily agree, however, it is a forum, around the table to participate in discussions and guidance on the way forward and co-existing."

Di sums up why people should be involved:

"Because you can; no other mining area has such a dialogue. This is a great opportunity to ensure the community's voice is heard and responded to. We all live here and together we can gain the best outcome for everyone if we work hard enough. Better outcomes for the environment, our local businesses and those who work at the coal face."

THE

UPPER HUNTER MINING DIALOGUE NEWSLETTER

# DIALOGUE

APRIL - MAY 2020

## WORKING TOGETHER

COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY COMMITTED TO COLLABORATION



# BUSES READY TO ROLL

## EVERYONE PROSPERS

ANNUAL FORUM OFFERS NEW OPPORTUNITIES

## COMMUNITY VOICES

STALWARTS DISCUSS THE VALUE OF THE DIALOGUE

### SCHOOL MINE TOURS PROGRAM ON IDLE WITH DELAYED START

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER LIFE FOR ALL

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue (the Dialogue) was established in 2011 by the region's miners in response to community concerns about infrastructure and services, mine rehabilitation, water use and air quality.

The Dialogue brings together local miners, community and business leaders, environment groups, residents, regulators and other industries to better understand and address these challenges together and create a better life for all in the Upper Hunter.

The Dialogue is a collaborative effort addressing local community priorities by understanding its concerns and then working together to develop and implement solutions.

If you're interested in becoming involved in the Dialogue, please register your interest via email to [info@nswmining.com.au](mailto:info@nswmining.com.au)



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## THE WORD FROM THE CHAIR

Sarah Withell  
UHMD Chair



### Welcome to the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue's first newsletter for 2020.

2019 was a difficult year for the Upper Hunter. The ongoing drought continued to weigh heavily on the region and the devastating bushfires ravaged areas and communities across the district.

Now, in 2020, as with the rest of the world, we are being impacted by the rapidly evolving Covid-19 situation. While it has had a considerable impact on our immediate activities, we are actively working to ensure that the Dialogue will continue to play an important role in bringing the community and industry together.

We are a resilient community and our region has many strengths and advantages. As a community we will work together through the Covid-19 impacts while the recent rains offer some optimism that the drought might be slowing.

Throughout 2019 the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue has continued to grow and work to bring our community together. 2019 was a year of positives for the Dialogue and 2020 is also shaping up to be a success.

We finished off 2019, with arguably our most successful Annual Forum yet with about 160 people attending and helping plan the path forward for the Dialogue. The Forum discussion panels developed many great ideas which are being investigated.

During 2019, we launched the Economic and Social Development Working Group – which had been recommended in discussions at the Dialogue's 2018 Annual Forum. The new working group has already delivered on its first project with the launch of a procurement hub website at [www.nswmining.com.au/dialogue/procurement](http://www.nswmining.com.au/dialogue/procurement) which allows local businesses better information on procurement processes and access to the mining industry.

Two new events organised by this working group during 2019 also brought together local businesses and mining procurement representatives face to face to develop closer relationships and

explore business opportunities.

On the subject of air quality, we also launched a project which is analysing the trends in air quality in the Upper Hunter and if those changes are consistent with other regions. The study indicates that air quality trends in the Upper Hunter are similar to other regions and largely a result of the extreme climatic conditions. However, the Dialogue recognises that there is still concern about air quality and industry needs to continue to implement leading practice controls.

Our successful School Mine Tours Program, now in its third year, offered more than 800 Upper Hunter students and their teachers the opportunity to tour a working mine and learn first hand the facts of both the impacts and the benefits generated by mining. The program involved 18 local schools participating across 22 bus tours to 12 mine sites – this year the bus route will be longer with Scone-based schools invited to join the program. The 2020 tours program was shaping up to be the biggest ever with 22 schools involved, however, due to Covid-19 we have had to delay the start of the tours. Hopefully, we will be able to roll out the buses later in the year.

In 2020, the Dialogue is committed to continuing the successful collaboration between the community and industry. We are currently finalising this year's projects but our ongoing work with the collation of mine rehabilitation data, water use, grazing study on rehabilitated land and investigation into possible uses of final voids continues to be an important focus.

We will continue to monitor the Covid-19 situation and when appropriate, continue our community engagement activities, including displaying at local events and presenting at local Community Consultative Committee meetings.

As always, the Dialogue welcomes new community participants. If you're interested in "helping make life better for all" in the Upper Hunter please contact us at [info@nswmining.com.au](mailto:info@nswmining.com.au). We would very much like to have a "dialogue" with you.



Teachers try out their new Virtual Reality headsets.

## DIALOGUE MESSAGING IN THE CLASSROOM

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue's message of co-existence between community and the mining industry will become part of the curriculum for schools participating in the recently launched Pathways to Resource Industry and Mining Employment (PRIME) program.

PRIME will use the Dialogue's Virtual Reality Experience, as part of the program's in-class teaching material aimed at raising awareness of the wide range of mining industry careers for Hunter high school students.

PRIME is a partnership between Regional Development Australia and the NSW Minerals Council and has been introduced to 20 Hunter high schools this year.

The PRIME collaboration aims to help Hunter secondary school students better appreciate how science, maths and geography subject matter applies across the lifecycle of a mine and the types of skills and jobs that are required to support a mining operation.

The Dialogue's VR Experience joins other PRIME-developed teaching collateral including mining-specific lesson content, scenario-based learning activities and real-world problem solving in the classroom.

The participating schools have been

provided VR headsets which will allow students to "visit" a virtual-reality mine without leaving the classroom.

As well as touching on potential mining careers, the VR Experience augments the Dialogue's successful School Mine Tours Program by delivering the Dialogue's messaging to additional Hunter schools that cannot be included in the School Tours Program due to the distance between some of the schools involved and mine sites.

The School Mine Tours Program sees Year 5 and Year 9 students bused to Upper Hunter mine sites where the students and their teachers learn about the lifecycle of mines and the impacts and benefits of mining. The program has been expanded in 2020 with Scone-based schools offered the opportunity to participate adding to the more than 800 students and teachers from 18 schools that participated in the 2019 program.

### Our Projects:

As Dialogue Working Groups consider proposed new projects generated at the Annual Forum and community consultation, work is ongoing with the Dialogue's official current projects including:

#### Mining Procurement Information Hub

The hub is now live on the Dialogue's website and provides information from mining companies regarding their procurement processes and practices to improve the awareness and knowledge of engagement with industry for suppliers and other stakeholders.

#### Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network Data

This ongoing project involves an independent analysis and interpretation of air quality monitoring network data (specifically PM10 and PM2.5) and other climate data to understand any changes in air quality in the Upper Hunter and compare air quality to other monitored NSW locations.

#### 2018 Rehabilitation Results

The latest results from the annual Rehabilitation Principles and Commitments project have been collated. This project reports the amount of new rehabilitation and disturbance, biodiversity offsets and other land use types.

#### Water Accounting Framework Results

Data tracking the mining industry's water use, discharge and recycling have been updated to include the 2018 calendar year. The project allows the Dialogue to determine the amount of water entering and staying in the Hunter River system, and the amount used by the mining industry, agriculture, other businesses and residents.

**Grazing Trials** - The ACARP study looking at past and present grazing on rehabilitated mine land continues to progress with recent field assessments analysing soil profiles in rehabilitation completed over the past 15 years.

# COMMITTED TO COLLABORATION

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue has entered 2020 with its advisory and working groups committed to the successful ongoing collaboration between community and the mining industry aimed at minimising the impacts of mining in the region.

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue (the Dialogue) was established in 2011 in response to community concerns about infrastructure and services, mine rehabilitation and water and air quality.

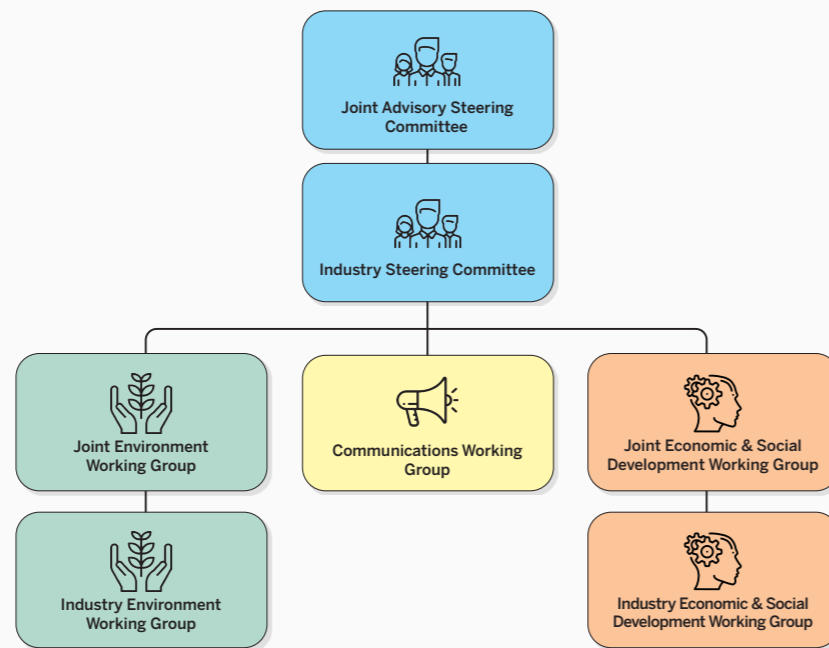
The Dialogue brings together local mining companies, community and business leaders, environment groups, residents, government departments, regulators and other industries to better understand and address these challenges by working together to develop and implement solutions.

When the Dialogue was established in 2011, it was initially focused around four key themes, with projects undertaken and overseen by Working Groups under each theme.

Projects and strategies developed by the Dialogue result from interaction with participants at Dialogue meetings, at the Dialogue's Annual Forum and through surveys and the Dialogue's community engagement program. Feedback from these sources is considered by the Working Groups and, where feasible, projects and strategies are implemented.

The Dialogue's senior group – the Joint Advisory Steering Committee – guides the Dialogue's focus to ensure current programs, strategies and projects align with priorities set by the community and working groups.

The individual Working Groups, which act as the "engine rooms" for the Dialogue by developing potential strategies and projects, include



the environment-themed Working Groups which focus on water and land management and air quality while separate Working Groups focus on economic and social development opportunities.

Proposed projects are considered by Industry Working Groups and their findings and recommendations are submitted to the Joint Working Groups which include representatives from community, industry and

government. Once the Working Groups agree upon proposed strategies and projects, their joint recommendations are submitted to the Steering Committees for advice on implementation.

Community representatives interested in joining the Dialogue's Working Groups can express their interest via email at [info@nswmining.com.au](mailto:info@nswmining.com.au) and more information can be found at [www.miningdialogue.com.au](http://www.miningdialogue.com.au)



## 'TRULY RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT'

Community, government and the mining industry came together in record numbers in a collaboration of ideas aimed at both minimising the impacts and increasing the opportunities from mining at the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue's Annual Forum in November.

A record turnout of 160 people gathered at the Singleton Civic Centre for the forum with a combined goal of developing ideas aimed at making the Upper Hunter a better place for all to live.

The Dialogue was formed in 2011 as a collaboration between the mining industry, government agencies and the community with the aim of lessening the cumulative impacts of mining.

After eight years since the Dialogue's inception, the Annual Forum continues to draw a wide range of attendees with important interests and views.

Dialogue Chair Sarah Withell welcomed the diversity of representation and views as an opportunity for "truly respectful engagement".

"The Dialogue's Annual Forum is an important event for the Upper Hunter to help shape the Dialogue's path moving forward. It provides an opportunity for people to make a difference through respectful dialogue and work on outcomes together" Ms Withell said.

"Ideas for projects and potential solutions to the current issues are discussed and developed by forum attendees with all having the opportunity to contribute their views. All of the ideas discussed at the forum will now be further analysed and prioritised by the Dialogue's working groups – which are made up of community, government and industry representatives – and likely initiate new Dialogue projects.

**"By listening to concerns, collectively taking action and developing solutions, everyone can prosper."**

"In fact, forum attendees witnessed the launch of the Dialogue's new procurement hub which was developed by the new Economic and Social Development Working Group the formation of which was an idea arising from the 2018 forum."

Attendees at the forum, also heard from Division of Resources and

Geoscience Executive Director Stephen Wills, who provided an update on the NSW Government's long-term land use planning projects and activities.

As well, preliminary data on a project evaluating air quality changes in the Upper Hunter and other regions was presented at the forum.

This project resulted from discussions at the 2018 forum and seeks to understand how the air quality has changed in the Upper Hunter and if this is consistent with other regions in NSW. Preliminary data shows similar results across the areas being compared but will be further analysed before a final report is released.

The forum also featured 27 displays from mining companies, NSW Government agencies, local government, community and business groups which allowed attendees to discuss environmental issues or network face to face with mining and business experts on procurement opportunities.



**Although it will have a delayed start, the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue's School Mine Tours Program plans to travel an expanded bus route in 2020.**

In previous years, the program has catered for Singleton-Muswellbrook catchment schools. Now entering its third year of operation, the program's success has allowed the Dialogue to expand the tours to offer Scone-based students the opportunity to tour a working mine. In 2019, the program saw more than 800 students and their teachers from 18 schools tour 12 Upper Hunter mines. This year 22 schools have so far confirmed their involvement in the tour program with potentially more than 1000 students from Years 5/6 and Years 9/10 taking part.

Originally planned to roll out in May, the start of the 2020 program has been delayed due to the Covid-19 impact. Tours originally scheduled for May and June have been postponed and will be rescheduled as part of the August/September tour calendar. The Dialogue will continue to monitor the situation and make a decision about the overall tour schedule in the coming months. The Dialogue tour program offers a fact-based, first-hand educational experience to teach local students about the impacts and benefits of mining in the Upper Hunter.

The Dialogue offers the free tours to all schools in the Upper Hunter catchment and the program uses educational materials and messaging developed by a Dialogue working group made up of teachers, community members and industry and local government representatives.

Photos shown from 2019



**SCHOOL TOURS EXPAND ROUTE**

