

## MINUTES

### Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue Joint Environment Working Group Meeting

UHMD Resource Centre, Upstairs of the Town Square Shopping Centre  
Suite 1, 159 John Street, Singleton NSW 2330

Wednesday 26 September 2018: 9.00 am- 12.30 pm

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#### Attending

Julie Thomas (Chair)	Muswellbrook Coal
Bill Baxter	Yancoal
Chris Knight	The Bloomfield Group
Matt Parkinson	AGL Bayswater Power Station
Craig White	Bengalla Mining Company
Jonathan Deacon	BHP
Cameron Archer	Tom Farrell Institute
Hamish Murdoch	Singleton Council
Ken Bray	Hunter Valley Water Users Association
Monique Meyer	Resources Regulator (via teleconference)
Neil Griffiths	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Neville Hodgkinson	Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group
Ron Fenwick	Wambo CCC / Community Individual
Bob Mackie	theresource
Craig Milton	NSW Minerals Council

#### Guests

Cate Fisher	TAFE
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#### Apologies

Chris Quinn	The Bloomfield Group
Daniel Lewer	Hunter Land Management
Genelle Scotts	Bengalla Mining Company
Glenda Briggs	NSW Department of Primary Industries
James Barben	NSW Minerals Council
Jim Morgan	Wybong Action Group / NSW Farmers' Association
Jo Powells	NSW Department of Primary Industries
John Campbell	Bengalla Mining Company
John Watson	Glencore
Karen Marler	NSW Environment Protection Authority
Kris Sheehan	BHP
Mark Scandrett	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Mark Slade	Community individual
Maryann Crawford	Singleton Council
Merri Bartlett	Peabody Energy
Ngairé Baker	Mount Pleasant Operation
Nigel Charnock	Glencore
Paul Amidy	Glencore
Peter Jaeger	Peabody Energy
Sarah Withell	BHP
Sean Constable	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Simon Turpin	Local Land Services
Tim Roberts	Tom Farrell Institute

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## 1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed all attendees and noted apologies. Given this was the first expanded meeting of the existing Joint Working Groups as an 'Environment' themed group, members introduced themselves.

## 2. Minutes and actions of the previous meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were accepted and the actions arising were addressed for both the Emissions & Health, and Water & Land Management meetings.

## 3. Rehabilitation and Mine Closure Update

Mr. Milton provided an overview of the various rehabilitation-focused activities underway. Ms. Meyer provided an overview of the government's reforms from a policy and operational perspective, noting the considerable consultation that has occurred throughout 2018.

## 4. Rehabilitation Principles and Commitments 2017

Mr. Milton provided a brief rundown on the Dialogue's planned approach to developing a Rehabilitation Principles and Commitments annual infographic. Members discussed the draft document included for review, noting this information, particularly trends that have been observed since 2012, would be helpful.

## 5. Update on current land management projects

Mr. Griffiths noted the follow-on ACARP grazing study that is examining past and present mine rehabilitation across Upper Hunter grazing land as a guide to future research has effectively just commenced, following issues encountered with establishing administration and the drought conditions preventing substantial fieldwork being undertaken. Mr. Griffiths noted that conditions had improved recently, with information starting to come in from the Dialogue's industry partners involved. The data that sites have been able to make available has been varied, and some follow-up work will be needed to source this data. Mr. Griffiths noted that some sites had better methods of data analysis and use different methodologies, so it should be noted that raw data would help provide some consistency in this respect. Mr. Griffiths noted that some members who had expressed interest in participating had since reviewed their data and withdrawn from the project.

Mr. Griffiths raised the possibility of arranging a meeting at the Dialogue Resource Centre in the coming months to provide a detailed progress update and seek feedback from participants on the process to date, including how to improve the fieldwork component. Members supported this meeting as a good opportunity to get industry and researchers together and exchange information about the data received and how DPI intends to use it. Mr. Milton noted the Dialogue would be happy to host this meeting at the Resource Centre. Mr. Fenwick queried whether it would be sensible to meet after a rain event, however Mr. Griffiths noting this may be explored as an additional meeting further down the line.

### **ACTION:**

- **Dialogue secretariat to liaise with Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Baxter (and other industry monitors) to organise a meeting for the ACARP Grazing Land Rehabilitation Study.**

## 6. HRSTS Study

Mr. Milton provided an overview of the HRSTS Study and noted that the first phase of the study had been completed and the Dialogue was working with the Steering Committee to discuss how to progress with Phase 2, which will address the nitrates issue as identified. Members discussed the 'harvestable rights' issue that had recently received press in the Upper Hunter, regarding claims about industry water use. Mr. Milton advised that the mines are required to report their usage on an annual basis. Mr. Fenwick encouraged the Dialogue to demonstrate how water management is improving in future projects.

## 7. Water Accounting Framework 2017

Mr. Milton provided an overview of the 2017 Water Accounting Framework project results, noting the

comparison of this year's results to the previous reporting period. Members discussed the allocations from Glenbawn Dam, noting this still sits at 100%, indicating each title holder still has rights. Mr. Bray advised that the 2006 January to June period saw water storage depleted by 25% and was concerned that there may not be a significant rain event until next year to ensure supply. Mr. Fenwick advised that he would be attending a meeting later in the afternoon to discuss unregulated stream policies.

## **8. Update on current water projects**

Mr. Milton provided an overview of other water projects the Dialogue is involved with. Of note is the Water Reform Action Plan. Mr. Fenwick advised that two irrigators had recently been taken to court because they haven't had an accurate functioning meter on their pumps. Mr. Bray noted that mines would be compliant with the threshold, although it is very complex.

## **9. Dialogue realignment update**

Mr. Mackie provided an update on the comms activities, especially Hunter Coal Festival and Tocal days, which provided good engagement opportunities for the Dialogue. Members noted that the school mine tours were progressing well.

Mr. Fenwick suggested greater utilisation of the Dialogue website to seek feedback and comments on issues as they arise, rather than waiting every few months for meetings. Mr. Fenwick also suggested a rolling register on what the Joint Working Groups had accomplished in their years of operation. Mr. Milton advised that the Dialogue's accomplishments are outlined in various summary documents, including the November 2018 newsletter, and that the Dialogue can work to better communicate the actions and commitments that have been delivered on a more regular basis.

## **10. Working Group - Terms of Reference and Membership**

Mr. Milton provided an overview of the revised Terms of Reference and Working Group membership, noting that objectives have been transferred from the existing Water, Emissions and Land Management groups. Mr. Hodkinson advised that Emissions & Health has focused more on air quality rather than the 'health' side, and that health concerns are much broader and could encompass heritage issues. Mr. Hodkinson advised the working group on research he has developed summarising local culture and heritage in the Upper Hunter. Mr. Fenwick encouraged Mr. Hodkinson to contact John Flannery as he has ties to council in this area, with Mr. Hodkinson advising that he has raised this matter with the local council. The research was provided to the Dialogue Secretariat.

With regards to the Terms of Reference, Mr. Baxter raised the issue of a consistent approach to how industry deals with high-risk days. The ToR refers to going beyond compliance and operational excellence, however, does not acknowledge that many of the current compliance requirements were once considered 'beyond compliance'. Mr. Fenwick recommended that industry continue to set the bar high, so that industry can already say that they have met the criteria should the regulator. Mr. White suggested that the objective should be refined to 'efficiently and competently minimise dust emissions from sites'. The same principles could be applied to those regarding land management, in that industry should be seeking to perform consistently high. See below for updated Emissions & health objectives in the Terms of Reference:

### *Air Quality Emissions & Health*

The key goals regarding air quality include:

- Develop a better understanding in the industry and the community of mining related emissions, and
- Manage mining operations to achieve consistent, continuous improvement of mining related emissions levels that reflects *best practice* and meets operational excellence.

### **ACTION:**

- **Dialogue secretariat to redraft Terms of Reference objectives to reflect 'best practice'.**
- **Dialogue secretariat to consider Mr. Hodkinson's heritage research.**

## **11. 2018 Forum Planning**

Mr. Milton provided an overview of the 2018 Annual Forum and agenda. Members noted the refreshed approach for the 2018 event. Mr. White encouraged Maitland Business Chamber to be involved given many suppliers may be sourced from this area.

## **12. Synoptic Plan Review**

Mr. Milton noted the recent developments regarding the Synoptic Plan review and encouraged members to share their thoughts on the recent workshop. Members discussed the intention to tie in with, and support the existing documents, and whether the Upper Hunter really needed to have another document. Mr. Bray recommended better coordination by DPC of all the workshops that government has been undertaking, as while they have ticked the box for consultation, the community is wondering what the outcomes are and whether anything significant has been achieved. Mr. Milton noted that the DPC and DPE would be attending the Forum to provide updates to attendees on the Synoptic Plan.

## **13. Communications Update**

Mr. Mackie provided an update on the Dialogue's communications activities, noting that the school mine tours had recently recommenced. Mr. Mackie noted the Dialogue's attendance at various community events across the Upper Hunter, and that the surveys undertaken at these shows has shown a noticeable shift from rehabilitation being the primary issue to air quality and emissions, and the perception that this is due to mining. Mr. Mackie also noted that there was increasing aggression regarding the issue. Mr. Mackie noted that in his conversations, younger people were more positive than older community members on this issue. While some attendees are keen to discuss specific operations, the Upper Hunter as a whole is discussed instead.

Members discussed the community sentiment, noting that they are equipped with greater amounts of information now than in the past. Members also noted that it would be good to get an understanding of whether these community members feel this is an issue across the region, or if it is directly about dust. Members encouraged a response from regulators as to what they are doing, so this can be communicated to the community and whether a negative media spin was influencing perceptions.

Members discussed how the air quality issue could best be managed, and if it was possible. Members noted the air quality information sessions the Dialogue held in the Upper Hunter shortly after it was established, which had a good turn out, and whether this may need to be revisited. Members encouraged the participation of NSW Health in the Working Group given that health is a major concern relating to air quality. Dr Howe from NSW Health was noted by members as being involved earlier in the Dialogue's work and to seek whether there is still interest in participating. Members agreed that if the community doesn't keep government to account there is a tendency to drift off, so it is important that the government is engaged with community in receiving feedback.

Mr. Hodgkinson presented dust research to the Working Group, noting a recent IPC decision on a local mine. The Chair advised that given this research related to a specific operation and not the Dialogue in general, the Dialogue would take the research on notice to discuss with the mine directly.

### **ACTION:**

- **Dialogue secretariat to seek engagement with NSW Health representative on the Working Group.**

## **14. Dust Risk Forecasting Scheme**

Mr. Milton provided a brief overview of the Upper Hunter Dust Risk Forecasting Scheme, noting that this has followed several presentations to the Dialogue's Emissions and Health Joint Working Group.

## **15. Upper Hunter Air Quality Fact Sheets**

Mr. Milton provided an overview of the recently completed fact sheets on air quality, noting these had arisen from a suggestion from Singleton Council regarding negative questions from the community about Upper Hunter air quality.

### **ACTIONS:**

- **Dialogue secretariat to provide links to fact sheets to JWG members, particularly council members who may receive these requests for local air quality information.**

## **16. Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network Seasonal Update**

Mr. Milton provided a brief overview of the Autumn 2018 period, encouraging members to review the update provided. The Winter 2018 report would likely be released in October/November 2018.

## **17. Current Emissions & Health Projects**

Mr. Milton noted the Clearing the Air video and encouraged members to view this who are yet to do so, and to share amongst their networks if possible.

## **18. Presentation: Cate Fisher, Mine Rehabilitation by Industrial Symbiosis**

Ms. Fisher provided an overview of the proposal submitted to the Dialogue for consideration. Members asked several questions regarding the proposal, including:

- Members queried whether the symbiosis proposal be used to grow crops, to which Ms. Fisher advised they would be.
- Members queried the significance of Melbourne in the presentation. Ms. Fisher advised that one of the critical components of the proposal is that it must be close to a city (within 3 hours). The Hunter Valley sites would be good as they would include Newcastle and Sydney waste.
- The Hazelwood Mine was used in research; however, this void involves brown coal, and carries water. The mine is low and flat compared to the Hunter Valley sites.
- Members queried whether any issues with sedimentary material such as salt would impact a project. Ms. Fisher advised that with constructed wetlands, it is possible to bring back the water to agricultural level water, however it would not be drinkable.
- Members queried how the proposed crops (bamboo, goji berries) were identified, and whether there was enough demand for these in the local market to justify their inclusion. Ms. Fisher advised that there is increasing demand, although any site opting to go down this path would have to undertake their own research.
- Members queried the use of compost material in this and whether it would be subsidised compost costs, which Ms. Fisher confirmed.
- Members queried the terraces being made of recycled products, and whether these would be locally sourced, which Ms. Fisher confirmed.
- Members queried whether wet or dry voids would be needed. Ms. Fisher advised that both may be acceptable, but is looking for mostly dry voids, with areas set aside.
- Members queried whether the international examples of post-void use e.g. Eden Project generates tourism. Ms. Fisher advised that it has generated some tourism but is not significant.

The Working Group then discussed the proposal following Ms. Fisher's presentation. Key feedback received from the Working Group included:

- This proposal is a low-value use for a void and mine waste, and there was concern over the economic benefit for the community and industry.
- Concern from some members that this is a low value use for waste, and whether this is an interim solution for industry to do in the meantime until systems catch up. Ms. Fisher advised that carbon sequestration needs to be sponsored.
- Concern that there is a push within the community to recycle, and the action of putting waste into the ground runs counter to the recycling trend.
- Members also advised that site approvals would simply not allow for this to happen.
- There are other ways to build terraces in voids, which would be cheaper than this.
- Potential problems with finding a dry void ready to go, or another suitable void that can be terraced in the dry areas, with water in the bottom.
- Not a particularly feasible way of dealing with waste. It needs to be a viable outcome - break even isn't desirable, industry waste should be turned into something.

### **ACTION:**

- **Dialogue secretariat is to advise Ms. Fisher of potential avenues for the proposal outside of the Dialogue, including the ACARP research program.**

## **19. Next Meeting / Close**

Members advised that Wednesdays at 9:00 am would be suitable meeting times for 2019.

**The meeting closed at 12:30 pm**

**Actions arising from meeting  
UHMD Land Management and Water Joint Working Group Meeting**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>DPI Water Availability Projects (Previous Meeting)</b>		
Dialogue secretariat to liaise with DPI Water for an update on 'water availability' projects.	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>In progress</b>
<b>ACARP grazing study</b>		
Dialogue secretariat to liaise with Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Baxter (and other industry monitors) to help organise a meeting for the ACARP Grazing Land Rehabilitation Study.	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>Completed</b>
<b>Terms of Reference and Membership</b>		
Dialogue secretariat to redraft Terms of Reference objectives to reflect 'best practice'.	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Dialogue secretariat to consider Mr. Hodgkinson's heritage research.	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>Completed</b>
<b>Communications Update</b>		
Dialogue secretariat to seek engagement with NSW Health representative on the Working Group.	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>Completed</b>
<b>Upper Hunter Air Quality Fact Sheets</b>		
Dialogue secretariat to provide links to fact sheets to JWG members, particularly council members who may receive these requests for local air quality information.	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>Completed</b>
<b>Project Proposal</b>		
Dialogue secretariat is to advise Ms. Fisher of potential avenues for the proposal outside of the Dialogue, including the ACARP research program.	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>Completed</b>