

## 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 12 June 2019: 9.00 am to 12.00 pm

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#### Attending:

Julie Thomas (Chair)	Muswellbrook Coal Company
Andrew Reid	MACH Energy Australia
Bill Baxter	Yancoal
Carolyn Herlihy	Hunter New England Health
Chloe Christensen	BHP
Craig White	Bengalla Mining Company
Glenda Briggs	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Jim Morgan	Wybong Action Group / NSW Farmers' Association
Jonathon Deacon	BHP
Ken Bray	Hunter Valley Water Users Association
Laurie Perry	Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation
Maryann Crawford	Singleton Council
Monique Meyer - via teleconference	Resources Regulator
Neville Hodgkinson	Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group
Paul Amidy	Glencore
Robert Gothard	AGL Macquarie
Sharon Pope	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Bob Mackie	theresource
James Barben	NSW Minerals Council
Craig Milton	NSW Minerals Council

#### Observers:

Jeff Esdaile	Community member
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#### Apology:

Cameron Archer	Tom Farrell Institute
Chris Quinn	The Bloomfield Group
Chris Knight	The Bloomfield Group
Ian Napier	Hunter Valley Wine Industry Association
John Watson	Glencore
Neil Griffiths	Department of Primary Industries
Jan Davis	Hunter Environment Lobby
Jo Powells	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Karen Marler	NSW Environment Protection Authority
Ngaire Baker	Mount Pleasant Operation
Tony Cox	NSW Department of Industry
Tim Roberts	Tom Farrell Institute
Daniel Lewer	Hunter Land Management
Natalie Hewitt	Community member

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### 1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed all, noting the great attendance today from Working Group members.

## **2. Minutes from Previous Meeting**

The minutes from the previous meeting were accepted. Mr. Barben noted the challenges in getting DPI Water to attend to present an update on their activities.

## **3. Update on Emissions and Health Projects**

Mr. Barben provided an overview of the outcomes of the 2018 Annual Forum discussion sessions, noting this had generated multiple projects for the Dialogue to progress in 2018.

Members discussed the project regarding a review of air quality monitoring data and were generally supportive of the Dialogue's proposed project. Mr. Barben advised that this project is responding to community concern regarding air quality and ongoing criticism that Upper Hunter air quality being worse than in other regions. In discussing how to approach the next steps, involving the formation of a project steering committee and the development of a scope, members provided the following feedback:

- The original 2018 Forum table discussion centred around putting a number on what people would be seeing in the air in an effort to quantify the visual components of air quality.
- While a number of consultants listed are not fully independent given their ongoing work with industry, it would be remiss not to seek to include the information they have gathered.
- There was concern that this work may be repeating CSIRO work from 2013 to identify particulates. The Chair and Mr. Barben noted that these past reports are now out of date and that this specific project although similar to previous work, is different and focused on comparing PM10 and PM2.5 figures from Upper Hunter sites with other regions.
- The Upper Hunter is subject to atmospheric conditions occurring across NSW, and while industry activity may play some part in conditions, this work might be better suited to the Government to undertake, rather than as a Dialogue responsibility.
- Air quality issues may often be more related to an issue of perception and visibility rather than any material impact. Mr. Barben noted the Dialogue needs to provide data and information to these discussions. The NSW Government work on addressing wood fire smoke was noted.
- Members suggested the Dialogue write to a number of the consultants/organisations to put together a proposal and their opinions on how this project could best be undertaken. However, other members were cautious of doing this as a scope is yet to be determined and they have not been involved in any discussions to date, so will have no context for the project.
- When the Project Steering Committee is assembled to develop the scope, it is important that one of the key objectives is that the community gets something out of this, and that the final product isn't an overly technical report. This is an opportunity to tell a story and explain what the community is seeing.

Mr. Barben recommended that anyone interested in joining the Project Steering Committee contact the Dialogue secretariat. Both Muswellbrook and Singleton Councils advised that they would be able to organise participation from a relevant staff member for the local government representative positions.

Other air quality projects being undertaken by the NSW government were also discussed.

### **ACTION:**

- **Dialogue to progress with forming Project Steering Committee and seeking involvement of various stakeholders as per the project brief.**

## **4. Update on Land Management Projects**

Mr. Barben and Mr. Milton provided an overview of the rehabilitation principles and commitments project, noting that the 2018 data is still being sourced from industry members. Information regarding the amount of buffer land is also being sought.

Members queried whether this was being done using information from a particular land use planning framework, and that given the data was being collected, whether there was any intention to look at how this may be used in the future. Mr. Barben noted that any considerations about the future use of buffer land fit under the Synoptic Plan gambit. There is currently no intention to expand the project but depending

on the feedback received there may be scope to include this as an arm of the Synoptic Plan Review.

Members discussed the progress made in relation to the ACARP past and present mine rehabilitation project, noting that environmental conditions have not been favourable. Members recommended seeking Malabar's involvement for soil profiling, given the Drayton site's significant rehabilitation progress.

Members briefly discussed the use of recycled organic material for use in mine rehabilitation, with industry members noting the current MWOO issue being considered. Members were generally supportive of industry increasing use of biosolids and organic food waste.

**ACTION:**

- **Dialogue secretariat to seek Malabar's involvement in ACARP past and present mine rehabilitation project.**

**5. Update on Water projects**

Mr. Milton provided an overview on the progress of the Dialogue's annual Water Accounting Framework project, noting the additional information requests to support the 2018 results. Members discussed that given the current environmental conditions, there was an increasing likelihood of voluntary water restrictions. Members recommended the Dialogue provide and promote information regarding industry water use and stewardship activities to ensure that Upper Hunter residents understand the limited water use in mining and what initiatives are being undertaken to reuse and reduce water usage. Mr. Bray noted that the annual meeting of the Hunter Water Users meeting was coming up shortly with State Water to present.

Mr. Barben also noted the Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy which has received generally positive feedback and is currently being considered by the government. Members supported exploring opportunities for water sharing and reliability of resources, and also noted the impending closure of Liddell would provide an interesting case study for future use of water storage.

**6. Synoptic Plan**

Mr. Barben provided an update on the Synoptic Plan, noting the limited progress made recently following the state election. The Dialogue is keen to see this work wrapped up in the coming months.

**7. Update on Communications Activities**

Mr. Mackie provided an update on the key communications activities, with Mr. Milton providing a summary of the updated community survey results.

Members were interested in the Dialogue's community and stakeholder meetings program, with Mr. Barben advising that the Dialogue would be happy to provide an update to any parties expressing an interest. Members also queried whether the Dialogue would seek to undertake the CCC meetings on an annual basis, which the Dialogue would look at providing more regular updates.

**8. Other Dialogue Working Groups and Steering Committees**

Mr. Milton provided an overview of the progress of other Dialogue Working Groups, in particular the Economic and Social Development projects the Dialogue is working on.

**9. Presentation: Dr. Neville Hodkinson - Bulga State Significant Conservation Area**

Dr. Hodkinson provided a detailed presentation of a proposal submitted to the Dialogue for consideration. The project involves a two-phase two-year approach that seeks to undertake a composite mapping on the legacy mining will leave in the Hunter region. Dr. Hodkinson is seeking the involvement of mining companies to provide relevant historical information regarding cultural or heritage matters in the Cockfighters Valley precinct. Mr. Hodkinson is seeking support from the Dialogue (non-financial) and NSWMC for the State Significant Conservation Area.

Members noted other initiatives or funding programs that could support this work, such as:

- 'Heritage Near Me' funding and resources to support proposals such as this.
- OEH's conservation work for heritage vineyards, noting this is producing a GIS map to be housed

- on a local and state government platform
- Resources Regulator work to map out rehabilitation and final land use, which is also being explored through the Synoptic Plan review process.
- MTW Heritage Grant Fund through the Singleton Historical Society Heritage Committee, which supports a range of projects and criteria and is linked to OEH and company objectives.
- Local Land Services Aboriginal Reference Advisory Group, which Neville could be a part of to connect with work being undertaken through OWH and National Parks.

Members agreed that a thematic history document for the Upper Hunter region that encompasses the rich history and significance of the bovine, equine, wine and vine, and mining sectors and that this should be a multi-regional initiative, as it has significance for the whole of the Hunter.

Members noted that Dr. Hodkinson has discussed the proposal with a range of external stakeholders and questioned whether the Dialogue was the most appropriate body to progress this, noting that it would fit in better as a branch of the Synoptic Plan. Members suggested that an archivist or historian could be engaged by Dr. Hodkinson to review what has been done and what further information is needed.

Members felt that the proposal had merit and supported the general principles regarding mining's contribution to the local heritage, however felt the proposal needed a greater focus on outcomes and deliverables and needed to better connect to the Dialogue's objectives. Members supported the Dialogue secretariat writing to Dr. Hodkinson in the form of a letter of support for the project that can be provided in subsequent funding applications, given the ongoing interaction with a range of agencies/stakeholders.

#### **ACTION:**

- **Dialogue secretariat to write a response letter to Dr. Hodkinson's proposal and suggest alternative funding or support opportunities**

#### **10. Other Business**

Mr. Perry provided a brief update on a firestick farming initiative currently being progressed across Upper Hunter sites, which the Dialogue may be able to support. Mr. Perry noted that it is a growing industry and there is work being done to develop programs for mining specifically in conservation areas. Mr. Perry noted that mining companies currently manage conservation areas, which could be better and more appropriately managed by local Aboriginal people and provide significant employment opportunities.

The burns are cost-effective, involve no use of chemicals, are an effective weed control and can be undertaken on conservation, rehabilitation and biodiversity offset areas. Both farmers and mining companies can use the technology and knowledge gained from this practice in their own businesses. Mr. Perry has sent through information to the Dialogue secretariat for reference to explain how the process works and planning for how it will be done in the future.

Local Land Services has been involved in the last proposal, which has supported training for 4 students for a year and ongoing mentoring for 3 years. Local MP Michael Johnsen is also supportive of the proposals. Mr. Perry advised of an upcoming burn at Mt Owen, which nearby mining environmental managers have been notified.

Mr. Barben noted that some sites have reported positive results from some inadvertent or unplanned burns on mine sites, so there is increasing interest from within the mining industry for such proposals. Mr. Barben noted that a presentation update from Mr. Perry and a representative from Local Land Services (Jess Wegener) would be helpful for the Working Group to better understand the project and its outcomes at the September 2019 meeting.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- **Dialogue secretariat to distribute Mr. Perry's material for information.**
- **Dialogue secretariat to seek an update from Mr. Perry and a representative from Local Land Services at the next Working Group meeting to explain their project and share results with the Working Group.**

#### **11. Next Meeting / Close**

The meeting closed at 12:00 pm.

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

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Analysis of Air Quality Monitoring Data</b>		
Dialogue secretariat to progress with forming Project Steering Committee and seeking involvement of various stakeholders as per the project brief.	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>In progress</b>
<b>Presentation - Neville Hodkinson - Bulga State Significant Conservation Area</b>		
Dialogue secretariat to write a response letter to Dr. Hodkinson's proposal and suggest alternative funding or support opportunities	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>Completed</b>
<b>Other Business - Laurie Perry - Firestick farming</b>		
Dialogue secretariat to distribute Mr. Perry's material for information.	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Dialogue secretariat to seek an update from Mr. Perry and a representative from Local Land Services at the next Working Group meeting to explain their project and share results with the Working Group.	<b>Dialogue secretariat</b>	<b>Completed</b>