

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 11 September 2019: 9.00 am to 11.45 pm

Attending:

Julie Thomas (Chair)	Muswellbrook Coal Company
Andrew Reid	MACH Energy Australia
Cameron Archer	University of Newcastle
Carolyn Herlihy	Hunter New England Health
Craig White	Bengalla Mining Company
Jeff Esdaile	Community member
Jim Morgan	Wybong Action Group / NSW Farmers' Association
Jonathon Deacon	BHP
Ken Bray	Hunter Valley Water Users Association
Paul Amidy	Glencore
Matt Parkinson	AGL Macquarie
Sharon Pope	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Bob Mackie	theresource
James Barben	NSW Minerals Council
Craig Milton	NSW Minerals Council

Guests:

Jess Wegener - via teleconference	Firesticks Alliance
Toby Whaleboat	Hunter Local Land Services
Dayjil Fincham - via teleconference	HEC

Apology:

Bill Baxter	Yancoal
Chris Quinn	The Bloomfield Group
Chris Knight	The Bloomfield Group
Daniel Lewer	Hunter Land Management
Glenda Briggs	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Jo Powells	NSW Department of Primary Industries
John Watson	Glencore
Karen Marler	NSW Environment Protection Authority
Laurie Perry	Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation
Natalie Hewitt	Community member
Neville Hodgkinson	Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group
Peter Jaeger	Peabody Energy
Peter York	Thiess
Tim Roberts	University of Newcastle
Tony Cox	NSW Department of Industry

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members and noted apologies received.

2. Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes and actions from the previous meeting were accepted.

3. Presentations: Cultural Burns and Indigenous Mentoring Programs

a. Firesticks Alliance - Jess Wegener

Ms. Wegener joined via teleconference to provide an overview of the Firesticks Alliance and the cultural burns they are undertaking.

b. Hunter Local Land Services - Toby Whaleboat

Mr. Whaleboat provided a summary of the Cultural Burn Mentoring Program. Members queried whether industry would take up these practices. Industry members advised that there is a requirement to demonstrate that land has resilience to burning, and there is a lot of potential to integrate these practices to managing mine rehabilitation land. Mr. Whaleboat advised that they are looking to study the soils to show the impact that burns have on soil composition.

ACTION:

- **Dialogue secretariat to distribute Firesticks Alliance and Local Land Services presentations and other materials (fact sheets, flyers) to members.**

4. Update on Emissions and Health Projects

Mr. Milton and Mr. Barben advised on the work the Dialogue has undertaken to develop the air quality data analysis project scope, and the two proposals currently under consideration from CSIRO and ERM. Members weighed up which of the proposals better balanced the Dialogue's objectives, with value for money, timeliness and providing the study with as much credibility and independence as possible. Given the delayed start, members acknowledged that this is unlikely to be wrapped up by the end of 2019, although recognised the importance of ensuring an agreed approach.

Members preferred the Dialogue to continue engaging with CSIRO, noting that although this is a Dialogue-initiated project and there may be some perceived bias from the outset, the CSIRO brand is powerful and should provide the Dialogue with the desired outcomes. Members queried what will happen if the project identifies something we have not suspected. The CSIRO report factors in a peer review, and Dialogue stakeholders will also have an opportunity to review via the project steering committee.

Members queried whether the drought may be impacting on the background pollution and if this is greater than normal, thereby exacerbating the industry's results. Industry members advised that where exceedances are recorded, there may be further information provided at a later stage regarding dust events and the original figures can then be recalculated and determined whether they have caused an exceedance or not. Mr. White advised that Bengalla have been undertaking Air Quality monitoring in 2018, which showed that the background pollution was 5 micrograms higher than what it normally has been. Further, the site approvals permit the sites to generate a certain level of dust and that this may need to be better understood by the community.

ACTION:

- **Dialogue secretariat to review CSIRO proposal and seek a reduction in costs and/or leverage more value from the proposal.**

5. Update on Land Management Projects

Mr. Milton provided an overview of the 2018 rehabilitation and disturbance results, with members noting the increases in both total rehabilitation and disturbance made this is a nuanced story to communicate to stakeholders.

Members queried what impact the current prolonged dry conditions are having on rehabilitation progress at sites. Mr. Barben advised that although there may be some level of impact, more rehabilitation is still occurring than in previous years, although it is worth noting that sites are in different stages of operation, with some sites in the commencement phase causing significant levels of disturbance.

6. Update on Water projects

Mr. Milton provided a brief overview of 2018 water accounting results.

Dayjil Buhle (HEC) joined via teleconference to provide clarity on a number of figures that Working Group members queried regarding the higher Environmental Flow, and reduced water reuse in the past year.

- Ms. Buhle advised that the water reuse figure reduced as a result of the new water sharing between Ravensworth and Mt Owen. Ravensworth started to pump tailings to Mt Owen's West Pit storage in 2018 and hence any tailings bleed return is reporting to Mt Owen storages as a system inflow. Note that from 2019 onwards, Ravensworth, Mt Owen, Liddell and Integra will be reporting as one operation (i.e. the Greater Ravensworth Area) to avoid issues like this as their internal reporting picked up this issue in 2018.
- Ms. Buhle advised that the environmental flow value is the sum of the gauged flow volumes from the Goulburn, release from Glenbawn Dam and release from Glennies Creek Dam. If we look at these three numbers over the last two years (2017/18 – refer graph below) you can see that while gauged flow from the Goulburn has decreased (as expected with the drier weather), release from the dams (particularly Glenbawn) has increased. This may be because WaterNSW is trying to supplement the lower natural flows but will also be affected by long range forecasting and operation of the dam itself.

Members also discussed the water allocations for irrigators and the fact that despite there being drought conditions, allocations for 2019 are above 90%. Members agreed that this could be useful for contextual information.

ACTION:

- **Dialogue secretariat to communicate contextual information regarding Environmental Flow and Reuse figures in the promotion of 2018 water accounting results.**

7. 2019 Annual Forum Planning

Mr. Barben provided an overview of the 2019 Forum Agenda and opened up discussion on what format the members felt the discussion sessions could take this year to ensure these continue to provide the Dialogue with quality ideas and feedback to guide the Dialogue's activities and future projects.

Members encouraged the Dialogue secretariat to find out more about what the NSW government speakers intend to present on before agreeing to their request to speak and ensure that they focus on what the community wants to know rather than what they want to speak about. Mr. Barben advised that it seems they do have a long-term post-mining focus at the moment, which would be of benefit to stakeholders to learn more about.

Members agreed that while there are long-term plans and redevelopment opportunities, these ultimately need to focus on providing employment opportunities at the end, and many of these may be in currently unknown industries which require flexibility and foresight in the planning and approvals process to accommodate.

Members suggested the possibility of question-asking apps or technology to assist in the process, potentially via SLIDO or other mechanisms to put some targeted questions to stakeholders. A post-event survey will also be prepared and launched during the event so that members can provide feedback immediately following, whereas in previous years there has been a slight delay of a day or two.

8. Communications Update

Mr. Mackie provided an update on the various communications and engagement activities the Dialogue is progressing. Mr. Mackie advised that the School Mine Tours has focused on the reporting of students being involved, while the involvement of the 60 or so teachers involved in the process has been under-reported. Members welcomed the positive feedback on the Virtual Reality resources.

9. Update on other Committees and Working Groups

Mr. Barben provided an update on the Joint Advisory Steering Committee, noting the Dialogue's recent

efforts to secure a new Chair in Sarah Withell to replace the vacancy left by David O'Brien, and discussions with local business chamber presidents regarding the vacant community/business position on the JASC.

10. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

11. Next Meeting / Close

The meeting closed at 11:45 am.

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

Action	Responsibility	Status
Cultural Burns Programs		
Dialogue secretariat to distribute Firesticks Alliance and Local Land Services presentations and other materials (fact sheets, flyers) to members.	Dialogue secretariat	Completed
Air Quality Analysis Project		
Dialogue secretariat to review CSIRO proposal and seek a reduction in costs and/or leverage more value from the proposal.	Dialogue secretariat	Completed
Water Accounting Framework		
Dialogue secretariat to communicate contextual information regarding Environmental Flow and Reuse figures in the promotion of 2018 water accounting results.	Dialogue secretariat	Completed