

Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue

2017 UHMD Annual Forum Report

21 November 2017



From top left: JWG: Emissions & Health Chair, John Watson using the Dialogue's new virtual reality technology; presenter David Blackmore discussing the upcoming rehabilitation reform program, Workshop attendees discussing the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue



Introduction

About the forum

On 21 November 2017, around 80 participants involved in the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue (Dialogue), met to review progress of the Dialogue during 2017, and consider how the Dialogue can continue to evolve to meet its goal of bringing together the Upper Hunter community to promote co-existence with mining and deliver the best overall outcomes for local communities.

This was the sixth annual gathering. The first was held in December 2012 and concluded that an annual gathering of the many individuals and groups involved in the Dialogue was a helpful way to keep track of the progress of the many Dialogue projects and to consider broad issues such as how the Dialogue is managed, whether it is making good progress and the issues it should be tackling.

Forum attendees were joined once again by a local group of high school students representing Singleton High School. The students participated in the general discussion regarding the key issues relating to the Upper Hunter and their contributions were warmly welcomed from the general attendees.

About this report

This report captures the written feedback from the afternoon workshop session. The discussion points have been transcribed verbatim however some small additions and/or amendments have been made to the written feedback where it is necessary to assist the reader (grammar and spelling corrections, expansion of acronyms etc.). It will be the task of the working groups and/or industry to determine what and which suggestions are to progress. Thank you to the UHMD Joint Advisory Steering Committee that reviewed the feedback.

Next steps

Valuable feedback provided attendees on the Dialogue was provided during the Forum's discussion session. The Joint Advisory Steering Committee and Industry Steering Committee, together with the various working groups will consider the feedback in this report during their first meetings in 2018.

Thank you

The NSW Minerals Council and our Upper Hunter industry members would like to thank everyone who participated in the forum and throughout the year, particularly the hard working members of the Joint Working Groups and Joint Advisory Steering Committee.

Special thanks to:

- The presenters Professor Richard Bush (International Centre for Balanced Land Use, NIER, University of Newcastle), Neil Griffiths (NSW Department of Primary Industries), David Blackmore (Division of Resources & Geoscience, NSW Department of Planning and Environment), Raelene O'Brien (Glencore), Dayjil Fincham (Hydro Engineering and Consulting), and Stephen Wills (Department of Premier and Cabinet).

- The UHMD Chair David O'Brien (Glencore).
- Di Sneddon for facilitating the forum.
- Club Singleton and its staff for hosting the forum's guests.

Program

The full program for the 2017 Annual Forum has been included below:

Wednesday 22 November 2017		
8:30am	FORUM OPEN	
8:30am	Arrival and networking	Tea, coffee and fresh fruit available
8:55am	Welcome to Country	Scott Franks, Tocomwall
9:00am	Welcome from Facilitator	Di Sneddon, Facilitator
9:05am	UHMD 2017 Year in Review: Looking Back, Looking Forward	James Barben, Director Policy, NSW Minerals Council & David O'Brien, Chair, Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue
9:20am	Key Findings of the Hunter River Water Quality Study	Professor Richard Bush, Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources, University of Newcastle
9:40am	Key Findings of the Cattle Grazing Study	Neil Griffiths, Department of Primary Industries
10:00am	Feedback and Discussion Session 1 Performance & Objectives of the Dialogue and Projects	In table groups, with facilitator at each table <i>What is the Dialogue doing well, what could be improved and what projects should it focus on?</i>
10:45am	MORNING TEA BREAK	
11:15am	DRG's Rehabilitation Reform Program Priorities	David Blackmore, Division of Resources and Geoscience
11:35am	School Mine Tours Program Update	Raelene O'Brien, Glencore
11:55am	Feedback and Discussion Session 2 Community Engagement	In table groups, with facilitator at each table <i>Is the Dialogue targeting the right people and opportunities, how should the Dialogue improve engagement across the region?</i>
12:40pm	NETWORKING LUNCH AND VR MINE TOUR DEMONSTRATIONS	
1:40pm	Learnings from Lusatia - Voids research proposal findings	Dayjil Fincham, Hydro Engineering & Consulting
2:00pm	Synoptic Plan Review Update & Economic Diversification Plans	Stephen Wills, Department of Premier & Cabinet
2:20pm	Feedback and Discussion Session 3 Synoptic Plan / DPC discussion	In table groups, with facilitator at each table <i>Review the scope of the plan review, key timeframes and milestones, progress achieved and potential improvements</i>
3:20pm	Summary of Forum Outcomes	Di Sneddon, Facilitator
3:30pm	FORUM CLOSE	

Presentations

A presentation from Rae O'Brien on the Dialogue's School Mine Tours Program was met with great interest, with attendees able to experience virtual reality tours of underground and open cut mines via headsets.

Mine rehabilitation, future land use and voids was another key focus of the forum, with presentations from both industry and government. Stakeholders heard about NSW government reforms to rehabilitation regulation and reporting, as well as an update on progress with the Synoptic Plan Review process.

The final feedback and discussion was led by the DPC, which sought feedback from attendees to help further refine the scope and improve the review process to ensure the best outcome for the Upper Hunter communities.

Discussion sessions

The discussion sessions provided a chance for attendees to discuss the performance of the Dialogue and Projects, and how to improve community engagement. We heard honest

feedback from attendees on the performance of the Dialogue throughout 2017, including where we are performing well and where we can we make improvements. A number of recurring and emerging issues were identified for the Dialogue to consider.

As the Dialogue initiative continues to evolve, there is a sustained need to ensure the right stakeholders are involved. We heard from attendees on strategies to improve engagement including regular provision of information in innovative and accessible ways, e.g. focusing on social media. Attendees encouraged greater visibility of the Dialogue at community events and targeted stakeholder discussions.

Below is a detailed summary of the feedback provided by attendees during the discussion session. Participants were challenged to identify the key issues impacting on the region and potential solutions to address them. Through this process, it became clear that four key issues were impacting the region, which the Dialogue could play an important role in addressing. These issues included:

1. Air Quality and health impacts, especially diesel particulate matter
2. Rehabilitation and Land use Planning
3. Communications and Engagement
4. Economic Diversification and the cyclical nature of industry

Issue 1	Air quality and health impacts, especially diesel particulate matter
Issue Explained	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given that 2017 has been a significantly drier than average year, air quality and the impacts that this can have on the environment and the health of the community in which mining activity exists was a high concern of participants. • Participants were concerned about the cumulative impacts of air quality on health, especially cluster impacts, and increases in diseases exacerbated by dust such as asthma. • Diesel particulate matter was a significant concern, with many calls for a study to identify actions and outcomes that can be assessed. • Participants felt that the communication of air quality could be improved, especially making the community aware of the UHAQMN and how it can benefit community. • Communication and education were a priority, with an encouragement to publish trends over time where possible. There is an opportunity to not just provide information, but to interpret the data so it educates and guides stakeholders. 	
Possible Solutions / Actions to achieve objectives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A gap analysis of existing studies to assess what difference the Dialogue can make. • Seek to participate in any existing or proposed studies • Industry to undertake an inventory of existing larger diesel engines on mine sites and railway lines - regarding their emission standards • Promote the outcomes of the above actions. • Maintain a wood smoke impacts education program • Develop and implement a community forecast issued by OEH similar to Sydney • Transitional approach - diesel particulates • Seek to publish and interpret long term air quality trends • Ensure industry is transparent in their response to adverse weather conditions, in real time. • Seek to survey the community to understand specific issues in relation to air quality. • Educate the community on the regulatory criteria, how they are developed, and what 	

<p>they are designed to protect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a study into air quality impacts arising from all sources of PM 2.5. • Conduct a study into ethanol benefits / alternative fuels. • Utilise temporary rehabilitation options to decrease dust. • Ensure industry best practice continues to be observed (i.e. on windy days reduce amount of explosive activities in mines, and water down surfaces to reduce dust).
<p>Stakeholders to engage with to drive solutions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University and other academia - seek advice and help from University of Newcastle to review existing studies, advise of gaps and develop study to assess diesel emission performance against world standards (Newcastle Uni - Centre for Environmental Health and Tom Farrell Institute are likely candidates) • Original Equipment Manufacturers - OEM's for diesel machines need to be engaged. • Community stakeholders, especially those in towns close to mines. • Local government/councils - Singleton, Muswellbrook, Upper Hunter • State government departments and regulators such as OEH, EPA, and DPI • Specialists in air quality • UHMD industry reps • Business chambers • NSW Minerals Council
<p>Key challenges or barriers to success</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing timely and relevant information from studies. • Alternative researchers than the University of Newcastle, if not available. • Applying the outcomes of any studies to improve emissions. • A reluctance from regulators and industry to invest or change. • Research initiatives regarding dust suppression, air modelling • Diesel subsidy. • Changing the default perception of industry that it's all okay. • Ensuring an adequate cross section of community participation in survey. • Time and resources - human and financial - Studies will not be cost effective.

Issue 2	Rehabilitation and land use planning
Issue Explained	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants noted that while in the past 12 months there has been considerable progress towards thinking about future land use planning, there is still much work to be done. • Participants reiterated the need to capture best practice rehabilitation methods from industry, and the need to communicate rehabilitation activities more effectively. • There is ongoing research into rehabilitation, which will continue to set high standards for industry to aspire to achieve. • Participants noted the importance of quality and sustainability in the post-mining landscape and having a long-term view as mining sits within the greater ecosystem. • Participants noted that the need to consider opportunities rather than liabilities in the management of final voids. • With regards to future land use planning, participants encouraged incorporating greater use of scenario planning and parallel economics (ties in closely with economic diversification). 	

- Need to build better communication and awareness of the quantity, quality and pace of rehabilitation by Dialogue industry members.

Possible Solutions / Actions to achieve objectives

- The ultimate aim for the community is to have some form of final land use post-mining.
- Consider what opportunities and parameters exist within the Upper Hunter - What can we do? We are playing with long timeframes and unfavourable regulatory constraints.
- Build education on potential land uses post-mining.
- Liaise with regulators to Natural vegetation v. meeting needs of regional growth (food bowl, energy, recreation).
- Consider alternative uses for voids in the context of the region - Newcastle water supply desalination; hydro generation; recreation.
- Work with DRG on their rehab improvement project - the benefits of having a regional view of final land form, land use, voids, rehabilitation vs. disturbance mapping would be useful.
- Progress with renewing Synoptic Plan and implementation of a more dynamic and flexible strategy to direct and guide strategic future post-mine land use - seek to incorporate regional planning incentives for mining companies to investigate alternative land uses.
- Continue progressive rehabilitation across the industry.

Stakeholders to engage with to drive solutions

- UHMD to continue driving the Upper Hunter community participation in the Synoptic Plan review process.
- Regulators and government departments - including strategic planners in the mix
- Establishing a Think Tank of Industry, Regulators, Community / UHMD and Innovators, such as the University of Newcastle, to have a collective approach to this and not work in silos.
- Industry to include more diversity of roles from missing companies (i.e. more business development roles rather than environment and community roles)
- Community to advise on their priorities
- NGO's
- Academics - global, national and local to ensure that we have a wide scope of knowledge regarding rehabilitation, voids and closure practices.

Key challenges or barriers to success

- All plans are long term.
- Land uses are constrained during operations and existing approvals encourage limited range of final land uses (i.e. paddocks and bush).
- Communication between regulators and industry.
- Other competing interests.
- Getting 'buy-in' from industry.

Issue 3	Communications and engagement
Issue Explained	

- There's been a drop off in community attendance and involvement in the Dialogue - what are the reasons for this?
- There is a lack of communication with industry employees regarding the Dialogue - they have the potential to become powerful advocates for the UHMD, given they often live and work within the community.
- More engagement between sites, schools and broader community to build open and transparent discussions.
- Overcoming the perception of mining as a negative and promoting coexistence.
- How is the Dialogue relevant to our communities, and how can the initiative be enduring and connected with the community long-term?

Possible Solutions / Actions to achieve objectives

- Communicate all UHMD achievements and what has resulted since it was established, including what has worked well and where improvements can be made.
- Community engagement in relation to planning - Provide UHMD support to facilitate in order to improve future outcomes. Community input to government planning in accordance with recent Environmental Planning Assessment Act amendments.
- Increase engagement with employees and contractors within industry that have a low awareness of the Dialogue.
- Prepare high quality factual information which is digestible, accessible and tailored to varying audiences.
- Use social media more effectively.
- Review all community organisations across the Upper Hunter and prepare a letter and offer to meet with targeted absent community organisations to provide a briefing on the Dialogue (i.e. Upper Hunter Sustainable Farming group)
- Ensure that all stakeholder ideas are respected and acknowledged.
- Continue school mine tours and encourage different teachers to attend each tour to ensure a wide breadth of information across the schools.
- Greater utilisation of mine open days to improve visibility and accessibility to mine sites for community members.
- Advertise projects and activities through local media channels (i.e. Radio, TV, and papers)
- Continue attending local events to interact with people who are not likely to attend UHMD activities.
- Use other educational programs where relevant and appropriate to support our School Mine Tours, e.g. ME program run by Regional Development Association.

Stakeholders to engage with to drive solutions

- Community organisations.
- Industry.
- NSWMC Communications Group and Executive Committee.
- Local government/councils
- University of Newcastle (Tom Farrell Institute)
- Mining League Comp org

Key challenges or barriers to success

- Resources - both financial and human
- Timing - Need to ensure events are timed such that key community members (e.g. small business owners) can participate.
- Overcoming a general lack of interest in the Dialogue - some former members may have had specific concerns.

Issue 4	Economic diversification and the cyclical nature of industry
Issue Explained	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Upper Hunter needs greater economic diversification to build capacity for a sustainable and resilient regional economy in the event of an industry downturn. • Industry and community need to work together to keep opportunities relevant and enduring over time. • Concern about employment during cycles and post-mining. • What is the future for mining in Hunter Valley, and what will the Hunter Valley of the future look like? • What are the barriers to economic diversification and how do we remove these barriers? • How do we encourage innovative post-mining land uses to contribute to economic diversification? 	
Possible Solutions / Actions to achieve objectives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in discussions with service industries - seek to remove red tape and review options. • Encourage fast-tracked reuse of formerly mined land, as well as greater use of buffer land with adequate protections in place for the community and industry. • Government and industry to consider capacity building support for SME's. • Leverage off existing infrastructure - What do we have currently? How can it be used productively in a different way? • Encourage greater investment. • Understanding the vision and key drivers. • Consider use of rehabilitated land for growing fuel for alternate fuels. • Capitalise on opportunities for tourism expansion (e.g. Eden Project). • Effective use of VPAs • Need short, medium and long-term solutions - these have not been identified as part of this discussion. • More effective government policy to support diversification - e.g. have mine employees trained in other skills so during a downturn they can move into other industries. • Undertake research to identify future options - Agriculture, Renewables, Technology • Supporting people who lose their jobs in a downturn 	
Stakeholders to engage with to drive solutions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole of government, industry and community approach. • Business chambers, including small business owners. • Regional Development Australia. • Government - State and Local - resources for training. • Young people - seek to uncover creative ideas for the future. • Industry groups. • Business leaders - local, national and international. 	
Key challenges or barriers to success	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding - which stakeholders are willing to invest in retraining employees while they're employed by the mines? • Clarity of process and the government's land use framework 	

- Timeliness of the plan to approach it
- Work / Effort / Time - very long term
- Governance arrangements - who is responsible, how do we do this, what, where, when?
- Ensuring a long-term view and sticking with a vision, but also ensuring adequate flexibility.
- Political will and backing
- Mining is a market driven commodity - some factors are outside the Dialogue's influence.
- Communication

Other key issues identified:

- Acknowledgement from several participants that the top 3 issues remain as Rehab, Air Quality and Water Quality.
- Some participants queried what the target was of the Dialogue, and how stakeholders can use the Dialogue to better leverage future projects.
- Water Quality was raised by several participants, particularly in relation to the health of the catchment, salinity and pollution.
- Noise pollution and the impact on neighbouring residents was noted as a concern, as was the impacts of erosion and compaction of soil by machinery on the environment.
- The heritage value of the Upper Hunter and the sense of place that it instils in the local community was a concern noted by participants.

Conclusion

The Annual Forum provides an opportunity each year to bring together the participants in the Dialogue to review the progress of projects and the Dialogue more broadly, and to continue to evolve the process so that it continues to building a sense of community and making a valuable contribution to building coexistence with mining in the region.

The feedback received in 2017 highlighted the importance of communicating with the community and getting our messages out there regarding the various projects being undertaken to address a number of impacts from mining. The key issues of air quality, water and land management remain high on the list of priorities and the Dialogue will continue working towards addressing these through various initiatives. Attendees also advised that a number of social issues are starting to creep back into the Upper Hunter community and that economic development could be a short-term priority for the Dialogue.

All the feedback and suggestions generated through the Forum have been collated and considered by the Joint Working Groups and/or industry as they continue to progress work.