



Upper Hunter  
Mining Dialogue

# Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue

## Annual Report

### December 2014



## Table of Contents

<b>The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Dialogue projects.....	3
This report.....	3
<b>Joint Working Groups .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Emissions and Health.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Emissions and Health – Update on current projects.....	6
Other initiatives on Emissions and Health relevant to the Upper Hunter .....	8
<b>Land Management .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Land Management – Update on current projects .....	11
Other initiatives on land management relevant to the Upper Hunter.....	13
<b>Water.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Water – Update on current projects .....	16
Other initiatives relevant to water in the Upper Hunter.....	18
<b>Social Impacts and Infrastructure .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Social Impacts and Infrastructure – Update on current projects .....	21
Other initiatives on social impacts and infrastructure relevant to the Upper Hunter .....	22
<b>Website and Newsletter.....</b>	<b>24</b>



## The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue brings together the eight coal producers of the Upper Hunter, community, environmental, agricultural and business groups, as well as local government and state government agencies, to address the cumulative impacts of mining and growth in the region<sup>1</sup>.

The Dialogue's progress is driven by the development and implementation of projects decided together with stakeholders.

In 2012, the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue brought together industry and stakeholders in four workshops to establish five year goals, and projects to work towards those goals, in the areas of: Water; Emissions and Health; Social Impacts and Infrastructure; and Land Management.

Joint Working Groups, made up of representatives of groups participating in the Dialogue as well as industry, are guiding the development of the projects and the selection of new projects to continue progressing towards the five-year goals. In 2013 new projects were added to the Dialogue after consultation through the Joint Working Groups.

### Dialogue projects

The majority of the projects are progressing well. Working collaboratively with many diverse groups means that progress is slower, but will ultimately result in much better outcomes. In 2014 we have made a concerted effort to push forward with current projects and hold off consideration of new projects until the Annual UHMD Workshop to be held on 3 December in Muswellbrook.

### This report

This report provides updates on all of the current Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue projects.

In addition to the projects of the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue there are many initiatives the industry is participating in, both in the Upper Hunter and state-wide, which also contribute to the Dialogue's five year goals. This report summarises those other initiatives and provides links to further information.

If you would like more information about any area of this report, please contact Greg Sullivan on 02 9274 1431 or via [gsullivan@nswmining.com.au](mailto:gsullivan@nswmining.com.au)

---

<sup>1</sup> Vale's only mine in the Upper Hunter, Vale Integra Operations was placed in care and maintenance in 2014, and they are no longer an active industry member of the UHMD, but remain as a stakeholder



## Joint Working Groups

Joint Working Groups have been formed to provide advice and guidance on the development of the projects. The Joint Working Groups consist of representatives from each of the nine mining companies, community, business and environment groups as well as government. The area of social impacts does not currently have a Joint Working Group, however the main project in this area has been guided by the joint Housing Research Steering Group.

### Emissions and Health

Anglo American  
Ashton Coal Operations  
Bayswater Power Station  
BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal  
Bloomfield Collieries  
Coal and Allied  
Glencore  
Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association  
Muswellbrook Coal Company  
Muswellbrook Shire Council  
NSW Department of Planning and Environment  
NSW Environment Protection Authority  
NSW Mine Watch  
Peabody Energy  
Singleton Council  
Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group

### Water

Anglo American Metallurgical Coal  
AGL  
Ashton Coal Operations  
BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal  
Bloomfield Collieries  
Coal and Allied  
Glencore  
Hunter Valley Water Users' Association  
Local Land Services  
Muswellbrook Coal Company  
NSW Department of Primary Industries  
NSW Environment Protection Authority  
NSW Mine Watch  
Peabody Energy  
Singleton Council  
The University of Newcastle  
Ron Fenwick

### Land Management

Anglo American  
Ashton Coal Operations  
Bayswater Power Station  
BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal  
Bloomfield Collieries  
Coal & Allied  
Department of Primary Industries  
Department of Trade and Investment, Division of Resources and Energy  
Fauna & Flora  
Glencore  
Hunter Environment Lobby  
Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association  
Hunter Valley Water Users' Association  
Hunter Valley Wine Industry Association  
Local Land Services  
Muswellbrook Coal Company  
Muswellbrook Shire Council  
NSW Farmers Association  
NSW Mine Watch  
Peabody Energy  
Singleton Beef and Land Management Association  
Singleton Council  
Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group

The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative  
Upper Hunter Shire Council  
Upper Hunter Wine Makers Association  
Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation  
Ron Fenwick

### Housing Research Steering Group

BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal  
Coal & Allied  
Department of Planning and Environment  
Housing NSW  
Muswellbrook Shire Council  
Singleton Chamber of Commerce  
Singleton Council  
Upper Hunter Community Services  
Upper Hunter Shire Council



## Emissions and Health

**Goal 1**

Develop a better understanding in the industry and the community of mining related emissions

**Goal 2**

Manage mining operations to achieve consistent, continuous improvement of mining related emissions levels that goes beyond compliance/operational excellence





## Emissions and Health – Update on current projects

### ***Communications strategy***

The second Air Quality Information Sessions were held in October in Singleton and Muswellbrook. Dr John Drinan of the Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group and a representative from industry jointly opened each session.

Representatives from the Environment Protection Authority, the Department of Planning and Environment's Singleton Compliance Office and the Office of Environment and Heritage provided an overview on air quality in the Upper Hunter plus updates on the various initiatives underway to better understand and manage air quality. A representative from Anglo American also provided an overview of what industry is doing to improve air quality.

### ***Weather forecasting***

A regional weather forecasting tool was trialed in late 2013/ early 2014 where daily forecasts were sent to each mine providing a forecast of dusty conditions over the next 72 hours. The daily forecasts provided an hourly breakdown, including when 'trigger' dusty conditions were forecast to occur. The triggers were based on specific combinations of temperature, rainfall, lapse rates and wind speed, which were developed by analysing weather conditions associated with higher PM<sub>10</sub> levels in the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network over a 12 month period.

Whilst the regional weather forecasting tool provided benefits to the mines, most had or were in the process of implementing site level forecast systems specific to their own needs. The Joint Working Group - Emissions and Health have agreed that instead of continuing with the regional forecasting tool, that the project be progressed by each mine agreeing to access its own weather forecast information and NSW Minerals Council collecting information on the forecast systems used. The Joint Working Group for Emissions and Health have also agreed that reporting on the use of weather forecast systems include a qualitative assessment sought from volunteers when dusty conditions are forecast that describes how individual operations use their weather forecasting systems. Each mine will also report on its responses to its separate real time weather system.

### ***Community weather forecast notification***

While the weather forecasting project focuses on the proactive steps that operations can take to manage emissions, this project investigated whether better information could be given to the public about coming adverse weather conditions. This project was suggested by community groups including Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group in 2012.

The Office of Environment and Heritage currently provides community air quality forecasts for Sydney. Expansion of these forecasts to the Upper Hunter seems a logical way to deliver this project, but OEH advises that at this stage this is at least 18 months away. Whilst a government system may be some time off, it will have independence from industry and credibility with the community. It will also be able to leverage off the existing systems in place for the Sydney forecast and cover a wider range of air quality issues than solely mining-related issues.



The Joint Working Group, through the NSW Minerals Council have written to the Minister for the Environment, Rob Stokes, outlining the community's desire for an air quality forecast for the Upper Hunter and seeking a commitment to have it delivered within a defined timeframe.



## **Other initiatives on Emissions and Health relevant to the Upper Hunter**

### ***Environment Protection Authority Dust Stop Program and Pollution Reduction Programs***

In 2012, as part of their “Dust Stop” program, the Environment Protection Authority placed mines on legally binding Pollution Reduction Programs, requiring them to assess their current operations against best practice and determine the most effective ways to significantly reduce their on-site dust emissions.

Further Pollution Reduction Programs have been implemented and progressed in 2013 and 2014, with a focus on managing dust on haul roads, overburden and stockpiles, and modifying operations during adverse weather conditions. All operations are working to improve their on-site practices and the industry is undertaking research to identify processes and technologies that could further contribute to minimising dust.

### ***Coal Train Dust***

The EPA is progressing some work it has undertaken into coal train dust, including finalisation of an audit program and some research work examining best practice measures.

The industry run project lead by NSW Minerals Council is also nearing completion. The project involves analysing existing management practices along the coal chain and identifying improvements as well as wind tunnel testing to identify the benefits of spraying loaded coal wagons with water or chemical veneers.

### ***Non Road Diesel Emissions***

The EPA held a workshop in June, which focused on non-road diesel emission sources including rail, shipping, construction sites and mines. The EPA is intending to develop a detailed diesel management strategy this year covering ports and shipping, locomotives and non-road diesel engine and equipment.

### ***NSW Air Quality Statement 2013***

The 2013 Air Quality Statement was released in 2014 and outlined compared with previous years, NSW experienced poorer air quality during 2013, due mainly to drier and hotter weather through the middle of the year and the impacts of bushfires in September, October and November.

A section on the Upper Hunter was included that outlined like other regions, Hunter Valley air quality was poorer during 2013 than 2012, primarily as a result of above-average temperatures during the middle of the year and extended periods of little or no rain. It also outlined that air quality in the Hunter was also affected by increased bushfire activity during January and September–November.

It was also outlined that observations from the UHAQMN indicate that annual average PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels in Muswellbrook are higher than at other locations in the Hunter Valley. PM<sub>10</sub> levels at the Upper Hunter monitoring stations that are closer to mines are also generally higher than elsewhere in the region.



**The NSW Air Quality Statement is available on the Office of Environment and Heritage's website here**

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/aqms/140057nswairqual13.pdf>

**Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network (UHAQMN) – Fine Particle Characterisation Study**

**Upper Hunter Fine Particle Characterisation Study** – NSW Health and the Office of Environment and Heritage commissioned CSIRO and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation to complete work to understand the contribution of various sources to PM<sub>2.5</sub> pollution in the Upper Hunter region. This study involves 12 month analysis of air particle samples in Singleton and Muswellbrook and was recently completed.

**The full report on the Upper Hunter Fine Particle Characterisation Study is available on the Office of Environment and Heritage's website here**

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/aqms/UHFPCSFinal.pdf>



## Land Management

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| Goal 1 | To decrease the time that disturbed areas are left without final or temporary cover, recognising that different mining operations are at different points in rehabilitation                                   |
| Goal 2 | To achieve a consistent level of best practice, quality, integrated rehabilitation – both within the industry and with future land uses - across the Upper Hunter and to be a responsible steward of the land |





## Land Management – Update on current projects

### **Grazing study**

The Joint Working Group – Land Management has agreed that the aim of the project is the answer the question “*Can rehabilitated mine land sustainably support productive and profitable grazing in the Upper Hunter Valley, NSW?*”.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has designed the project, with input from the mines and the Joint Working Group. The study seeks to replicate a local steer trading operation and steers will be brought and sold during the trial. The steers will be regularly weighed, and baseline tests of the pasture and soil will be undertaken. The steers have had baseline blood testing and will be tested again as they leave the study for sale.

BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal and Coal & Allied are participating in the project. The study is now fully operational with steers on rehabilitation sites at both Mt Arthur and Coal & Allied’s Hunter Valley Operations, and their respective control sites, local grazing properties Edderton and Wandewoi. The Mt Arthur steers were recently weighed for the second time and showed similar weight gains on both the rehabilitation site (an average of 1.1 kg per head per day) and the Edderton control site (an average of 0.9 kg per head per day).

DPI has set up a Grazing Advisory Panel, which includes the mines, government agencies and local graziers. The panel will provide advice on the management of the cattle to reflect as local practice as far as practical.

The study will continue for 42 months and regular updates on results will be provided to the Joint Working Group who will monitor and oversee the progress of the study.

### **Biodiversity reference sites pilot**

The project will identify biodiversity reference sites for two Hunter ecological communities. These are communities that are being established on mine rehabilitation. The reference sites will be examples of the communities at different stages. Monitoring will be undertaken at the reference sites on a range of criteria relevant at different stages of the rehabilitation process.

The monitoring will provide benchmarks to assess the development of the same community on mine rehabilitation.

Glencore and Coal & Allied are participating in this project. A consultant was engaged to assess whether the consent conditions of each participating mine to restore these communities would allow sharing of reference sites. They believe this can be done and also provided an estimate of the number of sites that would be needed. The companies now need to consider whether the sharing of reference sites is commercially feasible.

If the project is commercially viable the next step is for the Joint Working Group, the companies and the consultant to work together to develop a reference sites strategy, and then to identify the sites and put in place monitoring.



### ***Rehabilitation Principles and Commitments***

The Rehabilitation Principles and Commitments are designed to:

- Provide a set of common principles that will drive improvements to the industry's performance on progressive rehabilitation and temporary rehabilitation (initiatives like aerial seeding that are temporary and designed to address amenity and dust issues).
- Provide the community with aggregated data on rehabilitation.

The Principles and Commitments have been finalised by the Joint Working Group. They include six principles and a commitment to provide data with regard to rehabilitation and land management annually. Companies are to report against the document each year and data provided is aggregated by the NSW Minerals Council annually to provide a picture of rehabilitation and disturbance across Singleton, Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter local government areas.

The aggregate data shows that the ratio of rehabilitation to disturbance in both 2012 and 2013 was 0.8 (that is 0.8 hectares was rehabilitated for every 1 hectare that was disturbed).



***The first reporting took place in August 2014 and is published on the UHMD website***

<http://www.nswmining.com.au/dialogue/rehabilitation-reporting>



### ***Investigation of possible beneficial uses for mine voids in the Upper Hunter***

The aim of this project is to identify and the appropriate options for beneficial uses for mine voids in the Upper Hunter. The project has begun with a literature review of international and Australian void reuses. Consideration of the Upper Hunter conditions, environment, geology, void water quality, has also begun. It has become clear that a separate piece of work on void water quality will need to be undertaken and the Joint Working Group has agreed to this. This is in the process of being scoped.

The next step will be a workshop with Joint Working Groups, which will utilize both the literature review and the analysis of the Upper Hunter context to identify acceptable void uses for the Upper Hunter on the basis of social, environmental and economic factors. This is expected to take place early in 2015.

### **Other initiatives on land management relevant to the Upper Hunter**

#### ***Integrated plan for rehabilitation in the Upper Hunter (also known as the Synoptic Plan for the Upper Hunter)***

The NSW Government has committed to updating the Synoptic Plan for the Upper Hunter Valley through the Strategic Regional Land Use Plan for the region. The Synoptic Plan (the Plan) is not a land use plan, it is a plan that identifies where mining will disturb land and how best that land can be rehabilitated to integrate with neighbouring rehabilitation plans and the land use needs of the area. For instance it would identify where there should be native vegetation corridors and mines in those areas would be encouraged to plan their rehabilitation to contribute to the corridor.

NSWMC continues to advocate for this plan to be prioritised by the NSW Government and for a high level of stakeholder involvement to be part of the development of the plan. We understand both Department of Planning and Environment and NSW Trade and Investment, Division of Resources and Energy are working on the early stages of the plan and that it is likely to be progressed in 2015.

#### ***International Centre for Balanced Land Use***

The International Centre for Balanced Land Use is a new centre at the Newcastle University, which has funding from both the Department of Primary Industries and NSW Trade and Investment, Division of Resources and Energy. The Centre has a very broad range of issues that form its objectives, including rehabilitation. At this stage a steering committee has been formed will consider research projects that should be undertaken.



***Further information on the International Centre for Balanced Land Use can be found here***

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/centre/cblu/about-us>



### ***Upper Hunter Strategic Assessment of Biodiversity***

The Upper Hunter Strategic Assessment of Biodiversity is a joint initiative of the Commonwealth and NSW governments and will aim to drive a more strategic approach to identifying and managing biodiversity values in the region. The Strategic assessment aims to improve the planning of new or expanded coal mines which have the potential to impact on biodiversity. By identifying and addressing important biodiversity issues before mine applications are lodged:

- Environmental outcomes will be improved
- The assessment process will be streamlined
- There will be greater certainty for the community, industry and government.

The NSW and Commonwealth governments have been progressing the assessment throughout 2014. It is expected that the products from the Strategic Assessment will go on exhibition in early 2015.

 ***Further information on the Upper Hunter Strategic Assessment of Biodiversity, can be found on the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure's website here***

[http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/?action=view\\_job&job\\_id=5954](http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/?action=view_job&job_id=5954)



## Water

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Goal 1 | To develop a better understanding of the region's water resources and the existing and potential impacts of development on the Hunter Valley catchment |
| Goal 2 | Demonstrate and promote responsible and efficient use and management of water in the Hunter Valley   |





## Water – Update on current projects

### ***Engagement with Commonwealth Independent Expert Scientific Committee***

This project grew out of a call by stakeholders for a water study for the Upper Hunter. With the establishment of the Commonwealth Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Mining Development (IESC), the Joint Working Group – Water agreed that it needed to understand the work being proposed by the IESC before commencing a project.

The IESC has commissioned the Department of the Environment, the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO and Geoscience Australia to undertake a bioregional assessment of the Northern Sydney Basin, which includes the Hunter region. The assessment allows the IESC to have a better understanding of the potential impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining developments on water resources and water-related assets. The assessment will investigate the ecology, hydrology, geology and hydrogeology of the Hunter region. The work will therefore significantly improve the understanding of the cumulative impacts of mining on the region's water resources, providing the community, industry and regulators with information to help better manage water.

Over the past six months, the Upper Hunter mining companies have been assisting with the assessment by providing some of the data that the government requires to inform their assessments.

The Hunter Bioregional Assessment is due for completion in mid-2016. There will be a number of components of the assessment that will be released in stages over the next year and a half, which the Joint Working Group will be reviewing.

### ***Adoption of the Minerals Council of Australia Water Accounting Framework***

The aim of this project is to establish a consistent method of accounting for water extraction, use and discharge across the Upper Hunter mines. This project is providing the community, industry and regulators with a clear picture about the industry's water use and is helping to identify opportunities for reuse, recycling and other initiatives.

All Upper Hunter mining operations have implemented Stage 1 of the Minerals Council of Australia Water Accounting Framework - measuring all water inputs and outputs at mines. Some interesting information is already being generated, with an assessment showing that around half of water used on mines sites comes from on-site rainfall and a third of the water is sourced from groundwater sources that are mostly saline and of limited use to other industries or irrigators. The analysis is showing that mines only discharge around 3 per cent of their overall water use back into streams and rivers.

The majority of mines have now implemented Stage 2, which involves developing an operational model of each mine to help the mines identify reuse and recycling opportunities at their sites.

The results of both Stage 1 and 2 will be publicly reported on an annual basis from 2015 onwards.



### **Water resources map**

The community's desire for a water resources map has been recognised since the Dialogue's July 2011 Stakeholder Workshop, where one of the actions was to produce a hydrological map of the whole Hunter Catchment, in order to develop a better understanding of water resources in the region.

The map will be an interactive online map that displays the location and details of water resources, monitoring locations, mines and other landmarks in the region, in a simple and accessible format that also links to external data sources (such as water monitoring data). The map will provide a point of discussion from which further investigations can be undertaken.

The NSW Government has committed to developing this map into an online public mapping system for titles that it is developing called 'Common Ground'. Common Ground aims to be a community resource with detailed information about exploration and mining and mapping of titles and other information. The Joint Working Group is working with the government to incorporate relevant water layers into Common Ground such as water boundaries, monitoring locations, boreholes, and other landmarks in the region.

### **Hunter River water quality assessment**

Concerns around heavy metals and water quality have been raised through the Joint Working Group. In response, and prior to commissioning any assessment of river health, it was deemed important to understand what water testing and water quality analysis was already being undertaken by both industry and government.

At the same time as the project was being scoped the review of the Regulation of the Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme (HRSTS) and water quality commenced (see also *Other Initiatives* below). The Review provides an overview of the health of the Hunter River and through the review's Discussion Paper. The health of the Hunter River has been assessed, and it was found on average to be 'good'. However there were still uncertainties around the impacts of metals. When the review is finalised, the EPA will be providing recommendations for further research or investigation. This is likely involve understanding the environmental effects of different components of discharged water, which includes its ionic composition and metals. The Joint Working Group is currently awaiting the release of the Draft Regulation (expected in early December 2014) and a recommendation paper (to be released with the Final Regulation).

Since there is significant overlap between this proposed project and the Review outcomes, the scope of the project has not yet been defined. Nevertheless, the Joint Working Group remains committed to finding a project in this area that will complement the work being undertaken by government. The project is likely to involve assisting a study into the impacts of metals or other possible contaminants in water that is discharged from mines.



## Other initiatives relevant to water in the Upper Hunter

### ***Bioregional Assessment of the Hunter Valley***

The Commonwealth government has initiated bioregional assessments of a number of regions of Australia, including the Hunter Valley to investigate the potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of coal seam gas (CSG) and coal mining development on water resources. Through the Australian Government–funded Bioregional Assessment Program, CSIRO Water for a Healthy Country Flagship is collaborating with the Department of the Environment, the Bureau of Meteorology and Geoscience Australia to undertake the bioregional assessments.



***Further more information can be found on the Independent Expert Scientific Committee website here***

<http://www.bioregionalassessments.gov.au/>

### **NSW Office of Water Groundwater Baseline Project**

In August 2014, the NSW Government announced a new “framework that will map, monitor and protect groundwater resources across NSW”. The *Groundwater Baseline Project* will map and monitor groundwater in real-time, and analyse the location and quantity of water being extracted by different industries (including mining). The program is being introduced first in the Gunnedah, Gloucester and Clarence Moreton basins, but it this will also later be implemented in other mining regions.

The monitoring information will be used by the NSW Government to “identify threats, tackle the causes and prevent future problems.” New monitoring bores will be installed across the key basins and real-time data from these bores will be published on the NSW Office of Water website.



***Further more information can be found on the NSW Office of Water website here***

<http://www.water.nsw.gov.au/Water-management/Groundwater/Water-Monitoring-Framework/NSW-Groundwater-Baseline--Project/NSW-Groundwater-Baseline-Project#key>



***Review of Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme***

The Environment Protection Authority is currently undertaking a 10-year statutory review of the Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme (HRSTS) in order to make it a more effective and efficient tool for managing discharges of saline water into the Hunter River Catchment. The HRSTS uses economic instruments to ensure that salty water discharges into the river are only released when the river has a large amount of water with low salt concentrations (i.e. during high or flood flows). This ensures that salinity levels in the river are lower and more stable. One of the outputs of the review is an assessment of the health of the Hunter River water resource. The Environment Protection Authority is expected to release a Draft Regulation as part of the review in early December 2014.



***Further information on the review of the HRSTS can be found by following the link to the EPA's website here***

<http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/licensing/hrsts/regreview.htm>



## Social Impacts and Infrastructure

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| Goal 1 | To facilitate structured discussions between councils, business chambers and industry to better understand community infrastructure requirements, priorities and lend industry weight to lobby for infrastructure |
| Goal 2 | Undertake a study to assess the impacts of the growth of the industry in the Upper Hunter, with a focus on social impacts   |





## Social Impacts and Infrastructure – Update on current projects

### ***Housing study***

Until recently the growth of the Upper Hunter's coal sector, was placing pressure on infrastructure, services and the availability of affordable housing.

The study was scoped with guidance of the UHMD Housing Research Steering Group (HRSG), which represents industry, state and local government, community and business. The aim of the study has been to gain a better understanding of the drivers of housing affordability and availability in the Upper Hunter, and identify how government, community, industry and the housing sector can work together. During the course of the study the industry downturn, as well as development coming online, has seen pressure on local housing relieved.

The study was recently completed and has produced a number of reports that will assist housing stakeholders identify solutions to future housing needs.

The final component of the housing study was a workshop with local and state government, business, mining and the housing sector, held in August 2014. Although housing is no longer the crisis issue that it was 18 months ago, the workshop agreed that this breathing space should be used plan for future growth. Workshop participants developed a first pass housing strategy and agreed that the NSW Government and local government need to drive the strategy.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) is now taking the lead for government, by identifying where ideas generated by the Workshop are being addressed by current Government initiatives and where there are gaps. The UHMD HRSG will become inactive, as DPC has agreed to convene the next meeting of stakeholders, including the current members of the HRSG. The mining industry will continue to be an active stakeholder in this process.



***The housing study reports are available for download here***

<http://www.nswmining.com.au/dialogue/latest-projects/social-impacts-and-infrastructure/housing-study>

### ***Regional collaboration on infrastructure***

Councils in the Upper Hunter have historically received significantly less infrastructure funding than the average for NSW. This is despite 56% of royalties from mining being generated in the Upper Hunter. The aim of this project is for the mining industry, government and local businesses to form a collaborative partnership to seek infrastructure funding for the Upper Hunter area. This would provide a single strong lobbying voice for the region that would be more influential to the State and Federal governments and would therefore hopefully drive increased infrastructure investment in the region.

This project was proposed to the three local councils of the Upper Hunter. Unfortunately the project did not receive support from all of the councils.



Despite this, over the past two years the Upper Hunter region has been receiving significantly more funding for infrastructure projects than it has in previous years. This is as a result of funding flowing to the region from the NSW Government's Resources for Regions program, which has been specifically set up to ensure that more royalties flow back to mining affected communities in NSW.

The NSW Minerals Council (NSWMC), along with the Hunter councils, has advocated to government for the continued funding of the program, including in the last budget when the program received an additional \$57 million in funding<sup>2</sup>. The NSWMC CEO sits on the advisory panel, which recommends projects to government. NSWMC will be advocating for the continued funding of the project during the NSW election next year and will be seeking support from the councils in the Upper Hunter.

More detail on the Resources for Regions program is provided in the 'Other initiatives' section below.

## **Other initiatives on social impacts and infrastructure relevant to the Upper Hunter**

### ***Resources for Regions***

Resources for Regions is a NSW Government funding program which aims to relieve infrastructure constraints and support NSW communities affected by mining.

In 2013/14 \$40.2 million was allocated for:

- Road safety and improvement projects in Muswellbrook LGA (\$7.6 million)
- Safety and productivity upgrades to the Denman intersection in Muswellbrook (3.5 million)
- Funding for the Mine Affected Roads Package in Denman, Bylong and Muswellbrook (\$7.2 million)
- Upper Hunter Tertiary Education Centre (\$4 million)
- Singleton CBD Renewal (\$9 million)
- Ryan Avenue Pavement and Safety project in Singleton (\$2.9 million)
- Upgrades to the Regional Livestock Markets in Singleton (\$6 million)

Successful projects for 2014/15 will be announced in late 2014 or early 2015. Four projects totaling \$39.8 million have been shortlisted to fund hospital upgrades and roads in the Upper Hunter for that round.

---

<sup>2</sup> \$160 million initially committed over four years - increased to \$217 million.



### ***Muswellbrook Council Residential and Rural Residential Strategy***

In March 2014, Muswellbrook Council finalised a study on the capacity of current and potential residential lands for future development, having regard to environmental, infrastructure and other constraints.



***Further information on the Strategy can be found by following the link to Muswellbrook Council's website here***

<http://www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/index.php/planning-building-development/planning-controls/strategic-planning/1531-muswellbrook-residential-and-rural-residential-strategy-february-2014>

### ***Singleton Council Housing and Accommodation Strategy and 5-year Action Plan (Draft)***

Singleton Council is currently developing its Housing and Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan, which aligns with its 2030 Vision and aims to diversify its housing, facilitate the release of residential land and provide CBD living to support regional population growth. Public submissions are due on 5 December 2014.



***Further information on the Strategy can be found by following the link to Singleton Council's website here***

<http://www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/index.aspx?nid=1548>



## Website and Newsletter

The NSW Minerals Council launched a dedicated website for the Dialogue in 2014. The website includes information on all of the projects, stories from the Dialogue projects and people, a handy list of contacts for all of the mines in the Upper Hunter as well as all of the minutes and papers from Dialogue working groups.

To complement to website a bi-monthly e-newsletter about the Dialogue was launched in August 2014. The newsletter includes stories about the Dialogue and other events and initiatives of interest in the region. The newsletter is used to promote UHMD events and interesting external events.



*You can sign up for the newsletter on the Dialogue home page*

[www.miningdialogue.com.au](http://www.miningdialogue.com.au)