

**THE**

UPPER HUNTER MINING DIALOGUE NEWSLETTER

# DIALOGUE

**OCTOBER 2022**

## PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE

**FORUM BRINGS TOGETHER  
UPPER HUNTER COMMUNITY**

**REHABILITATION  
GROWS AHEAD**

**ANNUAL RESULTS SHOW REHAB  
MORE THAN KEEPING PACE**

**FINDING NEW  
OPPORTUNITIES**

**REVIEW SHARPENS FOCUS ON  
PLANNING FOR THE REGION**



## WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE HUNTER

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue (the Dialogue) was established in 2011 by the region's miners in response to community concerns about infrastructure and services, mine rehabilitation, water use and air quality.

The Dialogue brings together local miners, community and business leaders, environment groups, residents, regulators and other industries to better understand and address these challenges together and create a better life for all in the Upper Hunter.

The Dialogue is a collaborative effort addressing local community priorities by understanding its concerns and then working together to develop and implement solutions.

If you're interested in becoming involved in the Dialogue, please register your interest via email to [info@miningdialogue.com.au](mailto:info@miningdialogue.com.au)



### Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue

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## THE WORD FROM THE CHAIR

Sarah Withell  
UHMD Chair



**The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue is gearing up for its biggest and most important event in three years.**

Our Community Forum is important because it brings together our partners from the community, mining industry and government for a day of collaboration aimed at making the Upper Hunter a better place for all to live.

The November 16 event will be particularly important because it is the first Community Forum we have held in three years after Covid-19 forced the cancellation of the event in 2020 and 2021.

And this year's Forum will be especially valuable, both for today and tomorrow, due to its over-arching theme of planning for the future through diversification.

While the Upper Hunter coal industry continues to thrive and drive our economy, the industry is evolving, and the region needs to evolve with it and develop strategies to help diversify our economy.

All mines have a lifecycle and two of the Dialogue industry partners will update the Forum on their path to mine closure as their sites reach the end of their lifecycle.

The Forum will target the road ahead for the Upper Hunter with speakers and discussions focusing on the future, including a community panel discussing its views of the way forward for the Upper Hunter.

As part of the focus on the future, we will hear an important and timely update from the State Government on future strategic planning and land use.

The Dialogue has long advocated for a review of the planning system to allow for beneficial use of land post-mining.

The Dialogue believes a review of post-mining land use regulations is a key component to ensuring an ongoing

strong economic future as the region's economy changes and becomes more diversified to other industries and businesses.

A review of the planning system could unlock massive resources in the Upper Hunter and it is vital to ensure the region has the opportunity to take advantage of its existing assets and continue to evolve and diversify.

The current planning system generally requires mined land be rehabilitated to native bushland or, in some cases, as grazing land, but fails to leverage the existing valuable infrastructure in place or development potential of Upper Hunter mine land.

That infrastructure, including rail connections, electricity supply, large industrial buildings and water supply teamed with transport routes, will be extremely valuable assets for diversifying to new industries and creating employment in the Hunter's future.

The Dialogue is keen to hear your thoughts on the economic diversification opportunities, the pathway to these and your other views and concerns with the mining industry and future of the Upper Hunter.

The Dialogue strongly encourages members of the community to attend the Forum. If you are interested in the future of the Upper Hunter, please come along.

Discussion sessions will give community representatives opportunities to help guide the Upper Hunter's future and community feedback from the Forum helps shape the Dialogue's priorities and projects.

The Forum is free, but registration is essential. For more information visit our website at [miningdialogue.com.au](http://miningdialogue.com.au)

I hope to see you at the Community Forum at Muswellbrook RSL on November 16.

**As always, the Dialogue is keen to have input from community representatives. Contact us via email at [info@miningdialogue.com.au](mailto:info@miningdialogue.com.au)**



Native bushland thrives on a rehabilitated mine site.

# REHABILITATION GROWS AHEAD

**Upper Hunter mines rehabilitated more mined land than they disturbed by mining in 2021, according to the latest results from the Dialogue's Rehabilitation Principles and Commitments Project.**

Rehabilitation has out-stripped mining disturbance in a sign that mines have reached a steady state of operations and are completing progressive rehabilitation.

The Dialogue's rehab reporting project tracks key annual rehabilitation

metrics including how much land was newly disturbed by mining across the Upper Hunter region.

The latest data shows 701 hectares of mined land was rehabilitated by Upper Hunter mines compared to 514 hectares newly disturbed by mining during 2021.

This resulted in an annual rehabilitation to disturbance ratio of 1.36 – the highest ratio ever recorded by the Dialogue project; the 1.36 ratio equates to 1.36 hectares of land being rehabilitated for every hectare

disturbed by mining.

With the 2021 results added to the historical data, a total of 14,746 hectares of mined land has now been rehabilitated in the Upper Hunter; or 39 per cent of the total land disturbed by mining, leaving 23,058 hectares yet to be rehabilitated.

For more details about the Rehabilitation Principles and Commitments Project and to see full rehabilitation data see <https://miningdialogue.com.au/featured/rehabilitation-reporting>

## HEADING OUT TO PASTURE

**The Dialogue is heading out to pasture – in a good way!**

Plans are being finalised for a Pasture Restoration Field Day which will bring together agronomists, mining industry pasture rehabilitation experts, other industry and community organisations, and government representatives to share information and discuss mine rehabilitation and pasture research.

The field day will start with a morning briefing and discussion session followed by participants visiting a local mine's rehabilitated mined land to witness first-hand successful pasture rehabilitation techniques in action.

The key objective of the field day



is to promote and share research, information and techniques aimed at creating the best possible productive and sustainable pasture resources from previously mined land.

Developed by the Joint Environment Working Group, it is believed the field day will facilitate an exchange of information between agronomists and the mining industry on beneficial pasture establishment research

or techniques to provide a greater understanding and awareness of successes and potential approaches, both within the Upper Hunter and in other regions.

While the date for the Pasture Restoration Field Day is yet to be finalised, the Dialogue is planning to hold it in early 2023. More details will be released as plans are finalised.



# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

**The Dialogue's Community Forum will bring together community, government and mining industry representatives for a day of collaboration and planning for the Upper Hunter's future.**

To be held at the Muswellbrook RSL Club on Wednesday, November 16, the Community Forum is one of the Dialogue's most important and popular events and is making a welcome return after being postponed since 2019 due to Covid-19.

Community representatives interested in the future of the Upper Hunter are strongly encouraged to attend; as well as helping guide the Upper Hunter's future, community ideas and feedback from the Forum help shape the Dialogue's priorities and projects.

The Forum is free to attend but registrations are essential. Registration details and further information about the Dialogue Community Forum can be found at: [miningdialogue.com.au/engagement/2022-community-forum](http://miningdialogue.com.au/engagement/2022-community-forum) Registrations close November 11.

The Forum agenda will follow an over-arching theme of 'Planning for the Future', focusing on economic diversification and what it means for the future of the Upper Hunter.



**Community, government and industry come together at the Forum.**

A panel of community representatives at the Forum will provide a key voice in discussions on how the Upper Hunter should evolve into a more diversified economy to ensure the district and its residents can look forward to a strong future.

As well as the community panel discussion, the Forum will feature updates on mine closure plans from Muswellbrook Coal and Mt Arthur Coal.

In keeping with the theme of diversification, NSW Government representatives will provide an update on future strategic planning and land use issues for the Hunter and NSW

Minerals Council CEO Stephen Galilee will speak on the outlook for the coal industry.

Attendees will be updated on the Dialogue's activities and projects and will also have the opportunity to provide valuable direct input through small group discussions on themes centred on the Dialogue's main areas of interest: Environmental Issues (including land management, air and water), and Economic and Social Development.

The Forum will also be part of a live broadcast of Hunter Valley Today on Radio 2NM.

## DIALOGUE GOES ON SHOW

**The Dialogue has been "on show" and engaging with the Upper Hunter community at local events throughout 2022.**

The Dialogue attends Hunter events and shows with its interactive displays to educate and inform people about the Dialogue's activities as well as conduct surveys to find out the community's current issues and interests.

Attendance at the shows also allows the Dialogue to interact with community members who otherwise may not have a connection with the Dialogue.

The Dialogue's 2022 community engagement calendar has included the Upper Hunter Show, Tocal Field Days and Muswellbrook Coal's Open Day in the first half of the year, followed more recently by the Singleton Show, Bengalla Open Day and the Hunter Coal Festival's Singleton Community Day.



**The Dialogue display at the recent Singleton Show.**



# 2022 COMMUNITY FORUM

Wednesday 16 November  
Muswellbrook RSL Club



The theme for the 2022 Community Forum is 'PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE', with a focus on economic diversification and new opportunities for the communities in the Upper Hunter region.

The Forum will be part of a live broadcast of Hunter Valley Today on 2NM hosted by Darren Cutrupi and featuring interviews with speakers and attendees.

8:30 AM	<b>FORUM OPEN - Arrival, breakfast and networking coffee and tea available</b>	
9:00 AM	Welcome to Country	Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council
9:05 AM	Welcome from Facilitator	Di Sneddon, Forum Facilitator
9:10 AM	Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue In Review (2020 - 2022)	Sarah Withell, UHMD Chair; and James Barben, UHMD Secretariat
9:30 AM	Community Perceptions Survey - Insights and Opportunities	Katie Ferro, CEO, CRNRSTONE Research (formerly Stable Research)
9:45AM	Industry Update and Outlook	Stephen Galilee, CEO, NSWMC
10:00AM	Government Update on future strategic planning and land use issues for the Hunter	Stephen Wills, Department of Regional NSW
10:20AM	<b>MORNING TEA</b>	
10:40AM	Update on Muswellbrook Coal's Closure Plan	Julie Thomas, Muswellbrook Coal Company
11:00AM	Update on Mt Arthur Coal's Pathway to 2030	Adam Lancey, BHP
11:20AM	Community Panel Discussion	Panelists will include representatives from business, local government and community interest groups.
12:00PM	<b>LUNCH</b>	
12:40PM	Small Table Discussion and Feedback Session	Various themes including Environmental Issues, Post-Mining Land Use, Economic Diversification, and Social Engagement
1:50PM	Final Remarks & Summary of the Day	Di Sneddon, Facilitator
2:00PM	<b>FORUM CLOSE</b>	

Free registrations close Friday 11 November: [miningdialogue.com.au/engagement/2022-community-forum](https://miningdialogue.com.au/engagement/2022-community-forum)



# FAREWELL TO A FOUNDER

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue recently farewelled one of its founding members – Mark Ihlein

**Formed in 2011 after calls from the Upper Hunter community for a collaborative effort to lessen the cumulative impacts of mining in the region, the Dialogue has grown to include a wide-ranging representation of people from the community, government bodies and the mining industry.**

Mr Ihlein has been involved with the Dialogue since its origins – appointed by Singleton Council in 2011 – and continued to represent local government on the Dialogue’s senior body, the Joint Advisory Steering Committee, when it was formed in 2015.

He was well-suited to be a senior representative in the Dialogue as he worked as a Planning Manager and Director of Singleton Council for more than 20 years and was involved in many environmental and land use planning matters relating to mining operations and also served as a member of a number of mine operations’ Community Consultative Committees.

Mr Ihlein says the birth of the Dialogue in 2011 came with good reason.

“The community had genuine concerns regarding the impact of mining operations on the environment and on people’s health,” Mr Ihlein says.

“The Dialogue was somewhat defensive early on, but very quickly recognised that for the most part the community wanted to know and understand the facts associated with the issues that concerned them and wanted to be involved in the conversation of how mining was responding to the concerns they raised.

“Open and transparent dialogue between mining and the community with facts, data, trends and expert explanations was required. Important



**Mark Ihlein**

issues such as the perception that the dust from mining operations significantly contributed to adverse health outcomes in local communities were discussed and addressed.”

Mr Ihlein says the Dialogue evolved to meet community needs; as time moved on it has consistently delivered a range of informative information to assist the communities’ understanding of the impacts and how mining has transparently responded to concerns raised.

“Importantly the Dialogue continues to engage with the communities,” he says. “It is proactive not reactive and openly engaging.”

As for successes, Mr Ihlein says the Dialogue’s biggest achievements have been:

- The extent and openness of engagement with the community.
- Being prepared to sit alongside community members, listen to their concerns and respond in a

transparent and factual manner.

- Having community members engaged on the Steering Committee and Joint Working Groups.
- Building a level of trust and accountability between miners and the community.
- The provision of a range of industry data on an annual basis, for example the levels of site rehabilitation.

He strongly believes the Dialogue is still needed and should continue to evolve to meet community needs.

“The community still requires assurances that mining is proactively managing its impacts and responding to concerns raised,” Mr Ihlein says.

“Having been able to establish excellent credibility on environmental and health concerns with consistent and transparent facts, the next step is to look to the future.

“What does the Hunter Valley look like as mining moves to different areas? How can we work together for a more diversified economy? How can we adaptively use and/or reuse mine infrastructure for different economic benefits?”

Mr Ihlein, who has left Singleton Council to take up a role in development and planning consultancy in the private sector, is proud of his time with the Dialogue.

“It was great being a part of conversations which changes the perceptions of people and the wider community, which in turn has lifted the transparency and accountability of mining to world class,” he says.

“I wish all of those involved in the Dialogue every success in the future and hope that the future will be front and centre of discussions and initiatives.”

**The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue thanks Mr Ihlein for his long and valuable contribution and commitment to the Dialogue**



**Students from Milbrodale, Martindale, Broke and Jerrys Plains public schools tour a rehabilitation area at Bulga Mine.**



**Students from Singleton Public School visit Rix's Creek Mine.**

## TOURS PARKED UP

**The Dialogue's School Mine Tours Program has been "parked up" for the rest of 2022.**

The program hit the road in April and completed its scheduled journey in September.

Although impacted by wet weather and Covid-19 in schools causing the cancellation of multiple tours through the year, the 2022 program completed 20 tours and about 600 Upper Hunter students and their teachers visited a local coal mine site.

The Dialogue tours program is offered to Year 5 and Year 9 students from all schools in the Upper Hunter region; students and their teachers tour working mines and learn first-hand about the effects of mining in their day to day lives.

Using messaging and materials developed by a Dialogue Working Group comprising teachers, community and industry members, and local government representatives, the program offers a fact-based, first-hand education experience to teach local students about the impacts and benefits of coal mining in the Upper Hunter. The tours program is scheduled to return in 2023.

## REVIEW FINDS OPPORTUNITIES

**The Dialogue will promote the need for better planning for the Upper Hunter's future while continuing its focus on rehabilitation and air quality, following a review of the findings of its Community Perceptions Survey research project.**

The survey was independently conducted in 2021 with in-depth interviews of past and present Dialogue stakeholders. Survey respondents indicated the Dialogue's key areas of concern remain air quality, rehabilitation of mine sites and the lack of a strategic plan surrounding the future of the Upper Hunter region. Following the Dialogue's review of the Community Perceptions Survey and the opportunities offered by its findings, the focus on strategic planning and future land use will be a continued priority for the Dialogue.

The Dialogue will advocate for better planning for the future including at its November 16 Community Forum with an agenda aimed at exploring key community issues such as economic diversification, upcoming mine site closures and their plans for post-mining land use, government-led strategic plans for the region and potential new opportunities for the Upper Hunter.

The Dialogue has long advocated for a whole of government-led strategic plan for the future Upper Hunter and is uniquely well-placed to help facilitate connections between the State Government, industry, business, local government and community.

With air quality an area of concern highlighted by survey respondents, the Dialogue will distribute more information on industry and government air quality programs and

initiatives as well as from Dialogue projects.

While the survey indicated water quality was less of a priority, there remains a need to provide sustained focus on water issues to continue to improve community awareness. The Dialogue will also continue to provide the community with important water facts from its projects including preparing a fact sheet highlighting industry initiatives and actions to reuse and recycle water and limit impacts to other Hunter River water users.

The survey respondents also called for an increased priority for mined-land rehabilitation. The Dialogue will share details from its rehabilitation and land use projects to help communicate rehabilitation progress and the development of productive and sustainable post-mining land uses.



# DO YOU WANT TO HELP MAKE THE UPPER HUNTER A BETTER PLACE FOR ALL TO LIVE?



**Community, government and mining industry representatives will come together for a day of collaboration and planning at the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue's Community Forum on November 16 at the Muswellbrook RSL Club.**

Community representatives interested in the future of the Upper Hunter are strongly encouraged to attend the Community Forum.

The Forum will bring together mining, government and community representatives to understand the key issues, concerns and opportunities that need to be addressed.

Your involvement will help ensure the Upper Hunter and its residents can look forward to a strong future. Community ideas and feedback from the Forum help shape the Dialogue's priorities and projects.

The Forum is free to attend but registration is essential. Registrations close November 11.

## The Dialogue promotes

- Listening to and working in collaboration with the community to address concerns.
- Providing a reliable source of information that builds trust between the mining industry and the community.
- Coexistence with other industries.
- Contribution to a healthy living environment and stronger community in the Upper Hunter.



## Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue

### Focus areas

- Water
- Land management
- Emissions and health
- Economic and social development



**To register and for more information scan the code or visit: [bit.ly/3QNszhy](https://bit.ly/3QNszhy)**

Visit [miningdialogue.com.au](https://miningdialogue.com.au) or contact [info@miningdialogue.com.au](mailto:info@miningdialogue.com.au) for more information