

Summer 2025-2026

# THE DIALOGUE

## Exploring post mining land reuse opportunities

UPPER HUNTER MINING DIALOGUE NEWSLETTER

### Also in this edition:

- Results for 2024 Water Accounting
- 2025 School Mine Tours Wrap Up
- Save the Date - 2026 Community Forum
- Updates on the Future Jobs and Investment Authority and Net Zero Economy Authority initiatives

Pictured: Attendees of the Mine Land Reuse Field Day at Mt Arthur.

# A WORD FROM THE DIALOGUE CHAIR



Welcome to the Summer 2025-2026 edition of the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue Newsletter.

The Dialogue wrapped up its 2025 program, completing a busy year of engagement, ongoing data reporting, and on-the-ground activities aimed at further enhancing transparency and strengthening community awareness of mining in the region.

Throughout 2025, the Dialogue continued to address key issues and actions in our strategic work plan, which was updated early in the year to reflect key themes from the 2024 Community Forum, and is guiding our work on current and emerging priorities in the region.

The Dialogue's key environment projects continue to be a strong focus. In this issue we highlight our recently published 2024 Water Accounting project results. With figures dating back to 2014, this project provides useful data on water usage in the Upper Hunter.

A highlight of 2025 was the Mine Land Reuse Field Day which was held at BHP's Mt Arthur Coal site. The event brought together more than 40 representatives from government, industry, business and the community to explore rehabilitation areas, closure planning, and discuss the opportunities and challenges with future land-use once mining stops.

2025 was another successful year for the school mine tours program, with more than 500 students from 15 primary and high schools in the Upper Hunter, visiting 8 mine sites. A highlight of the tour program this year were two successful tours hosted by Rix's Creek and Mt Owen Mine for more than 80 educators, school leaders and support staff from Singleton High School.

The Dialogue also launched a new webinar series in 2025, which is designed to connect stakeholders directly with subject-matter experts on key issues. The first webinar was facilitated by Zephyr Environmental who explained the 2024 Upper Hunter Air Quality results and how air quality is managed and the second webinar focused on mine rehabilitation including an overview from the NSW Resources Regulator on how rehabilitation is regulated in NSW and a case study of rehabilitation from Glencore's Liddell Mine.

We continued to participate in various community and business networks as well as attended several Upper Hunter regional shows. These networks and events enable us to connect with the community and stay informed about relevant issues and concerns.

We hope you find this edition informative and wish all our members and stakeholders a safe and very happy summer season.

**John Watson | Chair**  
Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue



# 2025 FIELD DAY MINE LAND REUSE

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue, in partnership with BHP Mt Arthur Coal, hosted a Mine Land Reuse Field Day in Muswellbrook in October, bringing together more than 40 representatives from government, industry, business and the community.

The event focused on workforce planning, mine closure, rehabilitation, and infrastructure reuse, providing attendees with valuable first-hand insights into mine closure planning and post-mining land use opportunities.

Participants toured key areas of the site, including rehabilitation areas, operating pit, workshops, and potential pumped hydro site, guided by BHP staff who shared information and answered questions. The day also featured a presentation on workforce transition and community engagement initiatives, highlighting BHP's planning to support employees and the local region through closure.

Attendees had productive discussions about the challenges and opportunities around mine closure and land use and highlighted the need for sustainable transition pathways for the Upper Hunter.





# 2025 SCHOOL MINE TOURS PROGRAM WRAPS UP



Pictured: Students from St James Primary School visiting Mt Pleasant Operations

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue School Mine Tours program completed its busy 2025 schedule, with over 500 students from 15 schools in the Upper Hunter visiting eight mining operations this year.

Schools in the Singleton, Muswellbrook and Scone catchments participated again this year. Mine site staff enjoy the enthusiasm of the students and the opportunity to share some of the things they've learned on their education and career journeys.

A major milestone this year was the delivery of the first teacher-only mine tours, with more than 80 educators, school leaders and support staff from Singleton High School participating in tours at Mt Owen Mine and Rix's Creek.

These tours gave teachers a rare, in-depth look at the modern mining industry from exploration and approvals through to operations, rehabilitation and closure planning.

Based on the success of these tours, the Dialogue is planning three dedicated teacher tours for Muswellbrook High School in early 2026.

Since its inception in 2018, more than 4,300 students have now undertaken a tour.



Australian Christian College students visiting Bengalla



Broke Public and Jerry's Plains Primary Schools visiting MTW

The Dialogue would like to extend its thanks to all the mining operations who supported the school mine tour program.



# JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT THE 2026 COMMUNITY FORUM



## WEDNESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2026 MUSWELLBROOK

The Dialogue will host the next Community Forum on Wednesday 18 November 2026 in Muswellbrook.

Held every two years, the Forum brings together Dialogue partners, mining companies, government, interest groups and the broader community to openly discuss key issues, concerns and opportunities related to mining in the Upper Hunter.

### Why attend?

The Forum provides a valuable opportunity for meaningful, respectful conversations that help inform collaborative strategies and practical actions. Attendees will also hear updates from organisations and individuals working across the region and have the chance to connect and network with others involved in shaping the Upper Hunter's future.

### What issues will be discussed?

The 2026 Forum will focus on issues that are front of mind for the community, building on discussions from the 2024 Forum in Singleton.

Topics will include post-mining land-use opportunities, government action and investment, and updates on ongoing initiatives being delivered through the Dialogue.

Further details on the agenda and speakers will be shared closer to the event.

**This is a free event, open to everyone**

**Registration will open soon**

For more information or to express interest in attending or presenting, visit our [website](#) or email us at [info@miningdialogue.com.au](mailto:info@miningdialogue.com.au)

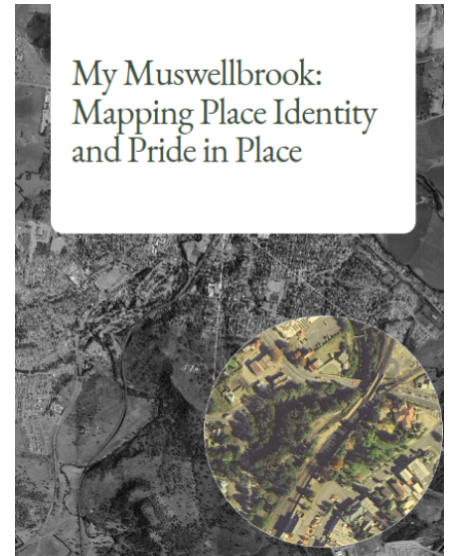


# 'AROUND THE GROUNDS'

## My Muswellbrook: Mapping Place Identity and Pride in Place

The My Muswellbrook: Mapping Place Identity and Pride in Place report has been released, sharing findings from a community-led research project exploring what Muswellbrook means to local residents. Led by the University of Newcastle's Institute for Regional Futures and funded by BHP Mt Arthur Coal, the study draws on community workshops to capture local stories, values and lived experiences.

Developed in the context of the planned closure of BHP's Mt Arthur Coal mine in 2030, the report highlights community hopes, concerns and priorities, and sets out key principles and practical recommendations to guide mine closure, rehabilitation and future land use in Muswellbrook.



## Future Jobs and Investment Authority

The NSW Government has continued to progress the establishment of the Future Jobs and Investment Authority, a new statutory body aimed at supporting economic diversification, jobs and investment in coal producing regions, including the Hunter.

In November 2025, the NSW Government introduced the Future Jobs and Investment Bill 2025, establishing the framework and governance for the Future Jobs and Investment Authority. The Bill proposes that the Authority be headed by a Chief Executive Officer and report to a Board comprising the chairperson of each local division and other members appointed by the Minister. Under the Bill, coal mine operators must give at least three years' notice of a planned closure and provide the Authority a workforce plan outlining transition arrangements for workers in the lead up to closure. The Bill is expected to be considered by the NSW Parliament in early 2026.

## Net Zero Economy Authority

In October, the Net Zero Economy Authority held a series of "Future Made in the Hunter" workshops to deepen the understanding of the views, priorities and challenges in the region and to inform future regional strategies.



In November, the NSW and Commonwealth Governments jointly announced a funding agreement that will see \$5 million invested through the Net Zero Economy Authority to develop post-mining master plans for BHP's Mt Arthur site and Glencore's Macquarie Coal site.

The initiative brings together mine operators, councils and governments to review planning and rezoning requirements and explore regulatory changes to unlock future land uses, with pilots designed to inform approaches for other sites.



# WEBINAR PROGRAM

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue introduced a webinar program in 2025, delivering two well-attended sessions focused on air quality monitoring and mine rehabilitation, both of which were identified as priority focus areas.

## HOW AIR QUALITY IS MONITORED IN THE UPPER HUNTER

The Dialogue opened the series with a presentation from Zephyr Environmental, outlining the key findings from the 2024 Annual Air Quality Report. The session provided a clear introduction to air quality concepts, an overview of the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network, and insights from the Dialogue's monitoring program, which began in 2019.



Nearly 30 participants joined the webinar, with questions centring on how air quality data is collected and regulated, and how factors such as drought influence long-term trends. A recording and the full 2024 results are available on the [Dialogue website](#).

## REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR MINE REHABILITATION AND A CASE STUDY

A second webinar held in October focused on mine rehabilitation and featured presentations from the NSW Resources Regulator and Glencore's Liddell Closure Project. The Regulator outlined the legislative and regulatory framework that guides mine rehabilitation in NSW, while the Liddell team shared their experience delivering rehabilitation on site, the first in NSW to achieve certification under the state's updated closure criteria.



Again, almost 30 attendees joined the session, raising questions about post-mining land use applications and the barriers to progressing alternative land use options. A recording is available on the [Dialogue website](#), alongside the [Dialogue's annual rehabilitation reporting](#).

## SAVE THE DATE

### Learning from Other Regional Transitions

 3 MARCH 2026

 12:00 - 1:00 pm

The first webinar for 2026 will be held on Tuesday 3 March 2026 with Associate Professor Jessica Reeves sharing her research and learnings from regions that have transitioned from mining to other sectors.

You can register for the webinar on the [Dialogue website](#).



# THE 2024 WATER ACCOUNTING RESULTS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED

In late 2025, the Dialogue published the latest report on water usage in the Upper Hunter. This project commenced in 2014, and reports annually on the cumulative inflows and outflows of water from mining operations across the Upper Hunter using a consistent accounting framework. This work supports improved water management and encourages water-saving and reuse opportunities across the industry.

The 2024 results showed slightly higher than average rainfall, with 349 gegalitres (GL) of water entering the Hunter River System, that's the equivalent of nearly 140,000 Olympic size swimming pools.

Of this water, 76% remained in the Hunter River System. Farmers, businesses and residents extracted 22% of the water, and about 10% of water was lost to evaporation from Hunter River storage dams. The mining industry used 2.6% of the water from the river, this is slightly lower than the 10 year average.

In 2024, the majority of water used by the mining industry was sourced from onsite rainfall and runoff (42%). The industry also extracted a large amount of the water being used on site from deep aquifers (26%) that have limited use to other water users due to the high salinity. Overall 41% of the water used by mining was reused onsite.

The slightly wetter conditions allowed mining companies to safely discharge 2.7 GL of excess water back into the Hunter River system.

The full 2024 Water Accounting Report and long-term water use trends are available on the [Dialogue website](#).

2024 was a wetter than average year, with about

**349,000  
MEGALITRES**

of water entering the river system in the Upper Hunter.

**76%**

of that water stayed in the river.

The amount of water extracted and used by farmers, residents and businesses was

**22%**

**MINING**  
used  
**2.6%**

of the water from the Hunter River system.

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue developed this resource using the best available information, supplied by industry data. Since water accounting is a complex task that relies on estimates and computer models, there are corresponding limits to the accuracy of the information. Sources: Bureau of Meteorology; DPI Water; NSW Minerals Council data. Note: Key figures are rounded for publication, so may not total 100% exactly.

# UPPER HUNTER WATER BALANCE 2024

## Mining's water use

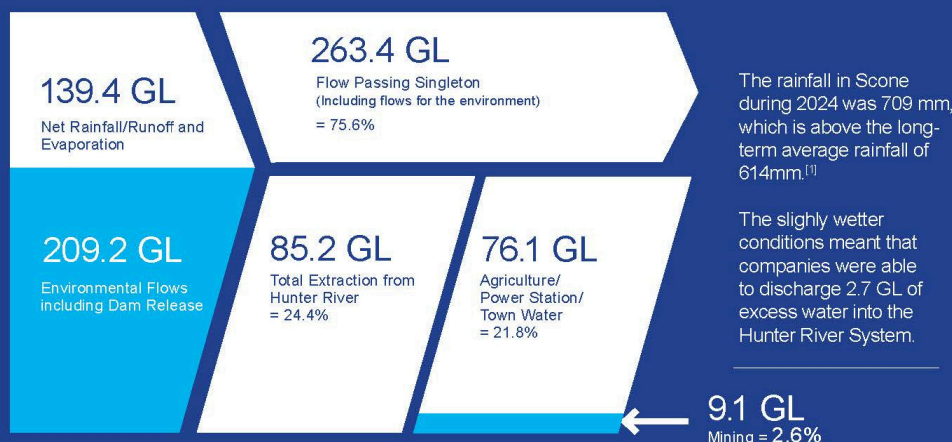


Upper Hunter  
Mining Dialogue

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue has collated the water use by the mining industry in the Upper Hunter in 2024. Using a common accounting framework, mining companies have reported their water inflows and outflows. This has helped industry manage their water use and embark on water saving and reuse opportunities.



### Hunter River System Extraction



### Mining Industry Water Use



MORE THAN  
**3.7x**

as much water evaporated from the Hunter River System storage dams as was extracted from the Hunter River System by mining companies

The mining industry used  
**JUST 2.6%**  
of water in the Upper Hunter River System

**9%**

of mine water came from rivers and alluvial aquifers

**42%**

of mine water was sourced from onsite rainfall and runoff

**26%**

of water was sourced from deep aquifers that are of limited use to other water users due to their high salinity

The mining industry reused  
**41%**  
of its water onsite

**2.6%**

of mine water was discharged into the Hunter River

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue developed this resource using the best available information, supplied by industry data. Since water accounting is a complex task that relies on estimates and computer models, there are corresponding limits to the accuracy of the information. Sources: Bureau of Meteorology; DPI Water; NSW Minerals Council data. Notes: [1] The source for contextual rainfall data was updated in 2019 due to the closure of the Scone SCS station. Scone Airport AWS was selected due to its nearby location, however long-term data for this site is limited to 1994 onwards.

For more information:

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



# UPPER HUNTER WATER BALANCE 2024














Upper Hunter  
Mining Dialogue

## Summary of Key Findings

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue has collated the water use by the mining industry in the Upper Hunter in the 2024 water year. Since 2014, using a common accounting framework, mines in the Upper Hunter have reported their water inflows and outflows from operations. This has helped the mining industry manage their water use and embark on water saving and reuse opportunities.

Below is a summary of key findings on water use in the Upper Hunter for 2024:

-  2024 was a slightly wetter than average year, which allowed about 349 gigalitres (or 348,587 megalitres) of water to enter the river system in the Upper Hunter.
-  76% (or 263 gigalitres) of water stayed in the river and flowed passed Singleton.
-  Farmers, residents and businesses extracted around 22% (or 76.1 gigalitres) of the water in the system.
-  Mining used 2.6% (or 9.1 gigalitres) of the water that entered the system.
-  10% (or 33.9 gigalitres) of the available water evaporated from the Hunter River System storage dams.
-  9% (or 9.3 gigalitres) of the water inflow to mines came from rivers and alluvial aquifers.
-  41% (or 42.4 gigalitres) of the water inflow to mines was sourced from onsite rainfall and runoff.
-  26% (or 26.7 gigalitres) of the water inflow to mines was sourced from deep aquifers that are of limited use to other water users due to their high salinity.
-  The mining industry reused 41% of its water onsite.
-  2.6% (or 2.7 gigalitres) of the water outflow from mines was discharged into the Hunter River.
-  The rainfall in Scone during 2024 was 709mm, which was slightly higher than the long-term average of 614mm.

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue developed this resource using the best available information, supplied by industry data. Since water accounting is a complex task that relies on estimates and computer models, there are corresponding limits to the accuracy of the information.

Sources: Bureau of Meteorology; DPI Water; NSW Minerals Council data.

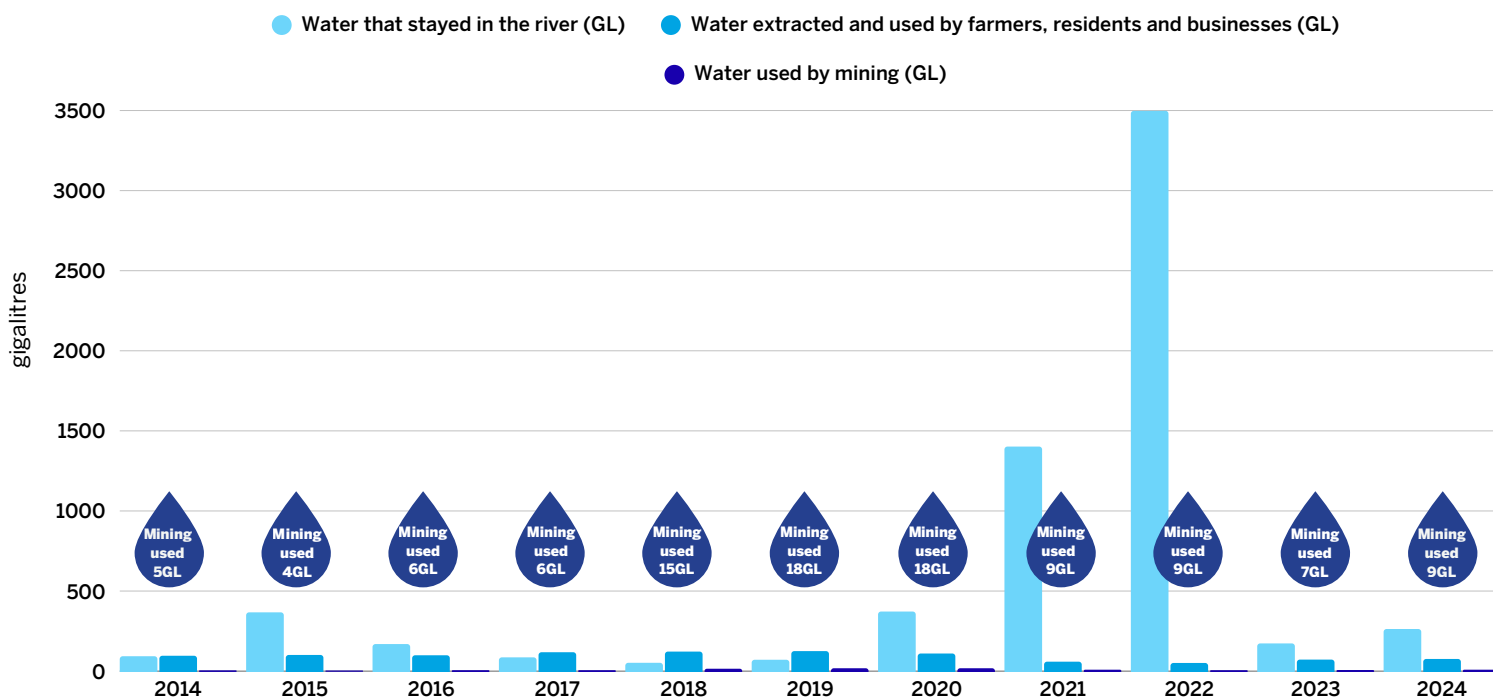
# UPPER HUNTER WATER BALANCE 2024



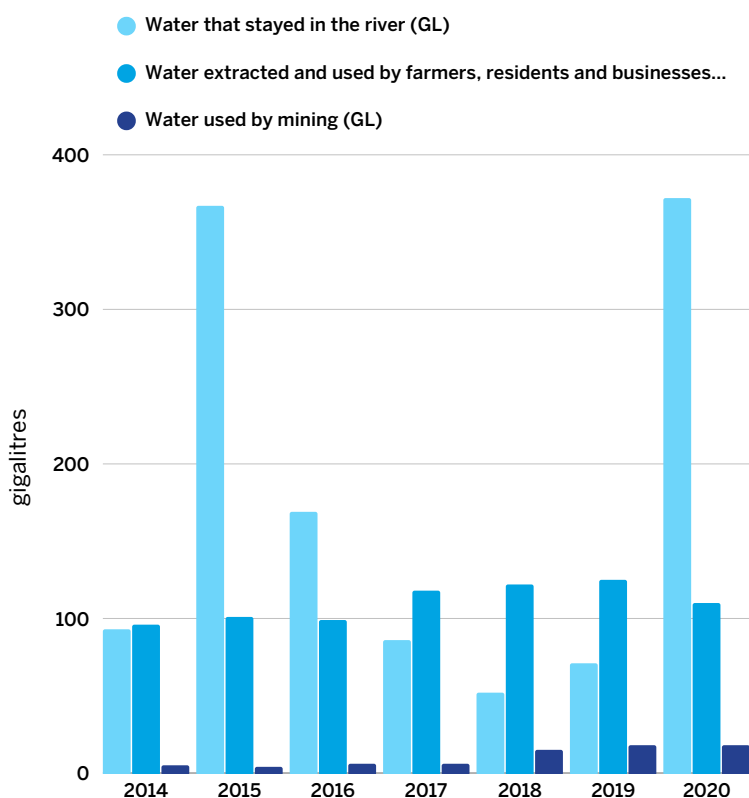
Upper Hunter  
Mining Dialogue

## Summary of Key Findings

**Figure 1: Annual Upper Hunter Water Use Figures (2014-2024)**

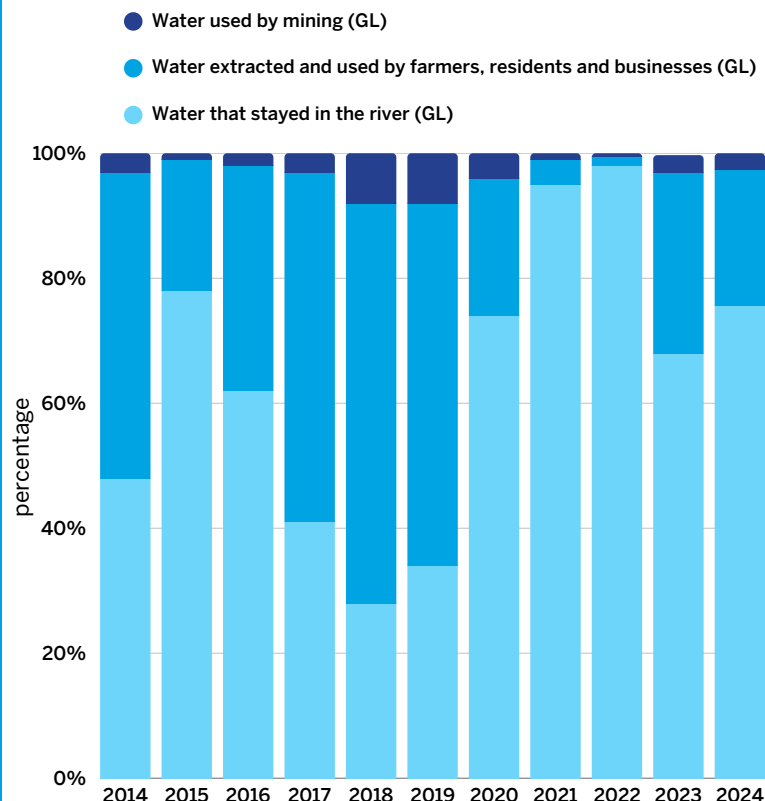


**Figure 2: Annual Upper Hunter Water Use Figures (2014-2020)\***



\* Note: Fig. 2 contains the same information as Fig. 1, but with the 2021 and 2022 years removed to better differentiate pre-2021 figures.

**Figure 3: Annual Percentages of Water Use (2014-2024)**



The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue developed this resource using the best available information, supplied by industry data. Since water accounting is a complex task that relies on estimates and computer models, there are corresponding limits to the accuracy of the information.

Data presented is based on a water year. Sources: Bureau of Meteorology; DPI Water; NSW Minerals Council data.





# FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE DIALOGUE

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue is a collaboration between community, mining, business and government working together to address the cumulative impacts of mining and make the Upper Hunter a better place for all to live.

The Dialogue's participants represent a wide range of stakeholders who work together and, through our Working Groups and Committees, work together to investigate issues and implement solutions on environmental (e.g. air quality, rehabilitation and water quality and stewardship) and economic and social development issues.

**If you are interested in learning more about the Dialogue or contributing your ideas, send an email to [info@miningdialogue.com.au](mailto:info@miningdialogue.com.au)**

## Why join the Dialogue?

- ✓ Play an active role in contributing to improving the quality of life for those living in the Upper Hunter.
- ✓ Share your thoughts and ideas with representatives from the community and mining industry,
- ✓ Learn more about the Upper Hunter region, including projects and initiatives in the pipeline.
- ✓ Connect with new people in the Upper Hunter Community.



Please send an email to [info@miningdialogue.com.au](mailto:info@miningdialogue.com.au) to learn more

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