

MINUTES

NSW Minerals Council UHMD – Emissions & Health Joint Working Group Civic Room, Quest, 5-7 Civic Ave, Singleton, NSW

Monday 22 April 2013 12.30pm-2.30pm

In Attendance

Tony Howard (Chair)	BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal
John Hindmarsh	Rix's Creek
Julie McNaughton	Ashton Coal Operations
Troy Favell	Peabody Energy
Gerard Gleeson	Rio Tinto Coal & Allied
Kate Brickhill	Vale
Wendy Bowman	NSW Mine Watch
Emma Ridley	Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association
Ben Harrison	NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure – Singleton
Melinda Hale	Singleton Council
John Drinan	Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group
John Shewan	Wybong Action Group
Neville Hodgkinson	Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group
Peter Forbes	Anglo American
Arti Brown	NSW Minerals Council
Claire Doherty	NSW Minerals Council

Presenter

Yvonne Scorgie	Environ
Lavanya Gowrisanker	Environ

Apologies

Chris Knight	Muswellbrook Coal Company
Lisa Richards	Ashton Coal Operations
David Frith	NSW Minerals Council
Scott Brooks	NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure – Singleton
John Watson	Xstrata Coal
Stephen Ward	Muswellbrook Shire Council

1. Welcome and Apologies

Tony Howard welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the Joint Working Group – Emissions and Health and noted the apologies.

2. Joint Working Group Terms of Reference

Members of the joint working group agreed to the Terms of Reference.

3. Communications Strategy

Arti Brown confirmed that the communication strategy is designed to communicate to the broader community about the research that is being undertaken by government agencies in relation to air quality in the region. It was noted that two sessions are planned, one in May and another in July/ August. It is anticipated that results of research, in particular the ANSTO/ CSIRO speciation study will be available in late June/ early July.

The members of the joint working group discussed the value of having an information session before the results are released. There were some concerns expressed that people would attend looking for results. The strategy of holding a meeting before results was discussed. It was agreed that helping people to understand the research and providing an information session to seek information about air quality was valuable, and that the promotion of the event could make it clear that a further information session will be held when results are available.

The timing of the July/ August information session was discussed, and members of the joint working groups recommended that this be held after research from ANSTO/ CSIRO and NSW Health is available, if that is practical. John Shewan asked that links to the research reports be circulated prior to the information session.

Members of the joint working group were asked to consider who in addition to Office of Environment and Heritage/ the Environmental Protection Agency, NSW Health and Department of Planning and Infrastructure (Singleton Compliance Office) should be asked to speak. Mark Hibberd from the CSIRO was suggested.

The following community groups/ organisations were suggested to assist in promoting the event:

- Headmasters/ P&Cs of local schools
- GP clinics
- The new healthy environment group being formed in Muswellbrook
- Merriwa Healthy Environment Group
- Action groups in Jerry's Plains, Denman, Aberdeen
- Local sports clubs
- Mining workforce
- ABC Upper Hunter and other local radio stations.

Members of the joint working group indicated that they would be willing to circulate information to their membership.

The members of the joint working group recommended that the speakers at the forum be asked to address the following:

- The research. In particular information about the fine particulates speciation study including why they are doing it, why there are concurrent studies and why some of the analysis is being done abroad. It was also suggested that a matrix of the studies be developed to show how they are related.
- The Dust Stop programs and other initiatives that assist to reduce dust.
- One of the mines to discuss its pollution reduction program.
- Environmental Protection Agency's *Upper Hunter Particle Action Plan*.
- Information about the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network, including why it was set up, the thinking behind the location of the monitors and how to understand the information from the network.

ACTIONS

- NSWMC to consider the release dates for air quality research when setting the date for the July/ August information session, with a view to holding it after relevant research results are released.
- NSWMC will circulate links to available research reports prior to the July/ August information session.
- NSWMC will ask speakers at the sessions to address the issues/ provide information as recommended

by the joint working group.

- NSWMC to invite Mark Hibberd from the CSIRO to the information sessions
- NSWMC to draft and circulate information about the information sessions to:
 - Members of the joint working groups for promotion to their members
 - Community groups and organisations, including those identified above.

4. Weather Forecasting Project

Yvonne Scorgie from Environ Australia presented on the joint working group's second project, the weather forecasting project. Yvonne is the consultant undertaking development of this project.

Yvonne's presentation:

- Noted that many of the nine coal producers taking part in the Dialogue already use some type of weather forecasting system to predict conditions and adapt management of their mine to manage emissions. She noted that their research has indicated that there is not much consistency on how those systems work and that the management actions in response also vary.
- Explained that there is a good deal of consistency between the meteorological data underlying the various programs used by the industry.
- Discussed the complexity of using weather forecasts to predict high levels of emissions. For instance high winds do necessarily not correlate with high levels of PM2.5; there is a pattern of increased PM2.5s, but not PM10s in winter. Also noted was the impact of different wind conditions and directions.
- Discussed the progress of the project. Yvonne explained that they are focussing identifying whether they can cluster mines on the basis of similar meteorology, then look at establishing triggers and responses.

In response to questions Yvonne advised:

- Would it be possible to use the system to provide information to the community which would allow them to take precautions? This would require the triggers to relate to PM 2.5s (the plan is that they will relate to PM10s). The results of the speciation could lead to an expansion of the project. It is possible, but the industry would need to work closely with NSW Health and other agencies to ensure that any information provided is useful and complements other government initiatives.
- What happens when the mines change shape? Do the models react to this? Yvonne said that their research indicates that the models tend to use static data and accordingly don't take account of the changing shape of the mine. She advised that this could be easily facilitated by the models.
- What about the power stations? Yvonne noted that power stations were different and not as straight forward. She also noted that wood smoke has been a considerable issue in other jurisdictions, and that in the US forecasting is used to identify "no burn days" where household fires are banned to improve air quality. The responses will depend on the speciation study.

Members of the joint working group thanked Yvonne for the presentation and indicated that they thought the project was very valuable.

5. Other business

The issue of emissions from diesel engines was raised a number of times during the meeting. Arti provided an update on this issue:

- The EPA have made it a priority to better understand off road diesel emissions in the mining industry and has asked mines throughout NSW to complete a detailed survey.
- This is an issue for the industry across NSW not just in the Upper Hunter.
- The EPA advise that they will be releasing a report in June/ July and at that stage they will consult

further with the industry and community about the issues and steps that may need to be taken.

ACTION

- NSWMC will keep the joint working group advised on progress in relation to diesel emissions.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting date will be advised offline.

The meeting closed at 2.25 pm.