

MINUTES

Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue

Joint Working Group Water and Land Management Meeting

UHMD Resource Centre, Upstairs of the Town Square Shopping Centre
Suite 1, 159 John Street, Singleton NSW 2330

Wednesday 27 June 2018: 10.00 am- 12.10 pm

Attending

Julie Thomas (Chair)	Muswellbrook Coal
Bill Baxter	Yancoal
Bob Mackie	theresource
Catherine Lewis	Resources Regulator
Di Sneddon	Community individual (presentation only)
Cameron Archer	Tom Farrell Institute
Craig Milton	NSW Minerals Council
Glenda Briggs	NSW Department of Primary Industries
James Barben	NSW Minerals Council
John Campbell	Bengalla Mining Company
Ken Bray	Hunter Valley Water Users Association
Mark Scandrett	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Mark Slade	Community individual
Matt Parkinson	AGL Bayswater Power Station
Neil Griffiths	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Ron Fenwick	Wambo CCC / Community Individual

Guests

Steve Barry	NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Hamish Aiken	NSW Department of Planning and Environment

Apologies

Chris Knight	The Bloomfield Group
Chris Quinn	The Bloomfield Group
Craig White	Bengalla Mining Company
Jim Morgan	Wybong Action Group / NSW Farmers' Association
Jo Powells	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Jonathan Deacon	BHP
Karen Marler	NSW Environment Protection Authority
Merri Bartlett	Peabody Energy
Monique Meyer	Resources Regulator
Ngaire Baker	Mount Pleasant Operation
Nigel Charnock	Glencore
Paul Amidy	Glencore
Sean Constable	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Simon Turpin	Local Land Services
Tim Roberts	Tom Farrell Institute
Wendy Bowman	NSW Mine Watch

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed all attendees. Mr. Barben thanked the Chair for accepting the Chairing duties and thanked Mr. Baxter for his commitments as Chair in previous years.

2. Minutes and actions of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted. Mr. Barben provided a summary of the outstanding actions, noting that several documents had been circulated to follow up actions.

3. Rehab Reform Program

Mr. Barben provided a summary of the intent of the Rehabilitation Reform Program and the new components this would involve, and that this would be expected to be released in the coming weeks.

Ms. Lewis noted this would now be referred to as the Operational Rehabilitation Reforms given they are focused on post-approvals. The change in name has been to avoid confusion with the DPE policy work around rehabilitation that is more focused on the planning and assessment phase.

Ms. Lewis noted that the consultation period for the reforms will extend to a 12-week period, which is double the initial 6-week period. The Resources Regulator will then be looking at the feedback received and incorporate revisions for finalisation and implementation of the reforms and the rehabilitation GIS portal in January 2019.

Mr. Barben noted that the recent DPE restructure has seen the ESU back within the Resources Regulator (like 2014 arrangements) and separated from the Titles unit within DRG. Inspectors would be reporting to Matt Newton as Director, Compliance Operations and Anthony Keon, Resources Regulator Chief Regulator, with roles likely to be split between compliance and approvals.

Mr. Baxter queried whether mining operations plans will go through to new departments. Ms. Lewis advised the department will operate as business as usual for the time being and recommended that sites contact their current key contact. In future it will go through titles portals, while detailed assessments will be referred to the Resources Regulator. A decision maker that sits within titles will make the final decisions, however these details are still to be finalised.

Mr. Barben noted the government is planning to respond to submissions received from the Improving Mine Rehabilitation discussion paper.

4. Rehabilitation Principles and Commitments 2017

Mr. Milton provided a brief overview of the key outcomes from the 2017 reporting period for the annual Dialogue rehabilitation project, noting that these are undergoing final assessment. Members noted that it would be good to provide contextual information regarding Mount Pleasant Operation's impact on the overall results, given it is in its initial stages and included in the figures for the first time, as well as highlighting the amount of biodiversity offsets and agricultural land owned by mining companies.

5. Update on current land management projects

Mr. Griffiths noted that there has been limited progress made in the new ACARP project, with administrative delays and environmental issues such as drought preventing any field work being undertaken. Mr. Griffiths also noted there has been limited contact with companies, and the provision of data has been slow from sites to date. Mr. Griffiths is currently reviewing the project and will seek to vary the timing of the project at an upcoming ACARP meeting and to enable this to push back six months. Approval will be needed for a formal contract variation. JWG members agreed this made sense given the weather issues. Mr. Baxter noted that he would follow this up as an industry monitor.

6. DPE Presentation

Mr. Barry and Mr. Aiken provided a detailed overview of their mine rehabilitation visualisation tool. The

tool has been developed as a community awareness tool for rehabilitation and to give everyone a sense of final landforms. Given the size of the data, there are challenges to providing this to the public, however the intention is that this will sit as a web resource. It is currently in draft form, but DPE is looking to get community involved and testing the resource to provide feedback on improvements needed.

The demonstration prompted a range of comments from members, including:

- Inserting dates into the final landforms displayed. DPE explained these have been purposely left as arbitrary dates at the moment, as they are all just final current approvals. DPE noted these will change as modifications arise, however it is the government's intention to make these visible as this project progresses. DPE noted dates could be provided via a speech bubble, or a sliding representation at different stages, however this would increase the data-heavy nature of the resource.
- Suggestion that this data might be showcased at a DPE community environment office in the Upper Hunter.
- Suggestion for better colour definition around cropping and woodland data. DPE noted that they still need to do a bit of editing work around boundary displays.
- Query as to whether there is any ability to drill down into detail on these areas or to look at two boundaries at once? DPE advised they aren't looking to provide a full spatial data set but provide a visual representation of the final landforms.
- Members discussed water bodies being displayed. DPE noted there are complexities displaying these, however they're filled to the equilibrium level that sites have in their assessments.
- Query regarding a pre-mining view of sites. DPE advised this is something that can be explored and would probably be more possible with recent mines.
- Query regarding updating data on a yearly basis. DPE advised that Truescape has said this is possible as yearly updated layers, however there needs to be a level of demand and funding to maintain this.
- Suggestion to allow searching for views of sites from specific locations. DPE noted that they could provide drive-through looks of operations.
- Suggestion that this is something that the Dialogue could take to regional shows to demonstrate to community members.
- Suggestion for a scale ruler to better show the size of these areas.
- Suggestion to include a layer of the original Synoptic Plan. DPE noted that they need to start feeding this data into the Regional Plan.

Mr. Barry outlined the next steps for the project, noting that industry is currently checking how their data is displayed. Once this data is returned, DPE will be able to make this more broadly available to provide for user acceptance testing. Members discussed the potential to make this available at CCC meetings.

Mr. Archer advised that there are misconceptions in the community as to the quality of the land in the Upper Hunter before mining. In many cases it was very rundown agricultural land, which may well be improved through mine rehabilitation. Mr. Archer suggested seeking data from the Lands Department on the Hunter land from the 1950's or so to determine what the productivity of the land was to get a better idea of intensive farming. This imagery should be available and DPE can look to work this in.

Ms. Briggs noted the Department of Industry is progressing some strategic planning looking at the availability of water taking into account the CSIRO study and will be seeking to undertake targeted consultation shortly around September 2018. The Government is currently considering this and is expected to sign off shortly. Mr. Barben noted that the Dialogue has sought an update from Eddie Harris at DPI Water on these reforms. Ms. Briggs noted that she would be meeting shortly and could raise that the Dialogue is looking to receive an update.

Mr. Barry also provided an update on the Improving Mine Rehabilitation discussion paper and broader DPE policy work in this area. DPE are currently working through the response to get more of a coherent agenda for the government regarding mine rehabilitation. As a result of the discussion paper, DPE will be able to develop a high-level policy framework, with an Action Plan many of which are focused on the Hunter, and identify information gaps, which will bring together broader work DPE and DRG has done. DPE do not intend to go back to stakeholders with an additional paper and will seek to meet with key stakeholders to discuss how they've considered their feedback.

ACTION:

- **Dialogue secretariat to liaise with Ms. Briggs regarding securing a presentation on DPI**

Water's 'water availability' projects.

7. Strategic Discussion on Dialogue Objectives

Mr. Barben provided an overview of the early 2018 strategic discussion, noting a reduction in emerging environment issues and a move towards future planning issues, as well as communication with stakeholders. The consolidation of the Joint Working Groups into a single Joint Environment Working will enable the Dialogue to discuss this information in a more efficient manner and reduce duplication of content and personnel.

Mr. Barben provided an overview of the intent of the Communications Working Group and Economics and Social Development Working Groups. It was noted the economics group would be looking at how to better utilise buffer land, and seek strategic land use and economic diversification opportunities, and would seek to link in with business chambers and council representatives working in this area to build a better relationship with industry and business. Mr. Barben advised that if any members wish to be involved, they should contact the Dialogue secretariat.

Mr. Archer suggested Dialogue consider contacting Trevor John at Regional Development Australia (RDA) Hunter, as well as University of Newcastle's Richard Bush. Given the RDA is a federal body, it would be good to feed into their processes and help influence work for the Hunter down the track.

Mr. Barben noted some recent discussions about opportunities in the Hunter region with solar farms, poultry relocation from South Australia to Hunter. These opportunities will ultimately depend on who is willing to invest and what land is available.

Mr. Barben noted the Statement of Objectives that was produced following JASC recommendations, which captures the key purpose and objectives of the Dialogue at this current time and will be updated as needed in future. Ms. Briggs noted the JASC appears to be working well.

8. Synoptic Plan Update

Mr. Barben provided an update on the developments with the Synoptic Plan. A new workshop would be held shortly, and all those included last year would be automatically captured in the 2018 workshop.

9. Update on communications activities

Mr. Mackie provided an update on the communications activities, especially regarding the Hunter Coal Festival and Tocal days, which provided good engagement opportunities for the Dialogue. Members noted that the school mine tours were progressing well.

10. Hunter River Water Quality Study

Mr. Barben noted that discussions with EPA are still underway to determine the approach to the next steps in the study. Members discussed when the initial report will be finalised, and Mr. Barben explained that the Steering Committee is seeking to determine an approach to addressing identified issues before publishing.

Mr. Archer advised that there has been considerable discussion on water quality recently and noted that the results of this report were pleasing and would be great to share with academics when possible. Mr. Bray noted that the salinity in the river has improved over years through the scheme. Mr. Barben noted that there have also been calls to copy this assessment in parts of Queensland.

Members noted that the Dialogue is awaiting feedback from the EPA to decide, and we would seek to have a finalised position in the next couple of months with a view to complete the additional study by the end of the year. The EPA have been very constructive and supportive of the project to date, so it is hoped this approach will continue.

Mr. Bray advised that he would like to see industry testing their sites on a regular annual basis to provide ongoing continuous data as this regular collection of data would help overcome negative public perceptions of poor water quality.

11. Bioregional Assessments

Mr. Milton provided a brief update on the bioregional assessments recently released.

12. Current land management and water projects

Mr. Milton provided an update on the Water Accounting Framework reporting project, noting that all data has been collected and the Dialogue is clarifying some operational efficiency data and groundwater splits. Contextual information will be provided in early July, so the final results will be known shortly and discussed at the September meeting.

Mr. Milton advised of the water reform action plan, noting that extensive consultation had recently been completed. Mr. Bray provided an update noting that this plan is locked into the federal work through the Murray Darling Basin Plan and is very compliance-focused, given over 80 people have been employed to manage the reforms. Mr. Bray expressed concern for the long-term future, and that the valley needs to be mindful of when Liddell goes offline, given their high security water licences. Mr. Bray noted the cost recovery for relinquished assets would be considerable and that industry was becoming more aware of their water constraints and responsibilities.

Mr. Parkinson advised that AGL was doing modelling on what will happen when Liddell switches off and expect more information to come out of this in the future.

13. General Dialogue matters

No general Dialogue business.

14. Next Meeting / Close

The Chair noted the next JWG meeting, noting this would be the first meeting for the combined Environment working group. Mr. Barben advised this would be held like the current merged Land Management and Water meeting, with distinct sections covering all environmental issues.

The meeting closed at 12:10 pm

Actions arising from meeting UHMD Land Management and Water Joint Working Group Meeting

Action	Responsibility	Status
DPI Water Availability Projects		
Dialogue secretariat to liaise with Ms. Briggs regarding securing a presentation on DPI Water's 'water availability' projects.	Dialogue secretariat	In progress - DPI seeking a meeting with Upper Hunter stakeholders upon release of report.