

Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue

Update and New Projects

December 2013



The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue brings together the nine 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.

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.

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 July 2013 the Joint Working Groups met to consider what new projects each group should take on in order to keep progressing the Dialogue towards its five year goals. The new projects chosen will be developed with advice from the Joint Working Groups.

This report

This report provides updates on all of the current Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue projects, as well as a brief description of new projects for each focus area that will begin during the second half of 2013/ first half of 2014.

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 Claire Doherty, Director Community Development, NSW Minerals Council, cdoherty@nswmining.com.au or 02 9274 1407.

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 is being guided by a joint Housing Research Steering Group.

Emissions and Health

Anglo American
 BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal
 Bloomfield Collieries
 Glencore
 Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association
 Muswellbrook Coal Company
 Muswellbrook Shire Council
 NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure Singleton
 NSW MineWatch
 Peabody Energy
 Coal and Allied
 Singleton Council
 Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group
 Vale Australia
 Wybong Action Group
 Ashton Coal Operations

Water

Anglo American Metallurgical Coal
 BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal
 Bloomfield Collieries
 Glencore
 Hunter Valley Water Users' Association
 Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority
 Muswellbrook Coal Company
 NSW Department of Primary Industries
 NSW Farmers Association
 NSW Mine Watch
 Peabody Energy
 Coal & Allied
 Singleton Council
 The University of Newcastle Australia
 Vale Australia
 Ashton Coal Operations
 Ron Fenwick

Land Management

Anglo American
 BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal
 Bloomfield Collieries
 Department of Primary Industries
 Glencore
 Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association
 Hunter Valley Water Users' Association
 Hunter Valley Wine Industry Association
 Hunter-Central Rivers CMA
 Muswellbrook Coal Company
 DTIRIS Resources and Energy
 Muswellbrook Shire Council
 NSW Farmers Association
 NSW MineWatch
 Peabody Energy
 Coal & Allied Industries
 Singleton Beef and Land Management Association
 Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group
 The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative
 Upper Hunter Shire Council
 Upper Hunter Wine Makers Association
 Vale Australia
 Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation
 Ashton Coal Operations
 Ron Fenwick

Housing Research Steering Group

BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal
 Housing NSW
 Muswellbrook Shire Council
 NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure
 Singleton Chamber of Commerce
 Singleton Council
 Upper Hunter Shire Council
 Vale - Integra Coal Operations
 Coal & Allied

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 first Air Quality Information Sessions were held in May in Singleton and Muswellbrook.

Representatives from the Environment Protection Authority, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's Singleton Compliance Office and NSW Health provided updates on the various initiatives underway to better understand and manage air quality in the Upper Hunter region.

Dr John Drinan of the Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group and Tony Howard of BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal opened each session.

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue was to hold a second round of information sessions after the release of the *Upper Hunter Fine Particle Characterisation Study*. However as sessions were hosted by the government and Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group it was agreed by the Joint Working Group to instead focus on the communications project for 2014.

Weather forecasting

At the first meeting of the Joint Working Group for Emissions and Health, Environ Consultants, who are working on the project, gave a presentation detailing the process they are undertaking to develop a weather forecasting tool for mines operating in the Upper Hunter region.

This tool will enable all sites to make a daily assessment of weather conditions and prepare their operations in advance of adverse weather conditions to minimise dust emissions. The industry working group is working through Environ's report to identify the best way to implement the project. The Joint Working Group will be updated on the progress of the project.

New projects

Communications project

Given the amount of research already underway by government to better understand air quality in the Upper Hunter, in 2012 stakeholders agreed that rather than industry commissioning new research, the Dialogue should wait for the results of current research and identify any gaps before commencing any further work.

Stakeholders also asked that a plan be adopted to better facilitate information sharing between government, the community and industry about all of the air quality and health related work underway. Given the success of the 2013 Communications Strategy, it was agreed by both industry and the Joint Working Group it should be continued and expanded where possible.

The 2014 Communications Project will be comprised of air quality information sessions, and will also include an open community workshop on a subject of particular interest to stakeholders and the community. Experts will be invited to present and educate attendees, and collateral will be produced to provide an easily distributable source of facts and information.

The project is due to commence in early 2014.

Community weather forecast notification

While the weather forecasting project focuses on the proactive steps that operations can take to manage emissions, this project will investigate 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 Joint Working Group agreed that the project is potentially valuable and would be useful to the broader Upper Hunter community. It was also acknowledged that the project is a complex one and that government agencies should be involved in the development of the notification system. The Joint Working Group agreed that an expert should be engaged to assess the feasibility of the project and develop a plan for what it could look like. The group also agreed that the project should begin after the weather forecasting project is complete and up and running.

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 in 2013, 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.

Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network (UHAQMN) – related research

Several pieces of research are due to be completed in the second half of 2013:

Special Additional Pollution Measures – PM₁₀, PM_{2.5} and PM₁ monitors have been installed in Camberwell, Muswellbrook and Singleton. This project aims to measure fine particulate concentrations across the Upper Hunter for the purpose of determining spatial variation and population exposure to inform further study design. This project is yet to report.

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_{2.5} pollution in the 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>

NSW Health Development Assessment Guideline

Action 7.8 in the Upper Hunter Strategic Regional Land Use Plan, released in September 2012, is “*Prepare a development assessment guideline for impacts on human health from dust generated by mining and other activities. The guideline will include maximum thresholds for both incremental and cumulative dust emissions.*”

We understand this guideline is in the process of being developed and we will keep stakeholders updated as we become aware of further progress.

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 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?*”.

BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal and Coal & Allied are participating in the project. Department of Primary Industries worked with the mines to develop a first draft design for the project.

At the most recent meeting of the Joint Working Group, members agreed to the design proposed by Department of Primary Industries, which will see the study replicate an operation to trade steers. Cattle will graze on rehabilitated mine land and on un-mined sites (analogue sites), chosen because they are representative of the area.

The study will take four years and will allow comparisons of the sites to be made across a number of measures, including:

- Animal health
- Soil and pasture composition
- Economic outcomes.

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.

Advice from a two consultancies on how the project could be developed has been sought.

Umwelt have been engaged to commence the work and provided a presentation to the Joint Working Group in November 2013.

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 draft principles were introduced at the Joint Working Group May meeting. Members of the group were supportive of the approach and saw benefits to aggregating information about rehabilitation and having common principles around progressive rehabilitation and initiatives that provide temporary cover.

A small sub-group of the Joint Working Group met to discuss the principles in greater detail. This group has requested some small changes to the Principles and, importantly, the addition of a preamble.

Those changes have been made and the only remaining issue is to make some changes to the presentation of information about disturbed and rehabilitated land.

New project

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

In July 2013 the Joint Working Group met to consider new projects for the group. The Joint Working Group agreed that given the group currently has three projects, it would be appropriate to take on one new, but substantial, project.

The issue of the future management of mine voids has been raised by groups participating in the Dialogue on many occasions. How these areas might be rehabilitated and how they could contribute to the region has also been questioned in the local media.

The Joint Working Group agreed that understanding the possible and achievable beneficial uses for mine voids would help the community to envisage the post mining future of these areas of the region, allow community members - through the Joint Working Group - to have their say about possible uses and provide the industry with realistic options. The project will commence with a literature review of beneficial re-uses of voids globally and will narrow those findings by considering options in light of the environmental, economic, social and regulatory context of the Upper Hunter.

The project is due to commence in early 2014.

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)

Developing this plan was the most popular idea at the July 2011 Stakeholder Workshop. It was subsequently taken on by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and was included as an action in the Strategic Regional Land Use Plan for the Upper Hunter, which was released in 2012.

The Plan will aim to ensure that rehabilitation of the various mines in the Upper Hunter is integrated, both with other mines and the surrounding land uses,. The plan will identify opportunities for rehabilitated land to contribute to regional land use priorities, such as contributing to conservation corridors.

More recently the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services, Division of Resources and Energy (Resources and Energy) has advised that it will take over the development of the plan. As part of the Dialogue a workshop was held with stakeholders in November 2011 to discuss a new synoptic plan. The feedback from that workshop has been provided to Resources and Energy, who will be continually engaging with stakeholders while developing the plan.

Mining Operations Plan Guideline

The new Mining Operations Plan Guidelines were released by Resources and Energy on 9 September 2013.

All mines are required to prepare a Mining Operations Plan outlining the final rehabilitation outcomes for the operation, and the activities that will contribute towards those outcomes over the period of the Mining Operations Plan, which is generally a seven year period.

The new Mining Operations Plan Guidelines place a much greater emphasis on outlining rehabilitation objectives at each stage of the operation in order to progress towards the final rehabilitation outcomes, tying those objectives to quantifiable completion criteria targets and reporting on the achievement of those targets. Mines will need to justify the quantifiable completion criteria targets by providing justification/ source information in the MOP. This source information may be information from native community reference sites, such as those being developed in the UHMD biodiversity reference sites pilot project.

The Mining Operations Plan Guidelines also place a high level of emphasis on consultation with the community about rehabilitation.

🔗 ***The Mining Operations Plan Guidelines can be found here:***

http://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/475434/ESG3-Mining-Operations-Plan-MOP-Guidelines-September-2013.pdf

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.

A draft terms of reference for the project was exhibited between May and July 2013. The state and Commonwealth governments are considering the submissions on the terms of reference. There will be further opportunities for the community to have their say as the assessment progresses. The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage recently provide a presentation on the assessment to the Joint Working Group – Land Management.

🔗 ***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

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 – Governance

Unlike the other three focus areas of the Dialogue, the Social Impacts and Infrastructure area does not currently have a Joint Working Group. However the main project, the Housing Research Project, is being guided by the Housing Research Steering Group, which has members from industry, local and state government and business.

As there is currently no joint working group in relation to this focus area all groups participating in the Dialogue were invited to the workshop on social impacts and infrastructure in July 2013. One of the issues for consideration at the workshop was governance and a Joint Working Group. The result of that discussion is the formation of a Joint Working Group - Social Impacts and Infrastructure.

Social Impacts and Infrastructure – Update on current projects

Infrastructure roadshow

The aim of this project was to develop a better understanding between the industry, community and business groups about the infrastructure needs of the region.

The NSW Minerals Council and industry members have met with a number of local councils, business chambers and community groups over the past year to communicate the purpose of the Dialogue and to gather a better understanding of important regional issues. Meetings with the following groups have been undertaken as part of the project:

- Apex Singleton Club
- Denman Chamber of Commerce
- Maitland City Council
- Singleton Chamber of Commerce

Housing study

The aim of this project is to better understand the housing needs of the region and recommend a multi-stakeholder approach to address the region's future housing requirements.

A Housing Research Steering Committee was formed to guide the scope and delivery of the project. A consultant has been engaged to undertake the study. Stage 1 of the study focused on understanding the issues and identifying the gaps in our understanding of housing.

The consultants facilitated a meetings with:

- Government housing representatives to discuss planning and policy issues for housing in the region
- Social housing representatives to discuss social and community housing issues.

Stage 2 will focus on: addressing gaps in housing forecasting for the region; building capacity of stakeholders in the region to collaborate in relation to housing; and scoping two projects that address housing affordability and availability in the region.

New projects

Housing study project recommendations

The housing study project is due to report finally at the end of 2013. Participants in the workshop agreed to consider the recommendations of the housing study when they become available and consider a project coming out of the recommendations.

Participants in the workshop agreed that despite the current easing of pressure on housing, housing remains an important issue, which could quickly become a problem again if the coal price increases. The project will commence at the beginning of 2014.

Regional collaboration on infrastructure

The idea for this project was generated at the first stakeholder workshop in July 2011.

Participants at the most recent workshop in July 2013 agreed that industry should approach the three local councils of the Upper Hunter and local business chambers, with a view to forming a collaboration between industry, government and business to seek appropriate infrastructure funding for the Upper Hunter area.

The industry will begin sounding this idea with councils and local business organisations in 2013.

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

The NSW and federal governments are developing various Hunter based infrastructure and investment plans to support the region.

Hunter Region 20 Year Infrastructure Plan

The Hunter Region 20 Year Infrastructure Plan sets out the long term infrastructure priorities in the Hunter in 5, 10 and 20 year increments. The Plan is intended to inform the recommendations for the investment of a \$350 million fund and provide a framework for sound infrastructure investment into the future.

The Hunter Economic Infrastructure Plan

The Hunter Economic Infrastructure Plan (HEIP) is being developed to enable a whole of supply chain view of mining related activities in the region with the aim of determining:

- Capacity constraints;
- Impacts of mining and mining related freight on communities along the supply chain; and,
- The required economic infrastructure requirements to further enable the development of communities that support the mining sector and alleviate any current or potential capacity constraints.

The planning work commenced on 31 August 2012 and was expected to be completed by June 2013.

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 2012/13 around \$10 million was allocated for:

- Muswellbrook Hospital Emergency Department Upgrade (\$4 million)
- Herbert Street Bridge Replacement, Broke (\$1.9 million)
- Bridgeman Road - New England Highway Intersection Upgrade (\$2 million)
- Pioneer Road Extension, Hunterview (\$2 million)

In October 2013 the government announced the second round of funding to be provided under the scheme. Singleton and Muswellbrook received more than \$16 million of the \$42 million available state-wide:

- Muswellbrook - \$7.6 million for a roads safety and improvement project including a heavy vehicle bypass and industrial services centre road network
- Singleton - \$9 million for a CBD renewal project to improve traffic flows.

A further round of funding, with \$78 million to be allocated, will be announced in 2014.

Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund

The Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund is a \$350 million funding commitment by the NSW Government in the Hunter Valley. Although the bulk of the funding has been directed to the Lower Hunter, in September 2013 the following funding was made available for Upper Hunter projects:

- \$5.7 million for the refurbishment of the Singleton 'Gym and Swim' complex
- \$2 million for the refurbishment of the Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music
- \$9.6 million for the replacement of the Muswellbrook Sewerage Treatment Plant
- \$4 million for the reconstruction of Thomas Mitchell Drive, Muswellbrook.

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 desire by stakeholders to better understand the water resources of the Upper Hunter. With the establishment of the Commonwealth Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Mining Development (IESC), it was agreed to understand what the IESC was proposing for the region before considering further investigation in this area.

It was agreed at the August 2012 Stakeholder Workshop that the NSW Minerals Council should contact the IESC, requesting them to engage with the Upper Hunter community. After some delay, the IESC referred NSWMC to the federal government's Office of Water Science, which is undertaking a bioregional assessment of the Northern Sydney Basin, which includes the Upper Hunter region.

The Office of Water Science presented to the Joint Working Group in November 2013 and provided detailed information on the Bioregional Assessment for the Hunter Valley (see below – Other Initiatives). The Joint Working Group will keep a watching brief on the assessment and mines will contribute data to the assessment.

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 operations. Once implemented this project will provide the community, industry and regulators with a clear picture about the industries water use and possibly identify opportunities for other initiatives.

All operations have implemented Stage 1 of the Minerals Council of Australia Water Accounting Framework, which involves measuring all water inputs and outputs from mines.

The Industry Working Group is now working implementing Stage 2 of the Framework, which involves developing an operational model of each mine. This will assist the mines in identifying reuse and recycling opportunities.

New Projects

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. However the idea was put on hold while further details about the federal government's bioregional assessments were sought, in order not to duplicate work (see above – Engagement with IESC). Given the delays in understanding the Commonwealth position, when the Joint Working Group met in July 2013 it decided to begin work on this project.

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. NSWMC is liaising with the NSW Trade and Investment, Division of Resources and Energy and the NSW Office of Water to develop the project.

The project will commence in 2013.

Hunter River water quality assessment

Concerns around heavy metals and water quality have been raised through the Dialogue's Joint Working Group - Water. 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. This would provide some initial insight into whether and how significant any water quality impacts are on the health of the Hunter River.

In investigating the work of government, it was found that the Environment Protection Authority has recently commissioned the Office of Environment and Heritage to review the Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme (HRSTS) (See also *Other Initiatives* below). The review will provide an overview of the health of the Hunter River. Since there is significant overlap between this proposed project and the review of the HRSTS, it is likely that the direction of this project will change, for example, to address any gaps in information identified in the review.

This project will commence following completion of the review of the HRSTS in early 2014.

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 Programme, 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.environment.gov.au/coal-seam-gas-mining/bioregional-assessments.html>

2013 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act Amendment – Water Trigger

Australia's national environment law, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), has been amended to require coal and coal seam gas projects that could have a significant impact on water resources to obtain approval from the Commonwealth Government. The change, known as the 'water trigger', means that such developments will require Commonwealth assessment of water resource impacts, in addition to existing state laws.

Review of Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme

The Environment Protection Authority has commissioned the Office of Environment and Heritage to review the Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme, which 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 has released a discussion paper on the review and submissions are due on 6 February 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>