

Narrabri Mine Community Consultative Committee Meeting #68

Date: Wednesday 12th March 2025
Time: 4:00pm
Location: Narrabri Coal Operations Boardroom

Meeting Commenced at 4:00pm

1. PRESENT AND APOLOGIES

Present: Russell Stewart (RS)
James Stieger (JS)
Mark Foster (MF)
Alan Grumley (AG)
Geoff Hunter (GH)
David Ellwood (DE) – Whitehaven Coal
Ben Simpson (BS) – Whitehaven Coal
Brent Baker (BB) – Whitehaven Coal
Harriet Davies (HD)- Whitehaven Coal

Apologies: Mayor Darrell Tiemens
Joshua Roberts-Garnsey- Narrabri Shire Council
Darren Swain (DS) - Whitehaven Coal
Jabin De Keizer (JDK) - Whitehaven Coal
Grant Case (GC) - Whitehaven Coal

2. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

No declarations.

No changes from previous.

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES

RS asked if everyone had read previous minutes.

RS asked for previous minutes to be accepted as a true and accurate record. Everyone present at the meeting agreed that the minutes were true and accurate.

Moved: MF Seconded: GH

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

- BB whilst there were no actions, there was a request for additional air quality discussion and BS has prepared a presentation

5. OPERATIONS AND SAFETY REPORT

- GC will be late for the meeting
- RS let's wait until GC arrives. Committee agreed.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING REPORT

- Each member of the CCC meeting is provided the environmental monitoring report two weeks in advance
- RS if there are no specific questions relating to this report then will shall continue to the air quality presentation. GH queried what the air quality report is. BB a presentation has been developed following comments received following the previous meeting regarding air quality monitoring methodology.

7. AIR QUALITY PRESENTATION

Presented by BS

- The presentation included a detailed description of the projects air quality impact criteria and management requirements, and required monitoring standards, for both the existing approval and the Stage 3 approval. NCO manage air quality in accordance with several approvals, including a site specific AQMP, and continue to utilise best industry methods for mitigating air quality impacts on the surrounding environment. The Air Quality monitoring results collected over the duration of active mining indicate that NCO dust impact is minimal and generally in accordance with the approved criterion.

Questions following the presentation:

- JS asked whether coal is soluble or insoluble and inquired about the 'rainbow effect' observed on top of his water tank. BS confirmed that coal is insoluble and not a hydrocarbon. DE noted that dust and other external factors, such as roads and transport, can contribute to water contamination. BB added that the sheen sometimes seen on the water surface can also result from decomposition of organic matter (eg. gum leaves), this is referred to as non-petrogenic hydrocarbons.
- GH how is a genuine exceedance verified? BB by an in-depth investigation, and in consultation with regulatory agency. BS this investigation considers the weather conditions at the time and filter paper appearance.

- MF requested clarification on the 2 TEOMS for the Stage 3 project approval. BS confirmed that there will be 2 TEOMs installed for Stage 3 commencement and the current HVAS machines will be decommissioned upon commencement. TEOM monitoring locations are selected based on predominate wind direction and location of sensitive receptors.
- GH will the current depositional dust flagon be decommissioned? BB explained NCOs are in the process of reviewing the Stage 3 Air Quality Management Plans. BS there is no criterion in the Stage 3 Development Consent for depositional dust. Just PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}.
- GH whilst he understands the process and the testing for dust, GH highlights that dust sampling onsite does not differentiate between coal and organic compounds, and therefore the percentage of coal dust within the sample is unknown. BB highlights that the mine is well within the limits of the project approved air quality criteria, and that these measurements include coal and all other mineral dust particulates.
- GH expressed concern around the number of TEOM machines and the risk that they are not monitoring wind from all directions. BS talked to figure explaining that the proposed TEOM air quality monitoring locations have been selected based on the predominate wind axis during higher wind speed events. The real time monitoring system will detect 'upwind' and 'downwind' PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations to determine the contribution from mining activities in real time at the 'Receiver'.
- AG acknowledged that NCO remains within the air quality criterion limits but expressed frustration that this does not help neighbouring landholders, stating that landholders are expected to 'just accept it.' BB responded that NCO continues to meet the approved air quality criteria, has conducted additional dust sampling and monitoring at the request of AG, tested water quality in tanks at AG residence and confirmed water quality meets recognised guideline¹ limits, emphasising that NCO has done everything possible. AG continued to be frustrated that he was previously compensated for being a neighbour to the mine however this is no longer the case as much of the property he leased from the mine has been removed from him. He stressed that everything on his property is covered in coal dust and claimed that the mine does not 'do anything to help the neighbours'. In response, RS suggested that AG draft a proposal outlining his concerns and submit it to NCO.
- GH questions what measures can be taken to reduce the coal dust, reiterating that this needs to be a constructive discussion and that the role of the CCC is to provide feedback from the community to NCO. BB stressed that NCO are operating within approved project limits and that the pit top dust management system operated by the mine has been reviewed by regulatory agencies and found to be adequate.
- Action: AG to provide a proposal and submit to NCO.
- RS end of Air Quality presentation and moving on.

8. WHC COMMUNITY UPDATE

- Information presented to CCC on Whitehaven Coal community spend in quarter 2 of current financial year.
- GH requested clarification on donations vs the community benefit fund that is part of the management plan. DE there is no community benefit fund required by the Narrabri Mine project approvals, only voluntary planning agreements with local government (i.e. council). GH assumed that there was a community benefit fund that should be spent in the region (Narrabri, Baan Baa) to put up with the impacts of the mining operation.

¹ Australian Drinking Water Guidelines

- BB as part of the annual review NCO are required to report on the various groups that benefit from the community contributions (shows slide of groups that have benefited in 2024).
- DE explained there is a community investment fund operated by WHC and chaired by individuals from the community who determine distribution of funds.
- DE explained the silo art in was an additional contribution from WHC that did not come out of the WHC community investment fund.
- JS expressed thanks to WHC for framing the photos displayed in the Narrabri Crossing Theatre.
- RS notes there is a lack of Narrabri applications to the community benefit fund.

9. REGULATORY INTERACTION (GROUNDWATER MONITORING REPORTED INCIDENT)

- NCO provided an update on commencement of operations under the Narrabri Mine Stage 3 approval, indicating this is scheduled to occur on or around 01 July 2025.
- GH does this mean make good agreements is two years from 01 July? DE clarifies commencement will be between 01 July to September, and yes this date will trigger the two year timeframe relevant to the make-good condition. There is an unknown administration delay to ensure biodiversity offsets are secured, before surface disturbance activities can commence. NCO will have to officially notify the department when commencement is triggered.
- GH asked whether more properties would be purchased. DE responded that no additional properties would be required for the initial phases, but would be required for later phases. GH also requested clarification on MOD 1 and the number of biodiversity credits required. DE explained that purpose of MOD 1 is to remove areas of surface disturbance no longer required, thereby decreasing the number of biodiversity credits needed. Stage 3 consists of six phases of surface disturbance, and biodiversity credits must be secured prior to the commencement of each phase.
- DE explained there are three different options for biodiversity credits for NCO;
 1. Acquire property, calculate biodiversity value using government calculation method, and secure the property under a biodiversity offset mechanism. This is generally the cheapest form of securing biodiversity credits.
 2. Purchase biodiversity credits from the market.
 3. Make payment to the government to acquire the credits. This takes the responsibility away from NCO and onto State government. This is generally the most expensive option.
- GH asked how close the offset need to be within the project? DE the offset must be within '2 biodiversity regions' of the project. GH do you know how much land you need? DE- it depends on the biodiversity value. Each property is subject to ecology surveys to calculate biodiversity credits, this process generally require seasonal surveys over a number of years. GH expressed concern over the large areas that WHC own and the impact this has on the local communities.

- BB Secondary Approvals: Stage 2 Project Approval: Extraction Plan LW203-206 - NCO submitted revised plan and have obtained progressive approval to mine LW204. NCO are required to submit a revised plan 3 months prior to mining LW205. A condition of the approval is to demonstrate that an aboriginal cultural heritage site comprised of sandstone formations with grinding grooves overlying LW205 can be protected from subsidence impacts. Proposed subsidence impact reduction trial is to be installed above LW204 to demonstrate effectiveness.
- BB Exploration Lease 9455 & 9456 to the north of the mine, Application for Prospecting Operations has been submitted to the Resource Regulator. The exploration program has a 01 July start date and is comprised of 11 drill holes with minimal surface disturbance. JS requested a map of the exploration lease drill holes for next meeting.
- Stage 3 Development Consent SSD-10269 is the approval reference.
- GH requested an update on the greenhouse gas emissions produced by the mine. BB explained that the Stage 3 approval requires a Scope 1 Emissions Minimisation Plan to be submitted within 12 months of commencing Stage 3. The Annual Review, which includes a section on greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation methods, is due 31 March. Further information will be provided at the next CCC meeting.

10. GROUNDWATER MONITORING EXCEEDANCES

- BB there have been several groundwater exceedances. A presentation has been prepared.
- RS lets discuss at the next CCC meeting along with the NCO Annual Review.

11. GENERAL BUSINESS

- JS requested a mine tour underground. DE –space for 10 people in June 2025 following the longwall move.
- GH requested clarification regarding groundwater bores outside the affected areas of Stage 3, understanding that additional baseline data would be collected on water levels, water quality, and bore flow rates. BB explained that the way the make good agreement guideline works is when a private landholder bore is determined to be impacted by greater than 2 m water level drawdown then a ‘make-good’ agreement is triggered to provide the landholder with a compensatory water supply, if triggered then additional testing of the affected bore’s performance (i.e. flow rate and water quality) is required to inform the specifications for any replacement bore. GH then asked how they would know if baseline data had not been collected, to which BB responded that extensive baseline data on groundwater has already been gathered within the area. BB advised NCO are prepared to undertake annual groundwater level measurements at the bores of any concerned landholder surrounding the mine.
- GH – raised questions regarding the solar farm.
 1. Did Essential Energy say that they didn’t want to export to the grid. DE – yes, this is due to capacity restrictions within the electricity grid.
 2. Following mine closure, is the community able to utilise this for the grid? DE – when the mine closes, and the solar farm continues operating, a review of electricity network will be undertaken to determine options.

12. ACTIONS FROM MEETING

- NCO to provide map of the EL9455-EL9456 exploration work program at next meeting.
- Organise underground tour for CCC or nominated local community members, maximum of 10 participants. To be scheduled on or around next CCC meeting, following longwall move and return to normal mining operations.

Meeting close at 5:20pm

Date for next meeting

4 June 2025 at 4:00pm