

## **RIXS CREEK MINE COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**MEETING:** 18/10/2023

**PRESENT:** Chairperson - Lisa Andrews

Community Representatives –Sue George (SG), Reg Eveleigh (RE), Deidre Olofsson (DO)\*via zoom & Michelle Higgins (MH)

Company Representatives – Chris Knight (CK), Damien Butler (DB - minutes), Dave Holmes (DH - Observer), Chris Quinn (CQ),

Cate Sims (Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue) [Invited Guest]

**APOLOGIES:** Geoff Moore (GM), Brendon Clements (BC) & Patricia Bestic (PB),

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- **Welcome**

- The meeting was held on site at Rix's Creek South.
- The Chair formally opened the meeting at 9:01 and welcomed attendees.
- Cate Sims from Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue (UHMD) was introduced and members introduced themselves to Cate.
- The Chair provided an acknowledgment of country.

- **Apologies**

- Apologies included PB, GM and BC.

- **Declaration of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

- The Chair covered the required declarations. There were no changes to the declarations.

- **Business Arising from Previous Minutes (responses to issues raised or provision of information)**

- The Chair noted the timing of the previous CCC, the actions that arose and the status of those actions. The last meeting was held 11 May 2023, and the minutes were finalised 26 May 2023.
- The actions from the previous meeting were covered. CQ noted he would email a plan of historical underground workings and shared these on the screen. SG asked if it was board and pillar mining and CQ confirmed that it was. CK provided some history on the underground workings and the mining that occurred prior to Rix's Creek Mine. The second action to provide a briefing on the rehabilitation reforms was included in the presentation to be provided. Action three was a presentation by UHMD, who were present for the meeting. Action four was to confirm status of the Motel. CQ confirmed it was still managed by The Bloomfield Group, there would be private tenants and that renovations are occurring. The Chair noted SG sent through information on the Local Land Services Coolatai Workshop on 22 May 2023.

- **Correspondence**

- The Chair noted the correspondence regarding apologies, the meeting notice and reminders. The meeting notice was sent 9 October followed by a reminder and video meeting link.

- **Update from Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue**

- CS advised that she had started in March this year with UHMD and noted a review of stakeholder relations and communications. CS informed the CCC of the low level of awareness of the Dialogue. CS noted the work UHMD has carried out including over 30 projects. CS commented on the uniqueness of the forum and its current focus.
- Feedback from the 2022 Community Forum was covered, including key themes and the need to lift community membership. CS advised that community engagement has fallen away as key issues have been addressed. CS noted the economic and social development issues and the need to focus on both these and the environmental matters. MH asked for a copy of the presentation.
- CS advised that the UHMD Community Forum would be held every two years and that other engagement opportunities had been identified and provided an overview of these.
- CS discussed the key areas of focus including economic diversification and future land use, and the Dialogue's role in supporting these.
- CS provided an overview of the Pasture Restoration Field Day and its success.
- CS gave an overview of Annual Rehabilitation Reporting project, noting that full results will be published in the coming month.
- CS discussed the Annual Water Use Reporting Project. Full results of the 2022 analysis are to be published in coming month.
- CS presented an overview of Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network Analysis and the School Mine Tours Program.
- CS reiterated the UHMD is actively seeking community members and invited all interested in being involved to contact the dialogue.
- MH asked about the school tours and if they ever extended to other schools outside of the Hunter. MH noted opportunities to increase further understanding, including in urban areas. MH asked if the recent field day included anyone from regenerative agriculture. CS confirmed there was not. MH asked if there are benchmarks (EOBs) for assessing the value of regeneration. CK noted a company called Regenerate was represented on the day. MH volunteered to provide details on EOBs.
- MH advised that she had never received information or any invitation to participate in the UHMD and noted opportunities to personally engage CCCs across the Hunter. MH asked about the age of people involved with UHMD and asked whether school children can become involved. CS advised that traditionally there had been no youth voices. CS noted these opportunities and the current events run locally by young people. CS advised of recent engagement and the desire for young people to form an advisory group for UHMD. CK commented on challenges with timing for the meetings in the middle of the day. MH noted a young person she knew and that schools have environment interest groups that could be targeted. CK noted some of the schools Bloomfield Mine hosts. MH asked about links with Department of Education. CS said there are some links. SG said to engage teachers you need to give them something to use that's relevant to the syllabus, particularly for years 11-12s. CK noted engagement with the year 12 environmental science group at St Marys High School that are engaged every year, a student of which has just started employment at RCM. CK noted how rewarding the engagement was.
- Owing to technical difficulties, the Chair telephoned DO to see if she had questions of CS. DO asked about how much rehabilitation had occurred and asked about timeframes for the rehabilitation to be certified. CK noted there was a presentation today about Rehabilitation Reforms. CK said that not a lot of land had been certified and noted there are large delays getting through the certification process. DO said there was nothing available on biodiversity including how much has been completed and the outcome of biodiversity in the Hunter area. CS agreed to take that question on notice. DO asked about water including high security water and how much was

actually used in drought times. DO stated that we are heading into another drought. DO also asked about school tours and what is the industry doing about forming a new industry and the transition process. CS responded on the focus on these areas. DO noted the need for re-education of the workforce. CS advised of the work with local government and other stakeholders about skills modelling. DO noted the need for transition for trades. DO said younger people needed to look forward to something.

- **Proponents Reports and Overview of Activities:**

**Progress of project:**

- CQ gave update on progress of the project. He noted final shaping of Artesian pit taking in 16.4 hectares. CQ noted the new area of disturbance where ecological studies were taking place.

**Environmental Monitoring and Performance:**

- The recent Pasture Restoration Field Day was again discussed. CQ said DPI agronomists had looked at the root structure and given positive feedback. CK noted the Resources Regulator was also in attendance. CK said there was good feedback from NSW Farmers.
- CQ showed the environmental monitoring locations.
- CQ confirmed the low levels of rainfall.
- CQ gave an operational noise update. He said operations were occurring on Saturdays and Sundays which were covered by the same level of noise monitoring that occurs during the week.
- The Chair asked about watering of rehabilitation and if the site uses water carts. CQ advised that the saline levels prohibit this, but that this water is used for dust suppression.
- MH asked if mines desalinate water for discharge. CK said Moolarben Mine do this. CK noted Yancoal at Stratford use water for irrigation. MH asked about water trading for farmers. CK noted the coal seam aquifers and the natural saline levels. CK advised that the site pumps water to Glencore. CK noted the Greater Ravensworth Area Water Sharing Scheme (GRAWSS) and that the site put water into to that scheme. MH asked for a presentation on water trading for the next CCC. CK said there are some commercial sensitivities but that a presentation with some level of detail could be provided. CK advised that the site didn't take any water out of the Hunter River. MH asked about water reporting. CQ noted it was covered in water balance section of the Annual review.
- CQ confirmed that during YEM24 there had been four noise complaints. He noted noise monitoring locations.
- Blasting was covered by CQ. CQ advised that one complaint was received about blasting and that on 12 September there was an exceedance. He explained that the wrights monitor was impacted. The Chair noted the correspondence received from the site as a result. CK said there were no complaints about this blast. MH asked about the use of predictive modelling. CK said most mines are using it. MH asked if the site had started this and CQ confirmed the site were part of the trial. MH asked that this achievement be minuted. CK noted how the site blasts in consideration of neighbours and the factors that determine if the site will and won't blast. MH asked if there was analysis of what was happening before the site had this technology. CK said there was not as the system has been in use for many years. CQ said the technology was embedded in operations. MH asked if it was regulated. CQ said it was in the management plans. CQ said the best available window to minimise any impact is picked for blasts. CK talked about the SODAR collaboration between mines that gives information in real time.
- CQ gave an overview of YEM24 Air Quality. He noted the dust trends were up coinciding with the dryer period but said these were still below standards.
- CQ gave update on waste management. He said there had been an increase in paper and cardboard recycling. He noted the sewage plant upgrades. MH asked

about the cost benefit to reducing waste. CQ said there was, including rebates. CK said two years ago the site was paying around \$200k per year on waste. CK said the total management system that was put together had halved this cost. CK noted the recycling of e-waste. MH asked this be included in the presentation next time.

- MH also asked about recycling of uniforms. MH asked whether people who leave can return shirts and the site can then put a badge over their names. SG said badged work wear that goes to the Singleton Neighbourhood Centre isn't used. CK noted potential use for rags. MH said Witmores may be able to help with this. MH noted the Endeavour group at Port Macquarie are a special needs employer who could help. It was agreed to investigate this further and provide an update at the next meeting.
- CQ covered water surface monitoring. He noted the dry areas and said there was a slight increase in electrical conductivity in clean water dams. He noted electrical conductivity in mine water dams was increasing.
- CQ said 1.1 Hectares had been rehabilitated for the period. 16.7 hectares had been shaped and 10.7 hectares of topsoil.
- MH asked about cleanliness of biosolids. CQ said it was high quality material. CK noted a cadmium issue was picked up and sent back to the supplier. CK talked about the testing procedures. CK noted the big uptake for biosolids by farmers and mine sites. CK said NSW EPA is currently revising guidelines on use of biosolids regarding certain pollutants.
- CQ said that Acacia Saligna had been targeted. He said there were questions about this at the field day. MH asked about Acacia Saligna and if the seed can be eaten by humans. CK said that the site's focus is elimination. CQ said it creates a monoculture and is dangerous in times of fire. MH asked if fire is a management tool. CQ noted a fire trial in South Africa. CQ advised of the best way to manage it is to target the saplings. CK noted the seeds can be dormant for up to 20 years.

#### **Community Complaints and Response to these Complaints:**

- CQ covered the complaints register. CQ noted testing on the tailings dam that required less water on the dam that corresponded with complaints. He said this testing had now been completed and spigot lines were working along with use of a smaller water cart. CQ advised future tailings dam testing would avoid periods of North West winds.
- CQ advised of a breakdown of communication in dog baiting and communications between property agencies, which meant those agisting were missed.
- MH noted a complaint about speed limits in the past regarding the truck movements. CK noted the Code of Conduct for the drivers that was developed and communicated.
- MH asked if noise complaints were generally at night. CQ said they were, particularly in winter. CQ said the site is seeing a reduction in noise complaints following the introduction of sound attenuated trucks. CK advised the trucks were two decibels lower than the requirements.
- MH asked about if there were any plans for vehicles on site to be hybrid or electric. CK noted conversations with Westrac, but that currently technology is not there yet for heavy vehicles. DB noted the company vehicle policy to purchase hybrid vehicles where they are available in the vehicle class. MH asked about how this impacts of CO<sup>2</sup> reporting. CK noted current reporting requirements.
- Information provided to the community was noted by CQ.
- CQ talked about the support for local firefighting services.
- DB noted the support provided by the company following the Hunter Bus Tragedy including company donations and support for an impacted worker. MH thanked the company for the support.
- DO asked for biodiversity to be put on the reporting. CK noted the current reporting which occurs biennially and said there was no requirement for specific biodiversity reporting as the final land use is grazing not native vegetation as part of any committed offsets. CK noted ongoing management of biodiversity offsets. An action was agreed to provide information on biodiversity offset areas. CK noted the biodiversity stewardships that have been established.

## General Business

- There was no general business from community members and DO advised that she needed to leave the meeting. DO left the meeting at 10.55am.
- CK had a presentation to provide on Modification 10 to Rix's Creek North. He said it was still in the planning phase and the scoping report had not yet submitted. He noted the key elements and clarified there was no changes to production rates. He noted closure timeframes for Integra and for use by the site of the RCN CHPP when closure occurs.
- CK explained how the Solid Bowl Centrifuges (SBCs) worked in the South operation and the SBC installation in the North.
- He explained the reasons for the rotary breaker given the differences between underground and open cut mining. MH asked what a grizzly is. SG said it was like a big sieve.
- CK noted the larger stockpiles that were planned were in already disturbed areas.
- MH asked about flocculent and how it reduces the need of a tailings dam. MH asked is flocculent leaches into the environment. CK said it was an acceptable material. MH asked if EPA approve it. CK said it was not required.
- CK noted the ongoing investigation of a solar farm to assist in powering the site but that this would be separate to this modification.
- CK said the noise assessments for the crusher and CHPP were not expected to be an issue.
- CK noted the Bloomfield Mine Continuation.
- The Chair asked if the solar farm would belong to the company. CK said it would be.
- DB suggested a tour of the North operations and this was agreed. CK said we may need an extraordinary meeting regarding the modification and that the tour could occur then.
- The Chair provided a briefing on revised CCC guidelines, which were revised in July 2023.
- MH asked about assessment of the effectiveness of a committee and if there is a benchmark. The Chair said that she had recommended a survey. The Chair noted a forum would occur tomorrow and that she would raise this.
- The Chair covered the template for the CCC terms of reference. MH asked about numbers of community committee members permitted. The Chair said guidelines allow up to seven.
- The Chair said she would distribute this information.
- CK then gave an update on RCN Continuation Project. CK noted this is completely separate to the modification just outlined.
- CK gave overview of the project. He covered the conceptual highway realignment and gave an update on property acquisition. SG asked about consultation with Transport for NSW. CK said this has occurred. CK noted the ownership of the road and recent discussion with Council. He said Transport for NSW have confirmed it is a state road that would transfer to Council's ownership which Bloomfield would be required to purchase. SG noted that it will be similar to Wallaby Scrub Road.
- CK noted distribution of newsletters and the response rate. He noted issues raised would be addressed as part of the EIS.
- CK noted the properties that would need to be purchased and he advised of a recent acquisition. CK said a land ownership update including farming operations could be given at the next meeting.
- CK advised that the SEARs had been issued and that the assessment requirements included a climate change and adaptation plan.
- SG asked if it is state and federal together or separate. CK noted that the Project would be referred to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DECCEEW) who will determine if the Project is a controlled action. It is expected that the Project may be a controlled action which would mean that impact to biodiversity may be assessed via bilateral assessment with the State Government, however currently there is no bilateral approval process.

- Rehabilitation Reforms including areas signed off by the Regulator was the next item in general business. In consultation with attendees, it was agreed to cover this in the next meeting when DO was present, given DO had requested this action.

**Next Meeting**

- The meeting schedule was confirmed, noting there would likely be an extraordinary meeting in the North regarding Modification 10. The next meetings would take place Wednesday 22 May and Wednesday 23 October 2024, meeting at 9am. RE asked for no meetings on Tuesdays.
- The meeting was declared closed at 12:07pm.
- The Chair thanked all for their contributions in 2023.

**Action items**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
1	Provide copy of UHMD presentation	CQ
2	Provide presentation at next CCC on water trading	CK
3	Investigate recycling work wear for use as rags	CK
4	Provide information on biodiversity offset areas at next CCC	CK
5	Provide presentation on land ownership including farming operations at next CCC	CK
6	Provide presentation on Rehabilitation Reforms including areas signed off by the Regulator (Carried over from October 2023)	CK