

**MINUTES OF THE MT OWEN COMPLEX  
COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday 7 March 2006 at Mt Owen Mine**

**1. Opening of Meeting**

Meeting opened by Mary Robinson at 10:00am.

**Present:**

Community: Alec Schmierer, Diedre Olofsson, Jenny Marshall, Gillian Holmes, Sam Deaves

Singleton Council: Mary Robinson (Chairperson), Brian Thomas

Mt Owen Mine: Nigel Charnock, Trevor Wells, Lisa Richards, Linda Dunn, Sarah Caruana

**2. Introduction of New Members**

Nigel introduced Linda Dunn (Graduate Environmental Officer from Thiess), Sarah Caruana (Environment and Community Graduate from Xstrata Mt Owen) and Trevor Wells (Operations Manager, Xstrata Mt Owen). Nigel also introduced guests Mike Cole and Yvonne Nussbaumer (University of Newcastle) and Mark Nolan (Department of Primary Industries – Mineral Resources).

**3. Apologies**

Apologies for the meeting were received from Patricia Bestic, Wendy Williams, Alan Noble, Val Scott and Gerrie Jordaan.

**4. Declaration of Pecuniary Interests**

Mary Robinson asked Committee members to declare any pecuniary interests. There were no such declarations from the Committee.

**5. Previous Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 November 2005 were accepted as a true record of that meeting. Moved Gillian Holmes, seconded by Brian Thomas.

## **6. Update on the implementation of key Mt Owen Consent Conditions**

Nigel Charnock provided the CCC with an update on the implementation of key Mt Owen Consent Conditions. Key points of his presentation were:

- All previous Consents for Mt Owen were surrendered in December 2005 and the mine is now operating under DA14-1-2004.
- Progressive development of continuous noise and air quality monitoring systems.
- Following consultation with the CCC & DEC Early Morning Blasting Trial Program submitted to DoP in August 2005 for approval.
- Detail design completed for Bettys Creek diversion in consultation with DNR & DPI-MR. The DNR approved the design plans in January 2006. Mark Nolan pointed out that the original creek was extremely degraded and that the diversions have been engineered to enhance the ecology of the creek and provide Green and Golden Bell Frog habitat by decreasing turbidity and with the addition of pools and riffles. Nigel also added that additional management plans have been developed for revegetation of the diversions and their on-going monitoring and management.
- Proposal for the implementation of the Mt Owen Biodiversity Offset Strategy has been developed with University of Newcastle and circulated to HCFFAC for comment – detailed in the Draft Mt Owen Complex Flora and Fauna Management Plan (FFMP).
- Industry Dust Health Brochure developed by NSWMC in consultation with NSW Health and DEC – distributed to relevant residents in January 06 & available via Mt Owen Complex Website. Nigel made copies of the brochure available at the meeting.
- Update on the Mt Owen Complex Website:
  - Environmental Monitoring Results are now available on the website and will be updated bi-monthly. The Website includes:
    - Monitoring Criteria and Location Plans
    - Monthly Monitoring Results
  - Mt Owen AEMR available on the website.
  - Website has been updated to include information on Ravensworth East Mine.
- No feedback on the following draft EMP's, Programs and Strategies submitted to the Department of Planning (DoP) in June 2005:
  - Environmental Management Strategy
  - Noise
  - Air Quality
  - Blasting
  - Water
  - Environmental Monitoring Program
- Draft Mt Owen Complex Flora & Fauna Management Plan submitted to the DoP for approval in February 2006 following consultation with the Mt Owen Flora and Fauna

Advisory Committee (acting in the capacity of the Hunter Coalfields Flora and Fauna Advisory Committee (HCFAC)).

- Commenced preparation of “conservation sensitive” Bushfire Management Plan for the Mt Owen Complex in accordance with the Mt Owen Development Consent.
- Locations for alternative Green and Golden Bellfrog (GGBF) Habitat Dams selected – to be established in Q2 2006 within conservation areas following approval of the DoP.
- Commenced installation of additional groundwater monitoring bores in February 2006 across Mt Owen & Ravensworth East.
- S. Deaves – are there problems with groundwater at Mt Owen?
- N. Charnock – there is some in-pit seepage and the water is naturally very saline. Mt Owen is quite a dry pit, with low rates of groundwater seepage into the pit. However, the Mt Owen Operations EIS predicted that there would be a gradual drawdown of saline hard rock aquifers as mining progressed to the south-east.
- L. Richards – the water that enters the pit comes from saline aquifers. Monitoring has shown that there has been no increase in the volume of water that has been seeping into the pit.
- S. Deaves – there are some springs drying out in our area, could this be a result of groundwater seepage into the pit?
- N. Charnock – Unlikely, but I would be happy to obtain further details off you and look into that.
- Glendell AEMR circulated to all CCC members & regulatory authorities in February 2006 – details environmental monitoring & other activities for 2005.
- Detailed archaeological salvage program completed across Glendell between November 2005 and Jan 2006. Involved surface collection of artefacts and more detailed sub-surface investigations and involved participation of local Aboriginal groups.
- Installation of additional groundwater monitoring bores across the Glendell project area in February 2006 to obtain baseline information.

## **7. Review of Operational Performance**

Trevor Wells provided an overview of operational performance since the last meeting. Key points included:

- Eastern Rail Pit – production scheduled to start in 2006.
- Water Management – pipeline network has been developed between all Xstrata mines in the Ravensworth Area allowing them to share saline water resources for dust suppression and use in coal handling and preparation plants. This results in more effective utilisation of saline waters and decreases the need for mine’s to use better quality river or creek water.
- B. Thomas – Does this mean that there will be less need for discharge off site?
- T. Wells – Yes, less need for discharge off-site in accordance with the Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme (HRSTS).

- M. Robinson – How often do they discharge?
- N. Charnock– It depends on a site’s water storages, water requirements and rainfall as discharges can only occur under high or flood flows in the Hunter River, but for example Mt Owen has not discharged since the three years that I have been at Mt Owen.
- L. Richards – It has been approximately 5 years since Mt Owen has discharged.
- Expansion of Mt Owen Complex – looking at commencing production at Glendell Mine in 2008. However, this is subject to Xstrata board approval. The expansion of the CHPP is also scheduled for this time. This will take output up to 9 million tonnes per annum. Glendell will be incorporated into the Mt Owen Complex.
- S. Deaves – According to the timetable set out in the EIS, which year of mining is Mt Owen up to?
- N. Charnock – Currently in year 2 (i.e. 2 years following receipt of the Mt Owen Development Consent in December 2004) and working in accordance with the predicted timetable.

#### **8. Department of Primary Industries – Mineral Resources Annual Environmental Inspection of the Mount Owen Complex**

Mark Nolan from the Department of Primary Industries – Mineral Resources (DPI-MR) provided an overview of the Department’s Annual Environmental Inspection of the Mount Owen Complex. Key points included:

- Great synergies have been developed due to the amalgamation of Xstrata sites in regard to waste management and water management.
- General mine management was found to be good.
- Dust management is a key issue for Mt Owen as dust is the subject of many complaints throughout the industry. However, Mt Owen appears to be managing this issue well, for example relocating or modifying operations under adverse weather conditions.
- The technology being used and the research being undertaken by the mine in regard to rehabilitation and revegetation is of excellent quality and these practices are being transferred to other sites.
- The recently submitted Mining Operations Plans (MOP) for the Mt Owen Complex are some of the best that have been sighted by the Department.
- The mine received a written warning in regard to a non-conformance with the MOP, which involved a small area of vegetation clearing outside clearing boundaries shown on the current MOP, but within the boundaries of the new draft MOP. The Department felt that adequate action was taken in regard to this issue as:
  - No environmental impact occurred above what was predicted in the Mt Owen Operation EIS.
  - The vegetation clearing that was undertaken was within the approved development (mining) area at Mt Owen.

- The required variation to the MOP had been submitted by Mt Owen prior to the clearing but had not been formally signed off the DPI-MR

Discussion between Mark Nolan and Diedre Olofsson followed this statement. Diedre questioned the DPI-MR handling of the matter. Mark reinforced his earlier comments that a written warning was adequate. Mark noted that the DPI-MR had requested a response from the Mine on the matter. Mark added that the Mine has advised the Department of a number of improvements to its site clearing procedures to ensure that there will not be a recurrence.

Mark made the recently submitted Xstrata Mt Owen Complex Mining Operations Plans (MOP) plans available for inspection following the close of meeting. Mark and Mt Owen personnel answered questions from CCC members relating to the MOP plans.

## **9. Review of Environmental Performance**

Lisa Richards provided an overview of environmental performance since the last meeting. Key points included:

- Discussion of dust, noise and blasting monitoring locations and operating schedule of all monitoring equipment (via tables and figures).
- Explanation of compliance levels for TSP and comparison of these levels with actual levels from 2005-06.
- PM<sub>10</sub> – explanation of compliance levels and comparison with actual data. Peaks measured at one unit along Glennies Creek Road (PM<sub>10</sub> 3) believed to be caused by an adjacent mining operation, not Mt Owen as the machine was situated approximately 100-200m from the adjacent mine's dumping area. This unit has now been decommissioned and is in the process of being relocated to the same area as the noise logger on Middle Falbrook Rd.
- Discussion of the movement of the TSP and PM<sub>10</sub> units from the Deaves property to the neighboring property at the request of the resident.
- Discussion regarding the use of the mobile trailer mounted noise monitor and how it will be used to calibrate the noise model for the mine to assess noise compliance at private residencies where fixed noise monitoring units are not located.
- S. Deaves – How far is the West dump from the nearest private residence boundary?
- N. Charnock – currently approximately 2km. I will find out a more accurate distance for you.
- Depositional dust gauges require rationalizing as there is some double-up due to gauges being installed prior to Mt Owen, Ravensworth East and Glendell being under common ownership.
- Explanation of DEC Assessment Criteria for depositional dust (4g/m<sup>2</sup>/month) and performance against criteria at residential gauges. It was noted that there was an exceedence of EPA criteria at one private residence. The resident has been notified and is been provided with dust results in accordance with the Mt Owen Consent. The resident is entitled to dust mitigation measures and acquisition under the Mt Owen Consent.
- S. Deaves – are the dust results related to changes in weather?

- L. Richards – the weather has an effect, but changes in dust deposition are also affected by operational activities.
- Explanation and examples of blast monitoring limits and results.. No blasts have exceeded DEC maximum limits set for overpressure and ground vibration since the last meeting.
- Complaints – data displayed and follow up action discussed. Discussion included complaints by type, complainant and month.
- Discussion regarding the changes to recording of complaints. Previously, each phone call was recorded as one complaint, regardless of the number of issues raised in that call. It was pointed out that although all issues raised in a call were dealt with thoroughly, they were only recorded on a per call basis. The new system records each issue raised as a separate complaint, and no longer records them on a per call basis. For example, one phone call raising five issues is now recorded as five complaints rather than as one complaint.
- Discussion regarding complaints protocol. Question raised by Brian Thomas as to why there is not an industry standard, and point made that the lack of a standard can make comparison across the board difficult. Nigel Charnock suggested that large companies (e.g. Xstrata) would have a consistent complaints management protocol applied across all sites. Mark Nolan pointed out that comparison between all mining operations would be difficult anyway due to differences in circumstances.

#### **10. Mt Owen Complex Native Forest Restoration Research and Monitoring Program**

Mike Cole from the University of Newcastle provided a presentation entitled “Flora Studies in the Ravensworth State Forest Vegetation Complex”. Key points included:

- Three distinctive vegetation communities have been identified within the Mt Owen project area, namely Upper Slopes, Lower Slopes and Rehabilitation and Offsets.
- The flora species list for the Mt Owen project area has doubled since 2000.
- Lani Dyer’s Honours project was discussed. The project focused on post-fire reproduction, the reproductive/regenerative potential of the Mt Owen site, plant dispersal syndromes and comparisons between old and new vegetation communities.
- Modeling is being done that focuses on the natural spread of vegetation. This will hopefully be able to predict what future vegetation communities will look like on the site.
- Research in offset areas is looking at different methods of increasing plant survival, such as different growth substrates, site preparation methods, and the addition of water retaining crystals at the planting stage.
- Research is also being conducted into the use of different soils (e.g. forest topsoil vs chitter) in rehabilitation areas and the impacts that they have on natural regeneration from the soil seedbank and the composition of the resultant vegetation community.
- Research is being conducted into cost-effective methods of woody weed control in rehabilitation areas (e.g. *Acacia saligna*)
- Mention of habitat creation for the Green and Golden Bell Frog (GGBF). Explanation of why this species prefers disturbed industrial sites. Stated that the GGBF uses “polluted”

water bodies to control and reduce the outbreak of the frog chytrid fungus, but uses cleaner water bodies for breeding.

- Discussion of key findings to date resulting from the current Australian Coal Association Research Program (ACARP) project being conducted at Mt Owen. The project is looking at alternative substrates to forest topsoil to establish native forest communities.

Nigel Charnock offered CCC members an opportunity to visit some of the research sites established by the University in rehabilitation areas as part of the site tour. No one accepted this offer.

## **11. General Business**

### ***Ravensworth Homestead***

Nigel Charnock provided an update on the Ravensworth Homestead. Key points included:

- Xstrata Mt Owen (XMO) engaged EJE Architecture in late 2005 to prepare a structural and material condition report for the homestead
- Stage 1 included identifying items suffering deterioration/damage, recommending appropriate repair methods for each building component & establishing priorities
- Comprehensive report received by XMO in late February 2006 (expected December 2005) – meeting planned with Xstrata management to prioritise recommended works & discuss options for future use of the Homestead
- Nigel advised that he would report back to the CCC on the outcome of the planned meeting at the next CCC meeting.

### ***Hebden Road Line Markings***

Mary Robinson advised the Committee that she had raised the issue of line markings along Hebden Road with Council. It was stated that minimal work had been performed to mitigate this issue. It was agreed that a letter regarding the issue should be sent to council from the CCC. Mary stated that she would again follow the issue up with Council.

### ***Vacant CCC Position***

Brian Thomas advised the CCC that the vacant community position on the Mt Owen Complex CCC was advertised in the last Mt Owen Complex Community newsletter. However, no written applications were received. The position remains vacant and will be advertised in the Newsletter until it is filled.

### ***Yorks Ck Cultural Landscape Remediation Project***

Nigel Charnock provided a brief presentation regarding the Yorks Creek Cultural Landscape Remediation Project. Key points included:

- The project commenced on buffer land owned by Xstrata Mt Owen in September 2005

- A working group has been established to guide the implementation of the project consisting of 5 representatives from the local Aboriginal community and representatives from Xstrata Mt Owen, the Department of Environment and Conservation and an independent Land Management Consultant.
- The project will address the historical land degradation issues within the project area such as erosion and loss of native vegetation.
- Given the presence of archaeological sites throughout the project area, all landscape remediation works will be carefully managed to avoid any potential interaction with these sites in close consultation with the local Aboriginal community.
- Nigel suggested that he would arrange for an Aboriginal representative on the working group to provide a presentation on the project at the next meeting. It was generally agreed that this would be a good idea.

### *Xstrata Coal NSW Community Survey*

Nigel Charnock provided an overview of the planned Xstrata Coal NSW (XCN) community survey. Key points included.

- The survey is titled “View Point”
- To commence March 2006 (4-6 month project) and will include the greater Ravensworth area, which covers the Mt Owen Complex area.
- Striving for consistency across XCN and continual improvement
- Through the survey XCN is looking to obtain feedback from key stakeholders on:
  - XCN & site environmental & community engagement performance
  - Assess adequacy of information provided
  - Assess adequacy of methods used to engage stakeholders
  - Identify community needs to guide social investment programs
  - Establish social indicators for future assessment

## **12. Next Meeting**

It was agreed by all members that from now on, Mt Owen CCC Meetings are to be held on a Thursday as this is more convenient for the majority of the Community members.

The next meeting has been tentatively scheduled for **Thursday 25, May 2006** at Mt Owen Mine.

Meeting closed – 12:30 pm by M. Robinson

Minutes prepared by – Sarah Harvey

**Action Items:**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Raised at CCC meeting on:</b>	<b>Status</b>
Names of CCC members to be added to Council's website	Brian Thomas	7/03/2006	
Mine's Community Inquiries, Blasting and Emergency Contact Numbers to be added to Council's website	Brian Thomas	7/03/2006	
Letter to be sent to Council on behalf of CCC regarding issues with Hebden Road line marking	Xstrata Mt Owen	7/03/2006	
Arrange for Aboriginal representative on the Yorks Creek Working Group to provide a presentation to the CCC	Xstrata Mt Owen	7/03/2006	
Provide presentation on Mt Owen Complex Biodiversity and Land management Plan, which was delayed at meeting on 26/11/04,	Xstrata Mt Owen	26/11/04 & 22/11/05	Complete
24 hour contact number for mine	Xstrata Mt Owen & Thiess	22/11/05	Complete. Advertised in December 2005 Community Newsletter
Letter to Singleton Council regarding line markings on local roads	SSC	22/11/2005	Mary Robinson to provide update at next meeting
Advertise for community rep to fill vacant CCC position following departure of Leanne Cramp	Xstrata Mt Owen	22/11/2005	Advertise in next Mt Owen Community Newsletter