

# 1 GENERAL MANAGERS MESSAGE



I am pleased to welcome you to the new-look Mt Owen Community Newsletter.

# 2 MT OWEN OPERATIONS PROJECT



The Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, the Hon. Craig Knowles MP, has recently announced that a Commission of Inquiry (COI) is to be held regarding HVCC's DA for the proposed extension of Mt Owen.

# 3 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE



Mt Owen is committed to maintaining and continually improving its environmental performance.

# 4 FROM THE COAL FACE



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# MT OWEN TWO-WAY

The Mt Owen Community Update Issue No.3 June 2004

## Message from the General Manager

I am pleased to welcome you to the new-look Mt Owen Community Newsletter. Thankyou to everyone who has taken the time to provide feedback on our past newsletters. As a result of this feedback, we have decided to adopt a new look for our regular newsletter. I hope you find the new format welcoming and informative.

The newsletter will continue to provide you with an update on the Mt Owen Operations project, as well as an overview of mining operations and recent environmental management and community initiatives at Mt Owen Mine.

In this issue we provide details of the upcoming Commission of Inquiry process. Hunter Valley Coal Corporation (HVCC) supports the Minister's decision to call a Commission of Inquiry into the Mt Owen Operations project, which is scheduled to commence on Monday 28 June 2004 at Singleton's Council Chambers. I hope that the

Commission of Inquiry will provide everyone with the opportunity to air their views.

Over the last six months Mt Owen has maintained its strong focus on environmental management and improving its communication with the local community. Mining has also progressed well in accordance with approved plans.

May I take this opportunity to remind you that our door is always open, so please don't hesitate to contact our Environment and Community Officer – Nigel Charnock, if you have any queries.

We appreciate your continued feedback, which is essential to assist us to continually improve two-way communication and management of our interactions with the local community.

Derek Walls - 'On behalf of the HVCC team'



Derek Walls HVCC General Manager and Peter Kane Operations Manager Thiess

## Project Update

At the time of our last community Newsletter in November 2003, Hunter Valley Coal Corporation (HVCC) was preparing to submit a Development Application (DA) and supporting Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning & Natural Resources (DIPNR) for modifications and extensions to its existing operations.

HVCC lodged the application on 28 January 2004, after which the EIS was publicly exhibited until 12 March 2004. During the exhibition period, DIPNR received submissions on the project from government departments, community groups and individual residents.

The Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, the Hon. Craig Knowles MP, has recently announced that a Commission of Inquiry (COI) is to be held regarding HVCC's DA for the proposed extension of Mt Owen Operations. The COI will concentrate on potential community impacts (noise, dust, blasting), water issues and social aspects of the project.

## When will the Commission of Inquiry be held and what is the process?

The COI for the Mt Owen Operations Project will commence on Monday 28 June 2004 at Singleton's Council chambers. Specific details of the Inquiry, including dates, times and the venue were publicly advertised the week commencing 17 May 2004.

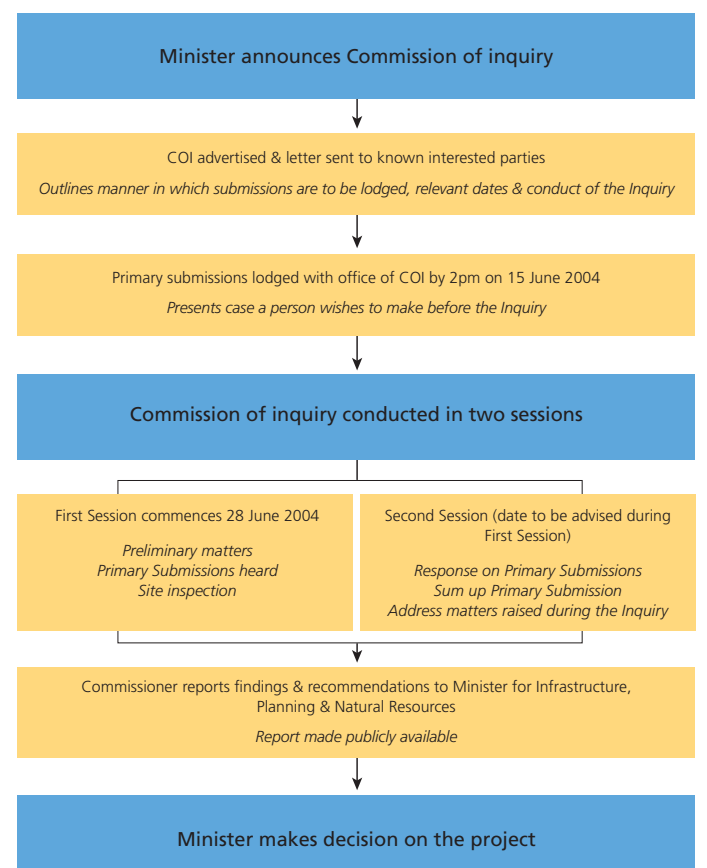
Commissioner Kevin Cleland has been appointed by the Minister to chair the COI. The Commissioner is independent of both State & Local government departments.

The COI is open to the public and provides an opportunity for all interested parties to express their views, which are then taken into consideration before the Minister makes a final decision on the project.

The COI process is illustrated in the diagram beside.

## When will a decision on the Mt Owen Operations Project be made?

The Commissioner will report findings and recommendations from the COI to the Minister, after completion of the second hearing session. The Minister may accept, reject or modify these recommendations. The Minister will then make a decision on the project.



## Environmental Performance

Mt Owen is committed to maintaining and continually improving its environmental performance. Key achievements in the last six months include:

- Commencement of additional rehabilitation research trials in conjunction with the University of Newcastle;
- Approximately 90 hectares reshaped and ready for final seeding; and
- For the year to date no discharge of saline water under the terms of the Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme, with continued focus on using saline water for dust suppression and coal preparation.



Reforestation area on buffer land at Mt Owen Mine

# MT OWEN TWO-WAY



## Recent Initiatives in Environmental Management

### Noise



Attenuated overburden trucks have been ordered as part of Mt Owen Mine's progressive equipment replacement program

The most recent Mt Owen Community Newsletter outlined our commitment to an extensive program to minimise noise, including:

- progressive replacement of existing equipment with new quieter equipment at a significant capital cost;
- installation of quieter reversing alarms on equipment;
- adoption of an alternative signalling systems to reduce the need for using horns; and
- installation of a real-time noise monitor in the Middle Falbrook Road area.

The first attenuated equipment has been ordered and is expected to be operational in early 2005. This initial order comprises one large overburden excavator and six overburden trucks.

The installation of quieter reversing alarms (SmartAlarms) on

equipment was completed in late May. An alternative signalling system to the use of horns on excavators is also being progressively implemented, with the system operational on 30% of the fleet. The remaining equipment will be fitted out with the alternative signalling system by mid June 2004.

A real time noise monitoring system for Mt Owen has been recently established along Middle Falbrook Road. The system will be undergoing a trial and familiarisation process before it is fully implemented. This is a state of the art monitoring system, which provides real-time information on noise levels. This information will be used to assist with the investigation and response to noise related complaints and to assess compliance with regulatory noise limits. Noise data in 'real-time' is relayed from the system back to the Mt Owen site office for interpretation and further analysis by key site personnel.

### Dust

You may also recall from our last newsletter that we have been trialling the addition of a chemical dust suppressant - RST - to the water in water carts to assist with dust control on haul roads and exposed surfaces. Following the success of these trials, RST has been permanently adopted as part of routine operational practices at the Mine.

Planned improvements to Mt Owen's dust monitoring network have also progressed, with the recent installation of two new High Volume Air

Sampling Units in the Falbrook Road area. One unit measures Total Suspended Particulates (TSP), whilst the second unit is designed to measure the concentration of finer particulate matter less than 10 microns (PM10) in the atmosphere. Both of these units are operated and maintained in accordance with relevant regulatory guidelines and will be used to assess performance against target dust levels set by the Department of Environment & Conservation (formerly Environment Protection Authority).



A chemical dust suppressant (RST) is being used in water carts at Mt Owen Mine for dust control

### Flora and Fauna Monitoring

Regular flora and fauna monitoring has been undertaken at Mt Owen since 1995 in accordance with a Plan of Management for Revegetation and Wildlife, which was developed in consultation with various government bodies and community organisations.

Fauna monitoring is conducted to assess the impacts of mining on local fauna populations, including birds, reptiles, mammals and frogs. Monitoring is also undertaken in rehabilitation areas and on other land set aside for conservation purposes to look at colonisation rates of native species in these areas. Monitoring techniques include trapping, spotlighting and inspection of artificial roost sites under a Licence issued by National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Flora monitoring is conducted seasonally to assess development in regenerating forest and rehabilitation areas. Areas of remnant vegetation are used as control sites for comparison with rehabilitation areas. Information obtained from this monitoring is used to guide and continuously improve rehabilitation efforts at the mine.



*Ozothamnus tessellates* was recorded during recent flora monitoring in Ravensworth State Forest in an area set aside for conservation purposes. It is the first rare plant species located in Ravensworth State Forest since monitoring commenced

### Rehabilitation Research

Mt Owen is committed to the ongoing rehabilitation of disturbed areas back to native woodland and forest to provide habitat for endangered fauna known to occur in the area. Mt Owen is leading the industry in the development of techniques to achieve this and has established research links with the University of Newcastle to ensure the best practical rehabilitation methods are developed and used. As part of this, a trial to identify the best surface material and ameliorants for restoring native forest is currently being established. Related research is looking into the long term nutrient requirements and weed management. In addition to the benefits to Mt Owen Mine and the wider mining industry, the research will provide a future teaching resource for the University and will be of benefit to anyone seeking to establish local forest communities.

Mt Owen places a great deal of emphasis on the standard of rehabilitation, which is highly regarded throughout the industry. Our aim is to maintain Mt Owen's position as an industry leader by pursuing a proactive rehabilitation strategy and maximising the amount of rehabilitation that we can carry out on an annual basis, thereby reducing the impact of the project upon the surrounding landscape.



A Newcastle University Student seeding rehabilitation trials at Mt Owen

Did you know that Mt Owen's operational and environmental performance, including environmental monitoring results, is reported in an Annual Environmental Management Report, which is available to the public through the mine's Community Consultative Committee (CCC) and local Council?

## Community Initiatives

# 1800 730 883

### Mt Owen Community Response Line

If you have any inquiries or concerns in relation to the Mt Owen Mine, please contact the Mine on the 24-hour freecall Community Response Line.

### Mt Owen Community Consultative Committee

Mt Owen maintains a close partnership with the local community. In May 2004, Mt Owen held its first CCC meeting for 2004. The meeting included an update on Mt Owen's Development Application for an expansion to mining operations, an update on current mining operations, and a review of the mine's environmental performance since the last meeting in November 2003. If you would like any further information on the meetings, please contact HVCC's Environment & Community Officer.

Current CCC members are: Councillor Paul Nichols (Chairperson), Brian Thomas (SSC Council Rep.), Mark Nolan (DMR Rep.), Patricia Bestic, (Community Rep.), Julie Clydesdale (Community Rep.), Jenny Marshall (Community Rep.), Alex Schmierer (Community Rep.), Wendy Williams (Community Rep.), Derek Walls (HVCC), Nigel Charnock (HVCC), Peter Kane (Thiess) & Geoff Marschke (Thiess).

### Community Response Line

HVCC has recently established a freecall 24-hour 1800 Community Response Line (1800 730 883) and professional answering service for community inquiries or complaints relating to Mt Owen.

All community inquiries or complaints made via the 1800 number are directed to a commercial call centre. The call centre operator will prompt the caller to supply contact details and key information in relation to the complaint and instantaneously relay these details to the Mt Owen Production Supervisor and HVCC Environment and Community Officer. The Production Supervisor is responsible for co-ordinating a review of activities that could have contributed to the complaint and where practical and necessary, implement remedial measures to mitigate the impact. The HVCC Environment & Community Officer is responsible for contacting the complainant as soon as practical to discuss the complaint and providing feedback to the complainant on the outcome of any investigation.