



Hunter Valley Operations (HVO)
Community Consultative Committee (CCC) Meeting
Wednesday 9 August 2023 at 1:30 p.m.



Attendance

Chairperson

Dr. Colin Gellatly Independent Chair HVO CCC

Community Representatives

Brian Atfield Community Representative
Jeannie Hayes Community Representative
Michael Wellard Community Representative
Di Gee Community Representative - Via Teleconference

Singleton Council

CR. Sue George Singleton Council

Company Representatives

David Foster General Manager
Andrew Speechly Manager Environment & Community
Nic McLaughlin Environment & Community Officer
Jason Martin Approvals Manager – HVO Continuation Project

Apologies

Janelle Wenham Community Representative
Todd Mills Community Representative

Minutes

Sarah Purser

- Welcome,** Col welcomed members to the HVO CCC Meeting. Andrew ran through housekeeping and emergency procedures.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners; "We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we meet today and pay respect to Elders, past, present and future".

- Apologies;** Advised and recorded.
- Declaration of pecuniary interests/conflicts of interest; Standing;** Col and Sarah are engaged by HVO to provide the respective roles of Independent Chairperson and meeting minute taking. CR Sue George is President of the Singleton Neighbourhood Centre.

4. Out of Session Correspondence - via email

27/06/2023 Draft Minutes for the HVO CCC Meeting held 10 May 2023
27/07/2023 HVO Agenda and Business Papers for today's Meeting

- Confirmation of the previous Meeting's Minutes;** Col called for formal approval of the Minutes for the Meeting held 10 May 2023 and the CCC confirmed their acceptance. The CCC Meeting Minutes are available on HVO's public website and can be accessed on-line via [Documents Hunter Valley Operations \(hvo.com.au\)](http://Documents Hunter Valley Operations (hvo.com.au))

6. Matters Arising

HVO to continue to provide the CCC with updates on the Continuation Project.

✓ At today's Meeting.

Col to correspond with the DPE Water Section, advising of concerns raised at this CCC in regard to river bank erosion as a result of the July 2022 floods and ask if they have any programs in place to address this. Col to extend an invitation to DPE Water Section to attend a future HVO CCC Meeting.

✓ Col confirmed this invitation had been extended to the DPE Water Section on 31 May 2023 and he will follow up attendance.

7. Company Reports | Update on Hunter Valley Operations

Operations Update

- **West Pit;** HVO continue to develop Mitchell Pit, with operations heading in a southern direction. HVO provided an overview of where they are up to with their mining activities and noted that members may have seen that the operations are now hard up against Lemington Road opposite the mine entrance. Dave noted a significant change is that the Dragline will cease operating in West Pit towards the end of August. Jeannie queried if that would be the end of life for the Dragline there and Dave responded that is correct, from thereon HVO will utilise Trucks and Shovels. Dave noted the dry weather conditions make it more difficult to manage dust from digging as the dirt is dry. HVO have undertaken a program of watering the benches and Dave noted that dust generation will lessen without the Dragline in operation.
- **Cheshunt Pit;** Continues in a south westerly migration and HVO continue to tip dirt fairly high on the top levels, that section is anticipated to be completed this year and thereafter operations will move to lower dumps.
- **Riverview;** Preparations are nearing completion for long term water storage in this Pit.

Environment

Complaints; Andrew advised there had been four complaints since the last CCC and provided an overview of the results of investigations and undertakings by HVO in response to concerns raised.

1 June 2023: Blast fume – Anonymous; HVO's investigations identified a blast category 3 fume in West Pit, the blast did not leave the mining footprint, however HVO did capture this as an incident.

10 June 2023: Blast dust – Warkworth; Andrew advised this complaint from the Gliding Club was in relation to dust coming from a blast in Cheshunt Pit. In response to a previous concern raised by the Gliding Club HVO had put in stricter blasting permissions, with low as well as high wind restrictions. Given this was a second issue, where possible HVO will now delay blasts when there is any potential risk of fume heading towards the Gliding Club on the days they operate, being Friday through to Sunday.

10 July 2023: Lighting – Long Point; This concern related to a lighting plant on Cheshunt Pit and the incident was raised and investigated. The lighting receptor check that was undertaken by HVO identified a shortfall in the design for the lighting plant height, that has been rectified and updated to the maximum height required.

27 July 2023: Alleged reckless driving – Jerrys Plains; Andrew advised that this concern had been raised by a resident of Jerry's Plains who had been tailgated and intimidated by another driver who then headed into Comleroi Road, which is HVO's south entrance. HVO made the assumption that it was one of their employees or contractors and Andrew confirmed that a site wide education slide had been delivered to their workforce on safe driving.

Andrew noted there had been efforts undertaken to get Singleton Highway Patrol engaged as well and the workforce has been encouraged to report any illegal or aggressive driving to both their Supervisors and Police.

Jeannie believes unsafe driving issues are not specific to HVO but right across the spectrum, particularly during shift changes. Jeannie noted that drivers do tailgate and show a complete lack of concern about kangaroos or other potential hazards that may be on the road. Jeannie added that there had been some serious accidents on Jerry's Plains Road, noting there is currently an abundance of wildlife located nearby or on the roads.

Sue advised she will raise the issue of reckless/intimidating driving behaviour with local police traffic command when she meets with them in the near future. Sue noted that she had already flagged the issue of B-Double trucks overtaking cars in the main street of Jerry's Plains. Sue was thanked in advance for her efforts and assistance with this concern.

Rehabilitation

- ✓ 10 hectares have been seeded in 2023, with a requirement of 44 hectares of new rehabilitation.
- ✓ 30 hectares have been shaped, along with 24 hectares topsoiled.
- ✓ Most of the activity is in the Riverview Pit area and this is where most of the rehab will be for 2023. HVO are creating a Geofluv landform in Cheshunt which takes a bit longer to shape out.
- ✓ 56 hectares of second stage rehabilitation have been seeded since the start of 2023. This includes 4 hectares of hydro seeding completed at the SE TSF. 45 hectares of GMD is scheduled for H2 2023, with 97 hectares required.
- ✓ Extensive maintenance works were completed during H1 2023 based on 2022 rehab monitoring data. HVO's focus has been on weed and Acacia Saligna management.

Weed Management 2023

Programme of activities:-

- ✓ During 2023, weed management at HVO has primarily focussed within riparian areas along the Hunter River to manage the River Red Gum populations.
- ✓ The weeds focussed on include Galenia pubescens, Pennisetum clandestinum (Kikuyu) and Ricinus communis (Castor oil plant).
- ✓ HVO is making a concerted effort to minimise the establishment of Coolatai Grass on its lands to avoid the degradation of bushland and pasture areas. These have mainly required management along transport corridors such as Lemington Road.
- ✓ HVO has undertaken weed management within the biodiversity offsets.

There was a general discussion around Coolatai grass, Andrew noted this had been discussed at the previous CCC and advised that it is being talked about as an emerging weed. Sue added that the Coolatai grass has been moving up the Valley. Brian queried if HVO spray boxthorn and Andrew confirmed this is a targeted species.

Feral Pest Management 2023

Program of activities

Andrew provided the dates and timing for HVO's Wild Dog Control and Hoggone Pig Baiting Programs that are synchronised with other sites and the Hunter Local Land Services (LLS). HVO's rural licensee pig control programs are ongoing via bounty payments. Andrew noted that the Kangaroo commercial harvests are currently being impacted by the temporary closure of Jerry's Plains Chillers. HVO anticipate harvesting activities will surge once this Chiller reopens.

Heritage

Historic Homestead Project; Includes Archerfield, Carrington Stud and Wandewoi Homesteads'. The Project Manager, Castle Wright, conducted initial inspections on 2 May 2023, and subsequently completed detailed building surveys and assessments.

Archerfield Distillery Structural Underpinning; As a result of the surveys, basement stone walls are to be underpinned in the immediate future as a temporary protection measure until stonework replacement plan and works can be finalised.

Chain of Ponds Inn; HVO received the Annual Management report from Liddell Open Cut with no issues identified. This property was visited by a former resident, who is now 99 years old. Andrew said this was a great opportunity to find out and record more information about what it was like when living there.

Maintenance; Yard maintenance works and Termite Interception System inspections at LEP listed properties is ongoing.

Reporting, Exceedances and Inspections

HVO's Independent Environmental Compliance Audit, which is conducted triennially, has been accepted by the DPE and the full report is on the company website. Andrew advised if the CCC have any questions regarding this Audit, he would be happy to take members through this report in more detail.

Tenements 2023; Mining Lease (ML) 1849 for ancillary activities i.e. coal processing and water management, was granted in May 2023.

Exploration Works 2023; One surface drill hole is proposed within EL 5606. The remainder of surface exploration drilling for 2023 is confined to Mining Leases, with works targeting the Bayswater and Barrett Seams.

HVO Continuation Project

Ecology Survey Delays/Additional Survey Requirements

Jason explained that additional ecology fieldwork is ongoing for both the State and Federal aspects.

- 📌 Vegetation and habitat surveys in rehabilitation are complete.
- 📌 Koala thermal drone surveys completed 26 June 2023, with no Koalas recorded. Koala scat fieldwork also completed.
- 📌 Common Planigale surveys via pitfall traps completed with no Planigale's recorded. Remaining surveys are scheduled for completion in August.
- 📌 Winter Birds Surveys, Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) are being conducted in August.
- 📌 Mammal MNES surveys scheduled for August to September.

Project Disturbance Boundary

Two scarred trees located within the disturbance footprint of the proposed Lemington Road realignment presented in the EIS were initially proposed to be impacted. Since this time, further design review has been completed and has resulted in the complete avoidance of impacts to these two sites, therefore there will be no impact to any scarred trees as a result of the Project. Additional work is underway to minimise Project disturbance footprint in the vicinity of Site 12. The Response to Submissions (RTS) currently being prepared will document revisions since EIS and include further details in relation to avoidance of impact to the scarred trees.

NSW Approval

Response to Submissions (RTS) is currently being prepared, HVO are anticipating the submission of the RTS late September, early October 2023. Following submission there will be a NSW assessment period which HVO envisage will take four to five months however is dependent on Government review periods and timelines. Following this assessment period the Project will be referred to the IPC for determination, anticipated for ~Q1/2 2024.

Subject to the receipt of development consent, post approval and execution readiness will be the next step with the hope to commence construction ~Q3 2024. Jason noted stakeholder engagement is continuing around multiple aspects of the Project, including with Singleton Council regarding the establishment of a VPA and the Lemington Road closure application.

Federal Approval

Jason explained the Project is not subject to the NSW bilateral assessment process. The Federal EPBC referrals are anticipated to be finalised in Aug/Sept 2023 and any controlling provisions determined by the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy and Environment (DCCEEW). A separate Federal EIS/PER is to be prepared, anticipated for Q1 2024. Despite not being subject to bilateral assessment it is anticipated that EPBC Act determination would occur post NSW determination.

Jeannie queried the anticipated timing for construction in 2024 and if HVO have some commitment from the Departments around timelines, she felt the Federal Approval process could potentially delay the project. Jason confirmed the company understands that delays remain a key project risk and will not commence construction until Federal Approval (and any subordinate approval necessary to commence) is received.

Jeannie queried if HVO has stipulated in their approvals and conditions what is going to be done with the land after mining, for example that parts of the land be targeted for specific purposes such as renewables. Jason advised that the conceptual final landform for which development consent is being sought is presented in the EIS and includes a landform with a combination of grazing and native vegetation. It was noted that specific conditions of rehabilitation would likely be included in any development consent for the Project. In response to a query from Sue, Jason confirmed that there is land specified for the purpose of cattle grazing in the EIS.

Dave explained that any variations to the current or proposed conceptual final landform would require a new approval for HVO to modify their consent, so HVO must remain committed to the proposed landform. It was agreed that there is a large number of opportunities for land use post mining but for HVO that would be an entirely new project and may also require appropriate approvals to be obtained. Dave explained there would likely be development consent conditions linked to consultation and for the community to be involved in the development of the final closure plan.

Community

Community Grants Program

All nine applications as part of Round One of the 2023 Community Grants programme have been assessed by HVO and granted a total of approximately \$31,000.00 in funding. Andrew said he had been out and about meeting some of the grantees, he acknowledged how many people the Singleton Neighbourhood supports and could definitely see where assistance is needed. HVO's contribution to the Neighbourhood Centre was acknowledged by Sue. Round Two of this programme is scheduled to open in September 2023.

Sponsorships

- ✓ **Gold Sponsor for Singleton Business Awards;** The Gala awards dinner was held 1 July 2023 at Singleton Civic Centre.
- ✓ **Rotary Club of Singleton on Hunter Incorporated;** The Singleton Art Prize was held 26 to 31 July 2023 at Singleton Civic Centre.
- ✓ **Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce and Industry;** The Great Cattle Dog Muster is to be held 9 September 2023 at Muswellbrook Showground.

Community Support - Apprentice Programme

Andrew noted that discussions are progressing with Aberdeen Pre-School and that HVO are looking for community support projects for their Apprentices. HVO currently have approximately 40 Apprentices, therefore they can achieve a lot of work in a short period of time. In response to a query from Sue, Andrew advised the Apprentices are learning trades such as mechanical and electrical, however HVO have had qualified Tradesmen come in and the Apprentices act as Trade Assistants. Andrew noted that the Apprentices are able to provide assistance with tasks such as painting and landscaping, Sue suggested that Rural Halls are often seeking help with jobs and she will look into that for HVO.

9. Community Representative Feedback

Jeannie queried the Wandewoi property that is located across the river from her residence and asked, given the forthcoming bushfire season, if HVO had any thought on how that would be managed in respect to fire management. Andrew responded that all properties get a fuel load assessment and those are currently being undertaken, including for Wandewoi. From the fuel load assessments HVO then work out the management strategies. Jeannie advised that a potential fire there was of concern and Andrew confirmed if there is a certain fuel load threshold then HVO can put cattle on to graze, as they have done in the past. In addition HVO do cut in fire breaks. Andrew added that HVO did locate a better offset than Wandewoi, therefore a reduction in the offset area could allow for more farming at Wandewoi. Andrew advised the last step to get that formally varied was to provide updated Management Plans to the Department which HVO are now waiting for approval.

Michael queried if HVO could provide some tank cleaning and filter changes for residents, he believed there were four properties that would like this done. Andrew responded he would be fine to organise this and asked that the residents email HVO so this work can be scheduled. Michael said there are still issues with some flocculants in the river and he does not know where this is coming from. Michael had tried to get a sample but this is proving difficult as the flocc just deteriorates in the water.

There was a general discussion about illegal access to land in the local area, HVO advised they were aware of a particularly nasty and potentially threatening engagement and from a safety point of view it was recommended that anyone coming across unsavoury characters are best to keep their distance and call the Police for assistance.

10. General Business; Nil declared. Col thanked all for their attendance and closed the meeting.

11. Next CCC Meeting; 8 November 2023 at 1.30 p.m.

Ongoing Actions

HVO to continue to provide the CCC with updates on the Continuation Project.

Col to follow up the DPE Water Section in relation to his invitation sent 31 May 2023 for a representative to attend a future HVO CCC Meeting.

HVO to provide an updated briefing on the detailed design for the North Void Tailings Storage Facility Barrier Wall - proposed for November 2023 Meeting.

HVO CONTACTS

Website <https://hvo.com.au/>

Continuation Project via hvo.com.au/continuation

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086443440525>

Meeting Minutes - InSite <https://www.hvo.com.au/documents/>

HVO Complaints and Blasting Hotline: 1800 888 733 (free call)

SMS Blasting Notification System- Send an SMS to 0447 448 982 with word subscribe included in text