



Hunter Valley Operations (HVO)  
 Community Consultative Committee (CCC) Meeting  
 Wednesday 8 November 2023 at 1:30 p.m.



**Attendance**

**Chairperson**

Dr. Colin Gellatly Independent Chair HVO CCC

**Community Representatives**

Brian Atfield Community Representative

Todd Mills Community Representative

**Singleton Council**

CR. Sue George Singleton Council

**Company Representatives**

Andrew Speechly Manager Environment & Community

Nic McLaughlin Environment & Community Officer

Jason Martin Approvals Manager – HVO Continuation Project

**By Invitation**

Cate Sims & Craig Milton Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue

**Apologies**

Di Gee Community Representative

Michael Wellard Community Representative

Janelle Wenham Community Representative

Peter Bowman Environment & Community Officer

Dave Foster HVO General Manager

**Minutes** Sarah Purser

- Welcome**, Col opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance.

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.

- By Invitation - Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue - HVO CCC Update - Presented by Cate Sims & Craig Milton**

Cate and Craig provided a detailed overview on the background and establishment of the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue (UHMD), its purpose, initiatives and the projects undertaken by this group.

**Key elements of presentation**; Overview of the Dialogue, Dialogue Organisational Structure, Key Projects, 2022 Community Forum Feedback & 2023 Plan, Communications and Engagement, Pasture Restoration Field Day, Annual Rehabilitation and Water Use Reporting Projects and 2023 School Mines Tour Program. Cate advised the UHMD are actively seeking new community members to represent the diverse voices and views of people living in Upper Hunter communities. Cate encouraged those interested in getting involved to please contact UHMD for more information.

**UHMD Contacts**; Website; <https://miningdialogue.com.au/> Email; info@miningdialogue.com.au

**Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Data Analysis;** The Dialogue has analysed long term data to determine how air quality in the Upper Hunter has changed and how it compares to other locations.

<https://miningdialogue.com.au/featured/air-quality-analysis>

4. **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.

#### 5. Out of Session Correspondence

5/9/23 Nic McLaughlin; Draft Meeting Minutes for CCC member comment  
6/9/23 Nic McLaughlin; Notification that Round Two Community Grants were open  
15/9/23 CR. Sue George; Acceptance of minutes without change  
Update on traffic / police and community halls.  
27/10/23 Nic McLaughlin; Invitation to today's meeting, including Agenda and Business papers  
6/11/23 Nic McLaughlin; Invitation to HVO's Community Information Sessions

6. **Confirmation of the previous Meeting's Minutes;** Col called for formal approval of the Minutes for the Meeting held 9 August 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 \(hvo.com.au\)](https://www.hvo.com.au/Documents/Hunter_Valley_Operations)

#### 7. Matters Arising

##### Ongoing Actions

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

- ✓ At today's meeting by Jason

**HVO to provide an update on the detailed design for the North Void Tailings Storage Facility Barrier Wall.**

Andrew advised alternative designs have been submitted to EPA, HVO are hoping to meet with EPA and other departments in the near future to progress the North Void TSF Barrier Wall into full design and execution.

**An invitation was extended on 31 May 2023 by Col for the DPE Water Section to attend a future HVO CCC Meeting regarding the 2022 Riverbank erosion.**

This invitation remains as pending confirmation from DPE Water Section.

#### 8. Company Reports | Update on Hunter Valley Operations

##### Operations Update

- **West Pit;** Andrew advised that HVO continue to operate in this area and identified the direction of mining. It was acknowledged that HVO are operating in close proximity to Lemington Road. Dragline work was completed in September and the DL has been walked up to its final resting place. Mitchell Pit development continues with mining progressing south from Wilton Pit into surface mining areas.
- **Cheshunt Pit;** Andrew indicated where works are being conducted on two faces parallel with the Golden Highway. HVO are still tipping up to top dumps but nearing the end of that work, thereafter they will start to tip towards the West.
- **Riverview;** The setting up of this pit for water storage has commenced following mining. The Dragline has been parked up and no longer in use.

## Environment

**Complaints;** Andrew advised there had been two complaints since the last CCC Meeting; 9 September from Jerrys Plains regarding blast fume and 10 September from Mt Thorley regarding dust. Andrew provided an overview of the results of investigations and undertakings by HVO in response to concerns raised.

**Dust Management;** HVO have launched their West Pit Dust Action Plan which is inclusive of; re-educating the workforce in visible dust triggers and actions, trialling irrigation techniques on blasted ground, increasing water cart availability and recommencing the use of chemical dust suppressants.

**Rehabilitation;** HVO have seeded 33 hectares of their 55 hectare target for new rehabilitation. 51 hectares shaped and 45 hectares topsoiled. The main areas undergoing rehabilitation is up on the Cheshunt dump, facing north east, and Riverview. These will be Geofluv landform. HVO also have some target areas for West Pit. Second stage rehabilitation has been mostly on the south east Tailings Storage Facility. HVO have cattle in the Carrington area, there are some earth work repairs to be conducted prior to this becoming native vegetation as its final land use.

**Weed Management;** This is ongoing, weather conditions have dried up but that equates to different weeds coming up. Andrew provided details of weeds being targeted by HVO and locations; on site at riparian areas along the Hunter River, biodiversity offset and rural buffer properties. Andrew noted that evidence can be seen along the roadways where HVO have sprayed the Coolatai grass, this is important to limit spread of the weed into bushland, rehabilitation and pasture.

**Feral Pest Management;** 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 the number of kangaroos had increased with harvesters delivering product to regional chillers, whilst the Jerrys Plains Chillers are temporarily closed.

**Biodiversity Offsets;** HVO continue their main activities of firebreak maintenance, weed management and erosion repair. Condon View on the Putty Road narrowly missed bushfire, however bushfire burnt the north section of Crescent Head offset during late October. Andrew advised the Green and Golden Bell breeding ponds survived this fire, however fences that were burnt will require repair.

## Heritage

**Aboriginal Cultural Heritage;** Andrew noted that Peter Bowman was out with Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAP's) today, undertaking Biannual Heritage Management Plan Inspections, where they check artefact scatters, adequate fencing, scar trees and the like, this will determine if any further works are required.

**Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit;** HVO are preparing to submit this permit ahead of mining in Wilton / Mitchell Pit. Andrew explained HVO are required to have this permit in place to be able to salvage Aboriginal Artefacts and this is under the West Pit Approval and not contingent on the Continuation Project.

**Historic Homestead Project;** Includes Archerfield, Carrington Stud and Wandewoi Homesteads'. The Project Manager, Castle Wright, conducted initial inspections on 2 May 2023. Detailed building surveys and assessments completed by Castle Wright first week of November 2023.

**Archerfield Distillery Structural Underpinning;** Basement stone wall underpinning work has been completed by Structural as a temporary protection measure until stonework replacement plan and works can be finalised.

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

## **Reporting, Exceedances and Inspections**

Andrew provided detail on an incident of Blast Fume (level 4B) on 9 September, PM<sub>10</sub> dust exceedances of Cheshunt East Monitor on 20 and 26 September and at Jerrys Plains Monitor on 2 October, 2023. Andrew detailed results of all investigations and actions undertaken.

Todd questioned where a blast fume dissipates to and Andrew explained that it's the process of the concentrated fume diluting in the air and becoming less hazardous.

The National Pollutant Inventory Report was submitted by HVO end September 2023.

## **EPA Bust the Dust inspections are ongoing**

HVO have had approximately five site visits by the EPA since the commencement of this program. At a recent visit there was an opportunity for the EPA to meet with Bruce Gould, HVO's Mining Manager, after having a tour around West Pit. The EPA talked to Mining Officers and were shown HVO's mining controls for dust. Andrew noted this had been a good learning opportunity for both parties and confirmed the EPA has not raised any significant concerns out of those visits.

## **Exploration Works 2023**

One surface drill hole completed within EL 5606 from 25 August to 5 September 2023. Remainder of surface exploration drilling for 2023 is confined to Mining Leases, with works targeting the Bayswater and Barrett seams.

Todd raised the Hunter Transmission Project noting they are talking about coming through the area. Andrew confirmed that is correct, HVO have the opportunity to help guide them through a pathway across the mine that would have the least impact on HVO. Todd said he had received correspondence regarding this project but was not sure why.

## **HVO Continuation Project**

Jason provided an extensive update on the Continuation Project, key elements covered:-

### **Ecology fieldwork**

Has been completed for both State and Federal aspects.

### **Project amendment to Lemington Road**

In response to concern raised in submissions and subsequent discussions with Regulators regarding impacts to Warkworth Sands Woodlands (WSW) and two Aboriginal scarred trees, HVO have moved a portion of the proposed Lemington Road realignment to the west. The revised Lemington Road realignment now avoids direct impacts to WSW and both Aboriginal scarred trees. Exclusion zones / demarcation around the scarred trees is to be established during construction. Government agencies including, Singleton Council staff and other key stakeholders have been consulted on the new alignment. The road will have an additional length of ~580m and maintain a design travel speed of 100 km/hr, resulting in an additional travel time of ~20 seconds. It was noted that this revised alignment has resulted in the preparation of an Amendment Report for HVO North.

### **Project amendment to Carrington west wing barrier wall**

The Amendment Report for HVO North also relates to the revised timing for the construction of the Carrington West Wing groundwater barrier wall. The Project is now proposing that the barrier wall is constructed prior to mining within 100 metres of the remnant western arm of the Hunter River paleochannel. Based on the HVOCP mine plan sequence the trigger date for the barrier wall to be in place is anticipated for approximately year 10 of the Project.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Project GHG emissions have been updated since submission of the EIS. Jason noted that HVO have made a commitment to develop the scope for a gas pre-drainage trial within two years of commencement of consent should approval be granted for the Project. Col queried the purpose of this trial and Jason responded it is to ascertain if HVO can get the gas out of the coal, and if so how much, and what it could be used for i.e. flare, sell, capture and use.

### EIS and Submissions Analysis

Following closure of the public exhibition on 27 February 2023, 1,060 submissions were received by the DPE from Government Agencies, Councils, public authorities, organisations, and individuals for the two DAs. The majority of the submissions received (91%) were in support of the Project. 75% of submissions were from the local or regional LGA's surrounding the Project including; Singleton (298), Maitland (221), Cessnock (139) and Muswellbrook (85). Over 97% of submissions from these LGAs were in support of the Project. Given there were 67 (~6%) unique objections received the Independent Planning Commission will determine the Project.

Todd queried if the positives had come from mine workers, he felt that all employees would of course support where they work. Andrew confirmed that employees and those indirectly involved with HVO would made positive submissions for the Project. Todd asked how many positives had been received from those not associated with the mine and Jason advised that HVO do not have detail of that data, only the name and whether they were in support or objected to the project along with any other informing included in any submission.

### EIS and Submissions Analysis

Strong levels of Project support primarily related to; employment opportunities, economic contributions including community contributions and Environmental performance. Objections raised matters including; impacts from greenhouse gas emissions, compliance of the Project with State, Commonwealth and international climate change policies, economic analysis / methodology, project's impact on air quality and human health and biodiversity impacts.

**Submissions Report;** prepared to address all submissions received following exhibition of the Project EIS. It was noted the Submissions Report had been submitted to DPE.

**HVO North Amendment Report;** prepared to address project amendments to Lemington Road realignment and timing for construction of the barrier wall. It was noted the Amendment Report would be submitted for had been submitted to DPE.

### Next Steps for NSW Approval

- Lodge Submissions Report and Amendment Report – November 2023
- NSW DPE assessment of the Project – Q4 2023 – Q1 2024 (estimate only)
- NSW IPC Assessment & Determination – Q2 2024 (estimate only)
- Continued stakeholder engagement including with Singleton Council regarding the establishment of a VPA & closure of Lemington Road
- Post approvals and execution planning
- Commencement of construction ~Q3/4 2024 (estimate only)

Jason explained that HVO are working through Federal Approvals for the Project. HVO will need to do a separate EIS for the Federal Government. It was noted that any Federal determination would likely occur post any NSW State assessment and determination.

Todd noted that when Lemington Road is closed on his side of the river, the realignment will result in increased road noise at his residence. Todd asked if that is classed as mine or road noise as there will now be a 100km/hr road approximately 2km from his property which the mine has put in. Jason confirmed that, once operational, it will be classed as road noise and acknowledged Todd's feedback.

## Community

### Community Grants Program;

Six of eight applications as part of Round Two of the 2023 Community Grants programme have been assessed and granted a total of approximately \$25,000 in funding.

### Funding Recipients

- ✓ Carrie's Place Domestic Violence and Homelessness - Upgrade of household appliances
- ✓ Denman Public School - Colour Run Fundraiser
- ✓ Whittingham Public Hall - Replace kitchen flooring
- ✓ Jerrys Plains School of Arts - Replace stage curtains
- ✓ Hunter Australian Native Bee Association - Native bee hives/colonies
- ✓ Muswellbrook South Public School - Colour Run Fundraiser

### Sponsorships;

The Great Cattle Dog Muster held on 9 September at Muswellbrook Showground.

### Community Support (Apprentice Programme);

Discussions are progressing for several proposed projects and Andrew encouraged members to put forward any that they may be aware of. Andrew advised that the Apprentices will be building some shelving at the Archerfield Homestead to home artefacts that are currently located in the back of stables.

## 9. Community Representative Feedback

Todd Mills advised that HVO's haul road is visible from his residence and he sees a fair bit of dust off that. In addition, he had recently experienced a bit of pit noise. Andrew acknowledged the feedback, but was not aware of any operational changes that would have recently increased noise. Todd also had an inquiry from a resident asking about cleaning solar panels and queried what HVO could do. Andrew confirmed he will get in touch with them.

## 10. General Business

CR Sue George noted the new NSW DPE CCC Guidelines and associated actions to be undertaken for the HVO CCC, Col confirmed he would liaise with Andrew in order to complete those tasks.

**ACTION 1: In response to the new NSW DPE CCC Guidelines (June 2023) Col to circulate the Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interest forms to members for sign off and return to Chair (these are to be completed annually). Col to complete the Terms of Reference Template for CCC review and agreement.**

Col thanked all for their attendance and wished everyone all the best for the Festive Season.

## 11. Proposed Meeting dates for 2024

1.30 to 3:30pm in HVO's Meeting Room MR1 of the Services Building

- 7 February
- 8 May
- 7 August
- 13 November

### Actions Arising from this Meeting

**ACTION 1:** In response to the new NSW DPE CCC Guidelines (June 2023) Col to circulate the Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interest forms to members for sign off and return to Chair (these are to be completed annually). Col to complete the Terms of Reference (ToR) Template for CCC review and agreement.

### Ongoing Actions

- HVO to continue to provide the CCC with updates on the Continuation Project.
- HVO to provide an update on the detailed design for the North Void Tailings Storage Facility Barrier Wall.
- An invitation was extended on 31 May 2023 by Col for the DPE Water Section to attend a future HVO CCC Meeting regarding the 2022 Riverbank erosion. This invitation remains as pending confirmation from DPE Water Section.



### CONTACTS

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

Continuation Project via [hvo.com.au/continuation](https://hvo.com.au/continuation)

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

Meeting Minutes - <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