



Hunter Valley Operations (HVO)
 Community Consultative Committee (CCC) Meeting
 Wednesday 7 February 2024 at 1:30 p.m.



Attendance

Chairperson

Dr. Colin Gellatly Independent Chair HVO CCC

Community Representatives

Brian Atfield Community Representative
 Todd Mills Community Representative
 Di Gee Community Representative
 Michael Wellard Community Representative
 Jeanie Hayes Community Representative
 Janelle Wenham Community Representative
 Neville Hodgkinson Community Representative

Singleton Council

CR. Sue George Singleton Council

Company Representatives

Andrew Speechly Manager Environment & Community
 Brendon Hubert Superintendent Environment & Community
 Jess Blair Projects Coordinator - HVO Continuation Project
 Astrid Ruiz Production Manager - HVO West Pit

Apologies

Dave Foster General Manager
 Nic McLaughlin Environment & Community Officer
 Jason Martin Approvals Manager – HVO Continuation Project
 Peter Bowman Environment & Community Officer

Minutes

Sarah Purser

1. **Welcome**, Col opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. Andrew introduced new HVO attendees and 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"*.
2. **Apologies**; Advised and recorded.
3. **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, her son has commenced working for the Environment Protection Authority (EPA).
5. **Out of Session Correspondence**
 - 24/11/2023 Finalised / accepted minutes for the HVO CCC Meeting held 8 August 2023.
 - 18/12/2023 Draft minutes for the HVO CCC Meeting held 9 November 2023 sent for CCC member comment.
 - 20/12/2023 Acceptance of minutes without change by CR. Sue George, no other comments received.
 - 2/2/2024 Invitation to CCC members, including Agenda and Business Papers, for today's Meeting.

6. **Confirmation of the previous Meeting's Minutes;** Col called for formal approval of the Minutes for the Meeting held 9 November 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/HunterValleyOperations)

7. Matters Arising

Actions Arising

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.

✓ Hard copy forms were presented to CCC members for sign off at the conclusion of this Meeting.

Complete the Terms of Reference Template (ToR) for CCC review and agreement.

Col noted there is a good section on responsibilities of the CCC Committee within the ToR. Col advised he is in discussion with the DPE regarding implementation of the ToR and will advise their final decision.

ACTION 1: Col to advise status of the CCC Terms of Reference upon receipt of feedback from the DPE.

Ongoing Actions

Continuation Project update

✓ Provided at today's meeting by Andrew

North Void Tailings Storage Facility Barrier Wall detailed design update.

✓ HVO currently await feedback and advice from the EPA along with other Agencies.

8. Company Reports | Update on Hunter Valley Operations

Operations Update

Andrew advised 2023 had been a positive year with HVO reaching key production targets. There were no significant environmental incidents or non compliances in 2023, Andrew attributed this to upgrade works implemented by HVO.

HVO's strategy for the next five years is to get annual production run rates for coal mined and delivered to the Prep Plant up to 21 million tonnes. Andrew noted for perspective that 2023 came out with 15 million tonnes and the 2024 target is for 17 million tonnes. Within the Mine Plan HVO are bringing in new equipment and enabling activities for throughput that will increase the ability for HVO to get better output from that plan.

West Pit; Andrew identified where diggers are located in key working areas and advised that HVO are increasing the amount of equipment in West Pit. HVO are mining through the overburden material in the Mitchell Pit area, then operations will progress in a south-easterly direction towards Lemington Road. Astrid explained how mining will be progressing with terraces, noting that approximately 50% of production for the entire site is in West Pit. Andrew advised that previously this had been a 70% to 30% split with most activity in Cheshunt. Brian queried how many seams are in West Pit and Astrid identified the four big ones, Astrid noted these can then be split into different blocks so the end result can be ten or eleven.

HVO South; In terms of current operations, HVO are setting up an area in the south of Riverview for water storage. HVO have reached the top dumping levels so there will not be any material put on top of dumps on the eastern edge of the mine, that has all now been planned to be shaped and rehabbed. Andrew identified the direction the pits will move over time.

Environment

Complaints; There were a total of 9 complaints received in 2023 and there have been no complaints for the period October 2023 to January 2024. Andrew acknowledged the relatively low number of complaints.

Rehabilitation; 57.8 hectares of new rehabilitation was completed in 2023 against a forecast of 44.0 hectares in HVO's Forward Work Programme that was provided to the Resources Regulator (RR). 98.5 hectares of Growth Medium Development (GMD) was sown to final seed mix in 2023 against a target of 97 hectares. All up 156.3 hectares of new rehabilitation was recorded for HVO in 2023.

The 2024 forecast is for 69 hectares of new rehab and 88.5 hectares of GMD, 5 hectares of new rehab has already been completed YTD. Andrew advised that HVO will submit an updated Forward Work Program to the RR in March 2024. Andrew identified the rehab areas via mapping. Brian queried if the rehab will be grasses, or will some areas have trees. Andrew responded that the south east Tailings Storage Facility area will be pasture and light woody, other areas will typically have vegetation corridors.

Weed Management; HVO'S focus onsite has been on riparian areas on the Hunter River and Wollombi Brook. Other areas targeted for weed management are to include River Red Gum areas and remnant vegetation. Andrew provided detail of the weeds HVO are focussing on.

Feral Pest Management; Andrew provided an overview of the schedule for HVO's Wild Dog Control Programs and "Hoggone" pig baiting program. HVO rural licensee pig control programs are ongoing via bounty payments and Kangaroo commercial harvests will commence in February/March 2024.

Biodiversity Offsets; Over summer there has been a focus on fire prevention and management options, these include; firebreak maintenance and additional water tanks where necessary to assist with fire management and weed control. HVO will conduct repairs to fences at Crescent Head Offset that were damaged by fire in October 2023.

Heritage

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage; HVO submitted an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit application in December 2023 for the salvage of artefacts ahead of mining related activities in Wilton/Mitchell Pit. If approved salvage works are to follow. CR Sue George queried what HVO do with the artefacts and Andrew responded there is a care and control permit for HVO to store these onsite.

Neville queried if there could be discussions with the Cultural Heritage Working Group in relation to what could be done with these artefacts in the future and asked if there is a regional facility where they could be placed. Andrew explained the artefacts do not belong to HVO, the company just has a permit to keep them safe. Previously the artefacts went to the Australian Museum but they are unable to accept any more. Andrew advised HVO are open to discussions as to where they could potentially go and regularly have these discussions with the Cultural Heritage Working Group.

Historic Homestead Projects; Includes Archerfield, Carrington Stud and Wandewoi Homesteads'.

Andrew advised critical work has been completed in stabilising the Archerfield Barrel room. The detailed building surveys and assessments were completed by Castle Wright in 2023 and HVO are now preparing to move to the next stage of quantifying and costing maintenance works.

Neville queried if there is a Conservation Management Plan and Andrew advised there is not a legislated one, however HVO do have an internal plan that is mostly around maintenance. Andrew confirmed that HVO has taken the lead for more significant homesteads to put more effort into them over and above just keeping them stable.

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

Reporting, Exceedances and Inspections

Andrew provided detail on PM Dust Exceedances on 2 October and 15 & 19 December 2023 at Wandewoi (mine owned land) and 19 December 2023 at Cheshunt East. Andrew detailed results of all investigations and actions undertaken in response.

EPA Bust the Dust

On conclusion of this program, that ran from October to December 2023, a request for information (RFI) was issued to all sites within the Hunter for operational data. HVO supplied the EPA with water cart and dust alarm data for the three months of the program as well as for three months prior. Andrew advised that the distance travelled by water carts was in the order of 600,000 kilometres during that period. Andrew noted there are over 800,000 kilometres of roads criss-crossing Australia so that puts the distance water carts travelled into perspective. Nearly 2,000 ML of water was used for dust suppression and there was in the order of 5,000 down time hours in response to dust alerts and physical observations.

HVO's initiatives around dust in 2023 included; educating the workforce, trialling irrigation techniques on blasted ground, increasing water cart availability, the use of RST (chemical) dust suppressants and tracking operational performance. 2024 will see HVO continuing to track operational performance, upgrade water cart fill points, commence engineering for ROM dust suppression, and CHPP dust suppression upgrades.

Compliance Reports

HVO have four Federal offset properties being; Wandewoi, Condon View, Mitchelhill, Crescent Head (South and North), yet to be approved is located next to the David Hook Property at Belford. Each year HVO is to report compliance against their Management plans to confirm they are undertaking the actions within those plans.

Andrew advised that HVO are working on exchanging off-sets at Wandewoi with the property in Belford to reduce native vegetation on good grazing land. Once this is signed off HVO can then go and survey the reduced area at Wandewoi and fully execute their Management Plans for those areas.

The EPBC Annual Compliance Report for 2023 was provided to the Commonwealth and uploaded to HVO's Website.

Exploration Works 2023

- Surface exploration (2 x drill holes) are anticipated in EL 5417 and EL 5606 during 2024.
- Should further exploration works be required in ELs, HVO will conduct consultation with impacted stakeholders.
- The remainder of surface exploration drilling for 2024 is confined to Mining Leases, with works targeting the Bayswater and Barrett seams.

Approvals - HVO Continuation Project

NSW Approval

- ❖ Submissions Report and Amendment Report lodged November 2023
- ❖ Project is currently under assessment by the NSW DPE
- ❖ Some further supplementary submissions are being prepared in response to feedback from Government agencies
- ❖ The Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023 introduced in December 2023
 - Includes emissions reduction targets for NSW
 - Establishing an independent, expert Net Zero Commission
 - Advises the Independent Planning Commission
- ❖ Independent Planning Commission is to determine the Project

Federal Approval

Determination of controlling provisions (MNES Assessment) for HVO North and HVO South, identified that the proposed action is likely to have a significant impact on the following matters protected by the EPBC Act:-

- ❖ **Listed threatened species and communities;** Andrew provided detail of species and vegetation that were considered to be matters of significance, explaining it has been deemed that these need to be assessed.
- ❖ **Coal seam gas or large coal mining development with impact on water resources;** Andrew advised HVO are required to submit Public Environmental Reports (PERs) and that they are currently being prepared. Andrew explained there needs to be two PERs; one for North and one for South.

Neville queried what is determined by the EPBC Act and Andrew responded the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) assess potential impacts to Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES). In relation to the HVO Project and potential impact to MNES, Andrew provided a few examples, not limited to; vegetation - Central Hunter Valley Eucalypt Forest and Woodland, Warkworth Sands Woodlands of the Hunter Valley and species - such as the Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater. Andrew explained HVO will have to offset the impact to these species or communities which will be documented through the PERs and assessment of the Project.

Neville queried if there is an EPBC Act currently applying to HVO and Andrew confirmed that occurred with the 2018 Modification of HVO South (when north and south were combined).

Consultation

- ✓ Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD) & DPE site visit on 19th February 2024 around ecology aspects.
- ✓ Singleton Council Meeting on 13th February 2024 regarding closure of Lemington Road and establishment of a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA).
- ✓ Given that a portion of HVO's submission is in the Muswellbrook Shire area, HVO will be talking to Muswellbrook Council regarding the establishment of a VPA.

NSW Approval - Estimated Timeline

- NSW DPE assessment of the Project – Q1 2024
- NSW IPC Assessment & Determination – Q2 2024
- Post approvals and execution planning
- Commencement of construction ~Q3/4 2024

Federal Approval - Estimated Timeline

- Determination of controlling provisions MNES Assessment - December 2023
- Federal PER guidelines issued – 29th January 2024
- Submission of Federal PER – March/April 2024
- EPBC Act assessment and determination – Post NSW State determination

Community

Community Grants Program;

Since November's CCC meeting, community support of approximately \$98,000 (in Round 2 2023) has been provided to:-

- ✓ **Painted Truck Trays; \$32,400**

In support of five charity partnerships - Westpac Rescue Helicopter, Diabetes Type 2 Foundation, Hunter Prostate Cancer Alliance, Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation and Singleton Family Support.

✓ **Ready4School Jerrys Plains School**

HVO is supporting the Jerrys Plains School Ready4School programme with \$32,000 again in 2024, this continues a partnership dating back to 2016. The programme prepares Jerrys Plains and surrounds pre-school aged children for kindergarten. Andrew noted it was wonderful to see the school so full of life - through all ages.

✓ **Tour d 'Horse in support of KIDS "Kids in Dangerous Situations" Foundation kidsfoundation.org.au**

Brian explained the KIDS Foundation was founded by Dr Susie O'Neill in 1993 to make a difference in child safety, well being and injury recovery for those affected by serious trauma, injury or burns.

The Tour d 'Horse event involved a 200 kilometre 'race' at walking pace over 10 days (18 to 28 January 2024) from Pokolbin to the Tamworth Country Music Festival Parade. The aim was to raise half a million dollars to support the work of the KIDS Foundation, which was surpassed.

Andrew advised that HVO were extremely pleased to provide \$20,000 to support Brian as one of the riders raising funds for KIDS, and also to support Brian as someone that puts so much back into his community. Andrew acknowledged that Brian was also instrumental in the event planning by organising the horses, feed and properties for the rides. Brian was one of twenty riders competing and did himself, HVO and the Hunter Valley proud with a third place finish.

Brian noted that Dr Susie O'Neill has organised some courses for pre-school around kids resilience and emotional wellbeing in the Hunter Valley and there will be care packs dropped off from Newcastle to Scone. Brian said the Tour d 'horse was the biggest event KIDS ever had with a large number of individuals and sponsors that rode. Brian was congratulated by all for his efforts.

- ✓ Book publication Ron Stokes – Dairying book \$2,659
- ✓ Christmas Eve Lunch Samaritans Singleton \$2,500
- ✓ Charity Golf Day - Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service \$1,500
- ✓ Christmas Appeal Salvation Army \$1,900
- ✓ Christmas Food Appeal St Vincent de Pauls In-kind (food)
- ✓ Christmas Cheer Singleton Family Support \$1,900
- ✓ Singleton Lolly Run - Singleton Fire and Rescue \$1,000

HVO have commenced a program to support their employees that are in fund raising ventures through the grants programme:-

- ✓ Brad Bates (HVO employee) Riding4Mates \$1,000
- ✓ Brenton Gee (HVO employee) Starlight Foundation \$1,000
- ✓ Brett Lane (HVO employee) Starlight Foundation \$250

In 2023; HVO provided household goods to Carrie's Place Domestic Violence and Homelessness (November), and funding to the Muswellbrook South School Colour Run (December) and Australian Native Bee Keepers Hunter Branch (November).

To support Christmas appeals HVO staff placed gifts for those in need under a Christmas Tree and if employees donated their HVO Christmas Gift Cards, the company doubled the value.

- ✓ Jerry's Plains Hall curtain replacement is coming in 2024

Community Grants - Round One 2024 - is scheduled to open in April 2024

HVO are hosting a Family Day on Saturday 25 May 2024 for employees and contractors, with children's entertainment and pit tours. Andrew advised HVO would like to open this event up further however need to limit this to staff and their families due to the large numbers as it already stands. Andrew extended an invitation to the CCC to attend this event and felt that in the future HVO will consider how to get neighbours involved.

9. Community Representative Feedback

Neville felt that it was noteworthy in relation to air quality that the levels of complaints have come down, he feels this is the result of a number of years of effective participation from the mining fraternity.

Neville believes that there is an impact on community in relation to Heritage and is seeing signs of this receiving attention again. Neville queried why the Great Lodge has been excluded from the Heritage discussions, he feels that it is as significant as Wambo Homestead and Ravensworth House. Neville believes the attention given to Wambo and Ravensworth has raised the silent Heritage significance to a lot of people in the Valley.

Neville noted three other properties located towards Dights Crossing being; the Cemetery, Clifford ruins, and Stafford which Neville felt was quite liveable. Neville acknowledged that there are a number of people contributing to the Heritage space and thinks everyone, in particular mining companies, should consider the long term future of the Valley and how Heritage might play a significant role in the psychic response to people in the region. Neville noted that the Great Lodge was also of significance.

Andrew acknowledged that Archerfield, Carrington Stud and Wandewoi Homesteads' are getting a lot of input. Andrew confirmed each of the other heritage sites are managed but not to the same degree as HVO had to work out which properties they started on and priorities. Andrew agreed with Neville that the Great Lodge, which is located on the flats down from Carrington Stud on the southern side of the river, has a lot of important history associated with it and needs to be maintained. Di noted three people that have visited the Historical Society had enquired about the location and what is happening with The Lodge, including contact from an Ancestor.

Neville agreed with Andrew that there needs to be a list of priorities. Neville feels Heritage should be looked at in a holistic way to determine what should be saved from a futuristic point of view, noting there is also funding available from Council. Col asked if HVO could provide a broader Heritage overview at a future meeting and Andrew advised that apart from restoration works, HVO are updating their European Heritage Management Plan which could be presented to the CCC.

ACTION 2: Peter to provide an overview of HVO's European Heritage Management Plan when finalised.

Michael advised that residents were all quite happy with HVO organising tank cleaning around the area and were appreciative of the job that HVO did.

10. General Business

Andrew advised that HVO have Office Equipment to donate and asked members to please get in touch with Nic if they see a community use.

Col thanked all for their attendance and confirmed HVO's next meeting date.

11. Next Meeting Date - 8 May 2024; 1.30 to 3:30pm in HVO's Meeting Room MR1 of the Services Building

Actions Arising from this Meeting

ACTION 1: Col to advise status of the CCC Terms of Reference upon receipt of feedback from the DPE.

ACTION 2: Peter to provide an overview of HVO's European Heritage Management Plan when finalised.

Ongoing Actions

- Col to follow up his 31 May 2023 invitation to the DPE Water Section, to attend a future HVO CCC meeting to discuss the 2022 riverbank erosion, via a contact provided by Andrew.
- Continuation Project update
- North Void Tailings Storage Facility Barrier Wall detailed design update.



CONTACTS

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

Continuation Project via 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