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## Joint CCC Meeting 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010

**Date:** 31 March 2010

**Time:** 4:00pm

**Location:** Mid Western Regional Council – The Stables

**Attendees:**

Garry West (Independent Chair Person)

Esme Martens, Linda Shreeve, John Webb (Mid Western Regional Council)

Percy Thompson (Mayor)

David Kitto (Department of Planning)

Garry Barrett (NSW Rural Fire Services)

Julia Imrie, Bruce Hughes, Linda Lewis, Scott Lillis, Ken Mayberry, Brian McDermott, Geoff Mitchell, Annette Riley, Bev Smiles (Community Members)

Jamie Lees, Rod Reinhard (Ulan Coal)

Shaun Cleary, Keith Downham, Kieren Bennetts, (Wilpinjong Coal)

Ian Livingstone-Blevins, Steve Peart, Julie Thomas, Kate Alison (Minute Taker) (Moolarben Coal)

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### **Meeting Items**

#### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

Garry West (GW) opened the meeting, welcoming council members, the Mayor, Department of Planning, community members and Ulan, Wilpinjong and Moolarben Coal mines.

GW explained that the need for a combined CCC was raised so all three mines and the surrounding community (via their respective CCC representatives) are able to raise issues and concerns on the cumulative impacts of the mines at a public forum.

#### **2. Apologies**

Richard Whyte (DECCW)

Margaret MacDonald-Hill (AMRC)

#### **3. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest

#### **4. Introduction**

Jamie Lees (JL) opened with a presentation showing an aerial view of the geographic location of the three mine sites and the areas affected by the expansion of the mines. JL also

gave a brief history of when the mines opened (Ulan in 1982, Wilpinjong 2006 and Moolarben 2009).

## **5. Cumulative Impacts**

GW noted that the main concerns for the surrounding land owners of the mines include noise, dust, water quality and ground vibration. GW then opened the floor for members to express concerns for cumulative issues that affect “the big picture”.

### Water, Air and Noise Monitoring:

Esme Martens(EM) commented that the predictions in Environmental Assessments are not always accurate, citing the Ulan Road where recent assessments stated that the road was satisfactory despite the fact that in places there are no sealed road shoulders and neglecting the fact that the road has presently in many sections reached the end of its economic life. She also cited the Combo Valley experience where there were no predictions in the EA of noise affectation, yet this has occurred and the company has resumed many properties in the valley. EM also commented that property acquisition was leading to a loss of community

Julia Imrie (JI) was concerned about the impact of mining on water quality, the river/groundwater system and The Drip. She believed further monitoring of groundwater/surface connectivity is needed to improve understanding of downstream impacts and ensure water resources are not unsustainably mined. JI asked whether sustainable yield had been determined for the local groundwater system and requested that a thorough Risk Analysis including downstream and long term impacts be conducted.

Bruce Hughes (BH) asked that it be noted that there are residential properties downstream from the Goulburn River – it’s not all National Parks.

JI requested there be independent monitoring and assessment of the cumulative effects of mining (water, air, noise etc).

Bev Smiles (BS) enquired about a Regional Monitoring System (similar to that in the Hunter Valley) that reports on noise, air and water quality. BS and other community members agreed that an independent review of all monitoring would be more credible to them as they felt that monitoring conducted individually by the mines is bias towards that particular mine.

Shaun Cleary (SC) clarified that all monitoring conducted by the mines is done by qualified experts, ensuring that the reporting isn’t bias.

Annette Riley (AR) acknowledged that it wasn’t the data that community members doubted the credibility of, but more so how that information is relayed back to the community. It was requested that a more transparent system be created to allow easier access to reports. BH suggested publishing results in local newspapers and newsletters.

BS expressed concern for the placement of monitoring equipment and that the community have issues with government approvals. The mines explained that their monitoring systems are mobile and can be moved. David Kitto (DK) commented that monitoring locations can be moved and that the community can consult with the DoP if they are having no luck with the individual mines.

DK asked that everyone acknowledge that the Ulan area’s turn out of coal is increasing by around 400% therefore changing the area from rural to industrial, which has obvious

consequences in terms of the environmental impact. He noted that while community members may be concerned about increasing levels of noise, dust etc, in many cases the levels are still compliant with the DoP's standards. DK reported that the reasons for the monitoring is to not only ensure that noise and dust levels are compliant but also to ensure that relevant reactive management procedures are in place should the levels go over their limits. DK acknowledged the request for Regional Monitoring. He reported that it isn't a simple system but could be done by DECCW and the DoP. He did comment that the monitoring systems are continuing to improve as knowledge on the subject increases. DK commented that people will be affected by the mines. DoP have developed guidelines regarding environmental performance, which need to be constantly reviewed as it is a complicated process. Mines need certainty on how they can operate and even if they are in compliance there will still be annoyance to the community.

**Action:**

- Each mine will continue to do individual monitoring.
- Mines to investigate other opportunities to publish environmental monitoring data i.e. newspapers.
- DK to look into Regional Monitoring System for the Ulan / Mudgee area.

**6. Land Management**

Geoff Mitchell (GM) made a request that as the three mines represented here today occupy many parcels of land, the position of boundary marks [ pegged corners, reference trees etc ] be recorded by their surveyors, as this type of information can be lost over time, and the cost of the re - establishment of those marks is four times that of recording the position of boundary marks when found .

**Weeds:**

Concern was raised for whose responsibility it is for controlling weeds on property boundaries. All mines ensured that Council Weed Officers inspect their land on a regular basis reporting on how they are to be controlled. John Webb commented that the mines aren't treated any differently to other land owners when it comes to weed control.

**Restoration of land after the mine's life span:**

Percy Thompson (PT) reported on how Cadia Gold Mine is planting timber on their land as an attempt to improve not only the physical appearance on the site but creating an industry (timber industry) for generations further down the track. It was requested that local mines consider doing the same thing. GW commented that approval conditions now are very different to previous condition including those that relate to rehabilitation.

Steve Peart (SP) commented that rehabilitation is now an important factor that is documented from the start of the mine lease – planning laws for rehabilitation at the end of a mine lease continue to increase in importance.

DK admitted that provisions of mining leases and completion criteria need improving. Conservation value is an involving area of science and is an area that is being looked at with a high level of importance.

**Feral Animals:**

The mines assured community members that feral animals are controlled similarly to the weeds, with outside assistance being sought were required, including the LHPA and Wild Dog Association.

**7/ Bushfire Management**

JW introduces Garry Barrett from the NSW RFS.

JW requests that a representative from each mine attend the meetings of the local Bushfire Committee. The Bushfire Committee includes land owners and representatives from NSW Farmers and National Parks and Wildlife Services and State Forests. The committee meets twice a year and the mines would require one representative to represent the three mines. It was suggested that the mines work on a rotational system, where the representative changes on an annual basis.

All three mines ensured that they are working together to develop Bushfire Management Plans.

**Action:**

- Each mine to discuss the how they are to be represented on the local Bushfire Committee.

## **7. Social Impacts**

### **Health Services:**

JW appealed to the mines to support the local health services, in particular the Gulgong Hospital which is facing closure due to a lack of resources. JW requested that the mines appeal to local and state government to retain the current health system as it supports the mines in a major way. Assistance is required by 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

**Action:** Mines to consider request to appeal to government agencies before 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

JW also reported on a scheme for a house grant for trainee doctors from Wollongong University. The house would encourage young doctors into regional areas in the hope that they would stay on after their traineeship.

All mines commented that they are aware of the health services issues and are working individually to improve the system. The mines are looking at how they support the Wollongong University proposal within the respective individual funding programs

### **Housing:**

Linda Shreeve (LS) expressed concern for the demand for and the lack of land / housing for the growing population due to expansion of the mines. Land owners are reluctant to sell their land as cost of subdividing and building is too expensive.

LS explained that there is a long lead time before subdivision land becomes available on the market for residential development. This lead time is a result of the considerable time required to design and approve the development and then install all the services required to support the subdivision.

LS raised the issue that Department of Planning knows about major developments in advance of Council resulting in the situation where Council cannot plan in advance for the additional housing and services demand to support these major projects.

DK ensured that the availability of land and housing is considered as part of the approval process.

JW raised a UCML Development Consent condition that UCML develop residential land in Gulgong and suggested that this land is released as soon as possible to relieve land shortages in Gulgong.

### **Roads and Traffic:**

There is rising concern by all for the conditions of the Ulan Rd and the increasing traffic flow

that uses it. The road is nearing the end of its life span and is in desperate need for an upgrade to allow for the increase in traffic. The mines contribute funds to Council for the maintenance and upgrade of local road through the Voluntary Planning Approval process. EM and JW both appealed to the mines for their continued support financially for the improved conditions of the roads. EM acknowledged that the mines are already contributing to the improvement (in particular for the new Wollar Rd).

BS expressed frustration that while the Mudgee mines contribute significantly to the government with their coal output, the community is begging for support for their health services and road conditions. There was a discussion about the state government putting a percentage of the royalties collected back into the local area that they are collected from. A similar system operates in Western Australia.

## **8. General Business**

### Communication:

EM raised that the general public are unaware of the work that each of the CCC's do. Requested that a press release be submitted to the local media to bring attention to how the CCC's are hoping to improve cumulative impacts caused by the mines.

EM identified the recent initiative of Centennial Coal to provide a half page news article each month in the Mudgee Guardian which provides an update on mining activities and positive news stories on community involvement.

### Action:

- A press release is to be issued to the local media regarding this meeting.

BS suggested that due to the success of this meeting that an annual meeting is held. A discussion was held regarding this and the recent Coal Day, which created a public forum for issues and concerns to be raised. The Coal Day was deemed a success and all three mines will be involved with further Coal Days.

It was agreed that cumulative and regional planning issues to be discussed at the Coal Day and that the CCC meetings would remain as operational meetings with the individual mines in accordance with the project approvals of each mining operation.

## **9. Close**

The general consensus was that the Combined CCC had been successful and that issues were raised and dealt with diplomatically.

GW thanked everyone for the attendance and involvement for the evening.

*Meeting declared closed at: 5:59*