

## Minutes of the Boggabri – Tarrawonga – Maules Creek Community Consultative Committee

**Meeting Held:** 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013, 2:30pm

**Venue:** Boggabri Bowling Club

### 1.0 Present and Apologies

**Present:** John Turner (JT), Independent Chairman  
Tim Muldoon (TM), Manager Community Relations - Whitehaven  
Anthony Margetts (AM), Operations Manager - Tarrawonga  
Danny Young (DY), Group Environmental Manager - Whitehaven  
Jill Johnson (JJ), Environmental Officer – Whitehaven  
Chase Dingle (CD) – Environmental Superintendent – Boggabri Coal  
Joe Rennick (JR) – Environmental Coordinator – Boggabri Coal  
Ken McLaren (KM) – General Manager – Boggabri Coal  
Mark Cornwell (MC) - Expansion Project - Project Manager – Boggabri Coal  
Dan Martin (DM) – Environmental Manager – Maules Creek  
Brian Cole (BC) – EGM Projects Delivery – Maules Creek  
Craig Simmons (CS) – Area Manager Services – Maules Creek  
Julie Heiler (JH), Community Representative  
Richard Gillham (RG), Community Representative  
Jason Davis (JD), Community Representative  
Karen Nankarrow (NK), Community Representative  
John Bastardo (JB), Community Representative  
Marty Brennan (MB), Community Representative  
Alistair Todd (AT) – Maules Creek Community Council  
Toni Comber (TC) – Red Chief Local Aboriginal Land Council  
Clr Catherine Collyer (CC), Narrabri Shire Council rep for Tarrawonga and Boggabri Coal CCC  
Lloyd Finlay (LF), Narrabri Shire Council rep for Maules Creek Coal

**Apologies:** Peter Laird, Community Representative  
Clr Hans Allgayer, Gunnedah Shire Council  
Jim Picton, Community Representative  
Rodney Woolford, Community Representative  
Greening Australia  
Steve Talbott, Cultural Heritage Groups Representative

### 2.0 Declaration of Pecuniary or Non-Pecuniary Interests

JH leases “Velyama” from Aston Resources (now Whitehaven) and is in discussions with Whitehaven regarding water issues at her property.

RG – Property falls into the ‘Zone of Affectation’ for Acquisition by Boggabri Coal Mine (BCM).

CC – Leases country owned by BCM

### **3.0 Introduction to inaugural BTM Complex CCC meeting**

JT provided an introduction to the first cumulative meeting and explained briefly how he expected the meeting to be conducted.

### **4.0 General Business – PowerPoint presentation**

- 4.1 DY, CD and BC provided a general status update for the projects (Tarrawonga, Boggabri Coal and Maules Creek, respectively).
- 4.2 DY provided an overview of the development of the following cumulative impacts management plans:

#### **4.2.1 Cumulative Air Quality Management Plan**

CC said that the EPA had a workshop at NSC regarding a proposed regional air monitoring network similar to the system that operates in the Upper Hunter. Given the mines are referring to a cumulative monitoring system, CC asked whether the mines had been discussing the system with the EPA. CC said the EPA are looking to implement the system in mid 2014 and that the public will be able to access the information.

DY said the mines have known that the EPA and DoPI have been considering a regional monitoring network for some time but the departments haven't discussed it in detail with the mines to date.

CC said she thinks it would be very good because the network would cover a larger area.

JH asked CC if the EPA system would be separate to the mine monitoring network or combined. CC said she believed it would be one system overseen by the EPA.

DY said the cumulative air monitoring strategy that the mines are proposing is based on the Project Approval requirements for each site and would be run by the mining companies, not the EPA. He said he envisages that the regional monitoring network would be run separately by the EPA.

JR said there had been some general discussions with the EPA about regional monitoring but the mines need to do their own monitoring for site compliance requirements whereas the EPA system would be a broader network that has nothing to do with the compliance requirements of each site.

AT asked if air sampling identified an exceedance would all three sites have to shut down. DY said the monitoring equipment will be able to identify the source of the dust and therefore only the mine, or mines, causing the dust would need to react.

CC said the EPA indicated they would be able to pinpoint which mines were exceeding compliance limits.

JH asked if Werris Creek would be included in the regional monitoring network. CC said she thinks so but can't be sure. She knows that Manilla and the other side of Narrabri would be included.

JH asked how the EPA network would be funded and made reference to the camera at Tarrawonga that the EPA installed and then couldn't fund. CC said that would be discussed between the EPA and the mines.

DY said the draft strategy had been issued to DoPI and is awaiting a response. The mines can't progress the strategy until then.

AT asked if the information from the monitoring network for the mines would be available on a website in real time. DY said the strategy requires provision of information but real time data identifies a number of sources, not just mining specific sources, and therefore needs to be validated. He said the format of provision of information still needs to be decided with the Department.

AT said if there is a dust problem during the evening but not during the day then the elevated result could be averaged over the day and not identified in the validated result. DY said the mines get the information in real time so they can react to the information. AT said but the public won't have access to it. DY said validation of data takes time and is reviewed by accredited and certified professionals.

#### **4.2.2 Cumulative Noise Management Plan**

MB asked whether more trucks increase the noise level. DY said more trucks make the overall noise louder but the increase is logarithmic.

DY provided an overview of a noise chart (including low frequency and total noise) the alerting system and live streaming for identifying noise sources.

AT asked if low frequency noise is the same as infrasound (can't be felt or heard within 7km of the noise source but can be heard further away). DY said he wasn't sure of infrasound or if it was the same as low frequency noise.

#### **4.2.3 Cumulative Water Management Plan**

DY said the Cumulative Water Management Plan had been through an approval process with SEWPaC.

DM identified on a plan which monitoring bores had been installed and which were due to be installed in the near future.

DY said the information from the cumulative water monitoring network would be used to recalibrate each mine's water model.

TC asked DM to clarify if three monitoring bores had been drilled on "Velyama". DM said only two.

CC asked if all of this proposed monitoring would be able to indicate a reduction in groundwater levels. DM said the monitoring bores target the deeper aquifers and the alluvium. The probes go through coal seams, interburden and alluvium and can pick up changes in each location. CC asked whether Boggabri's town water supply would be affected. DM said the water supply is much further south so impact is highly unlikely. CD said the idea of the monitoring locations closer to the sites is to pick up any localised issues before they extend to any sensitive receivers.

AT asked if the bore at Green Gully was the same depth as the pit. DM said it targeted the last seam in the mining sequence.

DM said all water monitoring information will be available to the public via reports that each mine will produce.

JH asked about sensors on private bores. DM said the network being discussed is a cumulative network and doesn't replace the existing monitoring network that each of the sites have in place.

TM asked how the source of impact can be identified (ie. irrigation or mining). DY said if impact from drawdown is identified a hydrogeologist would be engaged to assess. JR said you also need to consider seasonal changes.

#### **4.2.4 Regional Biodiversity Strategy**

No comments were received from the floor.

#### **4.2.5 Regional Aboriginal Heritage Conservation Strategy**

TC said that the information DY presented contradicts what BC had said earlier. She said that BC had indicated the program was almost complete but DY is saying it's only just starting. BC said he had indicated the salvage for the Maules Creek site was almost complete and that DY is referring to a cumulative strategy for the three mines. DY said the cumulative strategy is a separate process to each individual projects heritage management requirements.

- 4.3 DY explained that under the Voluntary Planning Agreements with NSC each of the three mines was required to provide \$100,000 funding for environmental projects for the local community. He said use of the funding was to be decided by the CCCs. The funding was raised at the last Tarrawonga CCC meeting with consideration that the joint CCC meeting was a good forum to discuss the options.

JT asked if NSC had any priorities. CC said it hadn't been discussed and that NSC would wait to see what the CCC's suggest.

JH said she is concerned about the changes in flood patterns due to the change in topography and that the landholders aren't getting enough information from the gauge at the Iron Bridge. She said sheep were stranded during the last flood as the information provided was incorrect. She has spoken with someone at the SES who considered that it was a good idea to install additional gauges. The options JH provided were Peter Watson's "Rosewood" property for a volume gauge and Andy Watson's "Nandewar" property for a height gauge.

JH said costs would be \$68,000 for the volume gauge and \$35,000 for the height gauge plus additional costs for NOW to monitor and maintain the gauges. She said there is also an issue with NOW embracing latest technology and that they want to continue to use old technology. NSC think it's a good idea but don't have money to maintain the system. She suggested that the mines could adopt the system and provide the information to BOM and NOW.

JH provided a second option for use of the funding. She said the RFS has a problem with fires in remote areas. If they could see the smoke earlier they could get to the fire quicker. She proposed a remote camera with a 360° view with the following costings:

- Santos tower – which can see the Pilliga and Kaputar regions: \$35,000
- Own 12m high tower - \$25,000.

The Santos tower option is more expensive because they would require riggers from Sydney to install it but it would provide a much better outlook than the 12m

high tower which may have an obscured view from trees. There would also be a \$1500 per year maintenance fee that RFS is willing to fund.

JH also suggested that the cameras can be used to monitor feral animal populations and native wildlife. She said if they got the go ahead it could be running by January.

CC said suggestions need to be accepted by the CCC and presented to NSC.

AT said the Maules Creek Community Council have discussed use of the funds and don't want to take over funding that is already in place (ie. for weed control). He suggested a company that co-ordinates projects for installation of solar panels for property owners. AT mentioned the Manilla project (where community invested in solar power) and the Farming the Sun initiative.

CC asked what sort of projects AT was referring to (ie. local landholders or community things such as schools). AT said people would have to buy their own solar panels but commissioning the consultant would allow for bulk buying power and assist individuals to install the correct solar power systems. AT said that solar power has a net benefit for the environment.

JH said the interest being earned on the funds being held by NSC should be included in the overall fund.

AT noted that in addition to the environmental trust fund a royalty for tonnage will also be provided to NSC.

JH asked DM if the Maules Creek money had been paid yet. DM said it hadn't because they are waiting for the outcome of the court decision.

JJ suggested a timeframe for suggestions. JT said projects should be discussed at the next individual CCC meetings and then a decision should be made shortly thereafter. JT said he will coordinate the process after the next meetings and in the meantime suggestions can be emailed to him. JH said issues are never resolved because the meetings are only held every 3 months. JT said this issue would be resolved.

TC asked how the flood gauge would be compromised by the new bridge. JH said she wasn't sure. RG said he didn't think it would make a difference.

## **5.0 New Business**

- 5.1 JH said that the Iron Bridge will be decommissioned once the new bridge is constructed but it will remain due to its historical significance. She said a meeting will be held in Boggabri to discuss options for the bridge so that it still has a purpose (ie. picnic area) and she thinks the mines should be involved as the mines are one of the reasons a new bridge is required.
- 5.2 AT said there are a lot of locked gates on properties that the mines own and wanted to know what the RFS should do if a fire starts on one of the properties. RG said RFS has the authority to cut the fence or locks. AT suggested RFS locks on all gates with keys in each fire truck. JH said Country Energy tried that previously but there were issues with the locks. TM said Whitehaven has recently included a clause in leases that require the lessee to be part of the RFS or at the least provide contact details to the RFS.
- 5.3 JH said there are fire trails that are now part of offsets and the RFS needs assurance that the trails will remain. She has organised for Russell Heiler to talk

with representatives from the three mines after the meeting and would like the representatives to participate in a meeting at the fire control centre in Narrabri.

- 5.4 AT asked what happens if someone in the community asks a CCC representative a question about one or more of the mines who that question should be referred to. JT said in the first instance the CCC rep should contact the mines directly and if they don't get an acceptable answer to contact him.
- 5.5 LF said there is still a problem with pig chasers and asked that each mine mention the issue again in toolbox talks. He said he knows of one issue of a pig chaser who works at Boggabri Coal. CC also said they had an issue with pig chasers but acknowledged that it's not just people who work at the mines. TM said that the companies do toolbox the issue and will do it again. He also said that if anyone catches people on our land we are happy to prosecute.

## **6.0 Next Meeting**

Date and time for next individual CCC meetings to be advised.

Meeting closed at 4:10pm.

John Turner - Chair