



MEETING MINUTES

Date: 4 February 2011.
File: FIL08/6990-09

Time: 10am – 3pm.

Meeting Location: Singleton.

Meeting 3 of the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network (UHAQMN) – Advisory Committee

In attendance: Cathy Cole (Chairperson), Wayne Bedggood, David Casson, Craig Dalton, Chris Gidney, Rory Gordon, Ben Harrison, Lyn McBain, Kenneth McDonald, John Neely, Patrice Newell, Carol Russel, Wendy Wales, John Watson.

DECCW: Grahame Clarke, Alan Betts, Mitchell Bennett, Chris Eiser, Jason Potts.

Apologies: Nicholas Hall (Ben Harrison replacing).

Agenda Item:

- 1. Acknowledgement of Country.**
- 2. Apologies (see above).**
- 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting.**

The Advisory Committee minutes from meeting 2 held on 5 November 2010, were adopted with one amendment, the replacement of “in” with “is” in Item 8.2.

4. Actions Arising from Previous Meeting.

The Chairperson summarised the actions from the previous meeting. In relation to Action 1, DECCW advised that no problems were anticipated with the monitoring stations due to mine subsidence. In relation to Action 8, DECCW advised that it attended a meeting of the Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group. In relation to Action 10, DECCW advised that it issued a media release following Meeting 2.

All other actions were to be dealt with under other items listed on the Meeting 3 Agenda.

5. Network Design Finalisation.

DECCW summarised the status of each of the proposed monitoring sites. DECCW noted that in-principle agreement had been reached on all sites proposed in the Holmes report except those at Warkworth and the remaining two sites in Muswellbrook. Monitoring sites

at Denman, Broke and Wybong had been proposed by members of the community and needed to be discussed by the Committee.

DECCW summarised the factors to be considered when determining where the monitoring sites should be. These factors included the frequency and strength of dust bearing winds, the size of the population at the site, whether there were existing complaints about dust, existing particulate matter levels, potential for future mine development in the area and the significance of the site to the Network as a whole. The main points were:

- Warkworth shows elevated particulate matter levels and complaints, but there are few privately owned residences.
- Denman has a substantial population but it is unlikely to be impacted by mine dust because of its location relative to current mining. Prevailing winds tend not to blow dust from mining areas towards Denman. There is potential for future mining to impact this site if approved, but current monitoring and complaints indicate that there is negligible impact at present.
- Broke has a moderate population but was unlikely to be impacted by mine dust because of its location relative to current mining area. Existing monitoring indicates that there is little impact at present, although a moderate number of complaints about dust are received from the Broke area.
- There is potential for mine dust to impact on Wybong because of the prevailing wind direction, although existing particulate matter levels and complaint levels are low. Wybong has a moderate population. A monitor in this location could be useful for indicating the dust leaving the mining areas to the southeast.
- The network design around Muswellbrook also needed to be reconsidered because DECCW was unable to locate a suitable monitoring site to the southeast of Muswellbrook.

Following discussion of the relative merits of each site, the Committee advised that it considered that the Warkworth monitor is necessary.

The Committee advised that it considered that two monitors in Muswellbrook would be sufficient, allowing one monitor to be located at Wybong instead. The Committee advised that the second Muswellbrook monitor should be located to the northeast of Muswellbrook.

The Committee advised DECCW that the rationale for not locating a monitoring site at Denman would need to be clearly recorded in the minutes of the meeting and articulated to the community.

The Committee recommended that future planning and approval processes for proposed new mines take into account the potential need for additions to the network to ensure it continues to meet its objectives. This is particularly important in the Denman area.

6. Web Development Project.

DECCW presented a new map-based webpage that is being developed with icons to show wind direction. Hourly data will be available by graph or table for each site. A consultant has been engaged to co-ordinate focus groups to test the new web page. One focus group will be formed from members of the general community and the other would comprise members of the Advisory Committee.

When asked how issues with accessing data from the existing pages of the website could be addressed, DECCW advised that these could also be raised during the Focus Group sessions.

Cathy Cole, Craig Dalton, Lyn McBain, Kenneth McDonald, John Neely, Carol Russell, Wendy Wales and John Watson expressed interest in being involved in the Focus Group.

ACTION 1: DECCW to facilitate the formation of two focus groups, one based on the interested members of the committee and the other selected more broadly.

7. Community Consultation Plan.

DECCW reported that the Community Consultation Plan had been updated following Meeting 2. Key actions include a media release following each meeting, publication of the minutes of each meeting on the DECCW website, DECCW attendance at public meetings, a 6-monthly update commencing mid-2011, and the website focus groups.

ACTION 2: DECCW to incorporate information on network performance into the 6 monthly update.

8. System Performance.

DECCW reported that as a result of problems with the meteorological monitoring equipment and a sampling pump failure on the Muswellbrook TEOM, overall data was available for 95 % of the time. This is consistent with DECCW's goal.

Delays in the publication of data on the website had been caused by computer software that prevents automatic publication of data if PM_{2.5} levels are greater than PM₁₀. Recent high humidity levels appear to impact the PM_{2.5} monitor when particulate matter levels are low. These results need to be manually checked before publication on the website.

DECCW advised that it is not possible to differentiate the number of hits on the Upper Hunter section of the air quality section of DECCW's website. There was a spike in air quality website hits following the Upper Hunter launch in December 2010.

About 60 subscriptions to DECCW's SMS alert system have been received so far.

ACTION 3: DECCW to investigate ways to differentiate hits on the Upper Hunter Air Quality section of DECCW's website.

9. Site Assessment Report.

DECCW presented an update on site assessments on the proposed sites:

- Despite investigations, a site around Jerrys Plains had yet to be identified. Concerns had been expressed about the visual impact of the monitoring stations.
- A suitable site at Mount Thorley had been identified. It is about 1.5 kilometres from the site recommended by Nigel Holmes in a pastoral area on the Hedley property.
- Negotiations were continuing regarding a site on Haggarty's Lane at Singleton South.
- An area of Crown Land near the cemetery at Warkworth may provide a suitable site.

ACTION 4: DECCW to provide the committee with an updated folio of sites.

The Committee then visited potential sites at Singleton South, Mount Thorley and Warkworth.

It was suggested that further investigations be carried out regarding the suitability of land near the Warkworth community hall.

The Committee endorsed the proposed Mount Thorley monitoring site.

ACTION 5: DECCW to provide a further detailed report on the Singleton South and Warkworth sites.

10. General Business

Nil.

Next meeting date:

24 March 2011 in Muswellbrook.

Prepared by: Mitchell Bennett (DECCW).

Reviewed by: Cathy Cole (Chair)

Minutes adopted: 24 March 2011