



## MEETING MINUTES

**Date:** 17 November 2011

**Time:** 10:00am – 1:30pm

**File:** FIL08/6990-09

**Meeting Location:** Singleton.

### **Meeting 6 of the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network (UHAQMN) – Advisory Committee**

**In attendance:** Cathy Cole (Chairperson), Martin Addinall, Wayne Bedggood, Craig Dalton, Craig Flemming, Rory Gordon, Lyn McBain, Kenneth McDonald, Carol Russell, Wendy Wales, John Watson.

Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH): Mitchell Bennett, Alan Betts, Grahame Clarke, Chris Eiser.

**Apologies:** Rory Gordon, John Neely (Martin Addinall replacing), Patrice Newell.

#### **Agenda Item:**

##### **1. Acknowledgement of Country**

##### **2. Apologies (see above)**

##### **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Following some discussion about references to individual organisations in the minutes, the Advisory Committee minutes from the meeting held on 30 June 2011, were adopted.

##### **4. Actions Arising from Previous Meeting**

There were no actions arising from the previous meeting.

##### **5. Progress Report**

OEH advised that seven monitoring stations were running by August 2011. These were at Singleton, Muswellbrook, Camberwell, Singleton north-west, Bulga, Mount Thorley and Maison Dieu. It is anticipated that five more will be operating by late November 2011. Hours of construction of the Jerry's Plains monitor are restricted to minimise impacts on horse breeding. The next four sites at Warkworth, Muswellbrook north-west, Aberdeen and Singleton south-west are undergoing calibration. Construction should start soon at

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Wybong and near Merriwa. Work is on-track to have the network built by the end of December 2011. The design and installation of a transformer to supply power at Merriwa may delay its finalisation.

The inclusion of an industry owned monitor at Broke was discussed. OEH advised that at this stage, its focus is on completing the network as currently agreed. It was agreed that the process for considering whether the network should be expanded should be discussed at a later meeting.

## **6. System Performance**

Commissioning has caused a few problems with the operation of the monitoring equipment, but overall, the equipment has been operational for 95 percent of the time. Outages included a power supply failure at Muswellbrook. Meteorological monitoring gear is now operating at close to 100 percent reliability.

Particulate matter less than 10 micrometres (PM<sub>10</sub>) levels have been greater than 50 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m<sup>3</sup>) on occasions at most sites. Levels above 50µg/m<sup>3</sup> were recorded at most sites on 21 September 2011. Muswellbrook PM<sub>10</sub> levels have remained below 50µg/m<sup>3</sup> at all times.

Interest in the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network webpage peaked soon after it was launched and has stabilised since then. Subscription numbers have grown.

## **7. Draft Interim Performance Report**

A draft interim performance report for the period December 2010 to August 2011 was presented to the committee. Drafting of this report has been challenging because the network comprises a mixture of monitoring sites that fulfil various purposes. Some sites represent air quality in larger population centres, other represent air quality in smaller communities, while others are diagnostic sites. Consequently, data from each site cannot necessarily be analysed and interpreted in the same way.

The committee supported the general format of the draft report but provided a large number of comments on the detail of the draft report.

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## **8. Draft Regulation**

OEH explained that the Deeds of Agreement currently covering network operation will cease in 2012. OEH proposed development of a Regulation to formalise ongoing network funding, reporting and operation, and to establish a cost benchmarking process. OEH advised that existing legislation enables formalisation of advisory committees.

A committee member suggested that network funding may need to be broadened to include non-industry sources of particles to ensure funding continues beyond the cessation of coal mining in the Upper Hunter.

The committee discussed the need for the Regulation to include a mechanism for ongoing review of the adequacy of the network. OEH recommended that this issue be discussed separately at a later meeting.

In response to a question about the scope of the Regulation, OEH advised that it was intended to relate to the Singleton, Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter local government areas.

The committee endorsed the development of a Regulation to formalise the funding, reporting and operation of the network. The committee also endorsed the proposed formal establishment of the advisory committee under existing legislation.

## **9. Media Clippings**

OEH distributed recent media articles related to the network.

## **10. General Business**

In response to questions about elevated particle readings at night, OEH encouraged committee members to report any poorly managed mining activity to the OEH Environment Line. OEH clarified that it does not investigate every elevated particulate matter reading. Instead, it uses trends and patterns in the network data to direct regulatory effort.

A committee member expressed a view that mined areas needs to be rehabilitated prior to new areas being cleared.

OEH advised that it is collaborating with NSW Health in a 12 month study to characterise PM<sub>2.5</sub> in the Upper Hunter.

### **Next meeting date:**

17 May 2012.

**Prepared by:** Mitchell Bennett (OEH)

**Reviewed by:** Cathy Cole (Chair)

**Minutes adopted:** 17 May 2012