

---

## UPPER HUNTER AIR QUALITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (UHAQAC)

### MEETING MINUTES – Meeting 27

Date: 29 March 2018

Time: 10:00am – 12:30pm

File: EF13/5718, DOC18/381453

**Meeting Location:** Singleton Library

**In attendance:** John Tate (Chair), Dr Craig Dalton, Thomas Green, John Watson, Matthew Parkinson, Mark Scandrett, Cr Danny Thompson, Cr Wayne Bedggood, Leah Cook, John Krey, Geoffrey Sharrock

Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH): Matt Riley

Environment Protection Authority (EPA): Mitchell Bennett, James Thomson, Michael Howat.

**Apologies:** Dr Catherine Chicken, Diane Gee, Andrew Speechly, Ben Harrison

### Acknowledgement of Country

### Agenda Item:

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The chair welcomed new members to the committee and noted:

- the importance of punctuality,
- that the committee's role is to advise the EPA and the Minister, and
- that members are free to express their personal views to the media, but only the Chair is authorised to speak on behalf of the committee.

#### 2. Apologies

See above.

#### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting, No. 25 of 27 July and Actions Arising

The Committee agreed to adopt previous meeting minutes as a true and accurate record.

The EPA provided the following advice on actions from the previous meeting:

- the chair sent a letter to Leanne Graham on behalf of the committee thanking her for her contribution,
- the EPA is considering whether there are more effective methods of communication instead of media releases after each meeting, and
- advice on complaints about a blast on 6 October 2017 will be provided to the next meeting.

#### 4. Community Feedback

Mr Tate invited committee members to provide feedback from their contact networks.

Mr Krey suggested that the community needs better information in response to the many air quality alerts that have been issued recently. Mr Bennett advised that the EPA's strategy for further dust reduction would be discussed under agenda item 7.

Cr Thompson noted community support for AGL's proposal to close the Liddell power station. Mr Parkinson advised that there would be a transition period before the power station is closed and that AGL would continue to consult the community. The chair suggested that a briefing on Liddell be provided to a future meeting.

Mr Watson noted that he believed that Glencore had done a good job controlling dust from its mines during challenging weather conditions over the past six to nine months. The EPA's Dust Stop program has been effective in reducing emissions during this time.

#### **5. Update on Five Year Review of Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network**

Mr Riley advised that the report has been published. He acknowledged the omission of a statement of the potential conflict of interest of the consultant involved in its preparation.

#### **Action item 1: OEHL to include an addendum to the five year review of the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network, noting the potential conflict of interest of the consultant**

Mr Riley noted that the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network is being used as a model for a similar network being established in the Namoi Valley.

#### **6. Air Quality Report Seasonal Analysis Spring 2017**

Mr Riley presented the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network Spring 2017 seasonal analysis. The daily average PM<sub>10</sub> benchmark was exceeded at various locations on 16 days during the reporting period due to the warm dry conditions. It was noted that during warm dry conditions, background particle levels are higher, and dust controls at mine sites may be less effective. Views of the webpage showing Upper Hunter air quality usually spike at times of elevated particulate matter levels.

#### **Action item 2: OEHL to distribute information on Upper Hunter air quality webpage views to the committee.**

The committee asked that rolling averages be included in future seasonal reports. The committee discussed the merits of a more comprehensive report on seasonal air quality, versus a shorter report summarizing the key points.

#### **Action item 3: OEHL to include rolling averages in future seasonal reports.**

#### **Action item 4: OEHL to provide both a one-page fact sheet or infographic, that summarise seasonal air quality, for review at the next meeting.**

The committee discussed how air quality during recent dry periods compared with similar earlier periods.

#### **Action item 5: OEHL to compare recent particulate matter levels with similar periods and report to the committee.**

Mr Riley noted that the OEHL was working towards replacement of aging gaseous monitoring instruments at Singleton and Muswellbrook.

#### **7. EPA Update on Upper Hunter Air Quality Management**

Mr Bennett reported on a dust risk forecasting trial conducted by the EPA and OEHL during Spring 2017 in the Upper Hunter Valley.

Air quality in the Upper Hunter is generally good. So the EPA's strategy to improve air quality is to forecast days of high dust risk when extra dust control measures need to be implemented.

The trial defined high dust risk as a 24 hour average increment of PM<sub>10</sub> between Merriwa and Singleton of 25µg/m<sup>3</sup> or more. Mines also recorded PM<sub>10</sub> upwind and downwind of each mine site during the trial, and the mass of material moved at each mine on each day. This was a measure of the level of activity at each site.

The OEH ran two dust risk forecast models during the trial period.

Each day was categorised as a hit, a miss or a false alarm. Both models accurately predicted one high risk day. Both models generated four false alarms. Both models generated three misses. Preventative action by mines may explain two false alarms. Inaccurate weather forecasts may explain one other false alarm. Three other false alarms require further investigation. Weather forecast inaccuracy may explain three misses.

In response to the presentation, the committee acknowledged the work done and the progress made. On most days the forecast was correct. While reducing spikes is particulate matter is important, reducing average levels is also needed. The importance of a consistent approach by mines to reducing dust emissions was emphasised. The committee supported further investigation of individual mine emissions.

## **8. General Business**

The chair encouraged the EPA to continue to inform the media about the issues discussed at committee meetings and information on air quality in the Upper Hunter.

**Action item 6: EPA to revise its community engagement plan for Upper Hunter Air Quality issues.**

Meeting closed at 12.30 pm.

**Next meeting date:** 24 May 2018.