



Environment Protection Authority – UHAQAC Minutes

Today's Meeting Date:	Thursday 25 July 2019 (No 33)	Next meeting date:	Thursday 24 October 2019 (No 34)
Meeting location:	Singleton	Last Meeting Date:	Thursday 23 May 2019 (No 32)
Meeting opened at:	10:00am	Meeting closed at:	12:30pm
Convenor	Mitchell Bennett	Minute Taker	Bianca Morton
Present:	<p>John Tate – Chair Dr Craig Dalton – Hunter New England Health Cr Danny Thompson – Singleton Shire Council Geoff Sharrock – Community Representative John Watson – Coal Mining Industry Representative Alex Newton - Coal Mining Industry Representative John Krey – Community Representative Leah Cook – Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) Loredana Warren – Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) Jenny Lange - EPA Mitchell Bennett – EPA Lindsay Fulloon – EPA Bianca Morton – EPA Adam Gilligan - EPA</p>		
Apologies:	<p>Mayor Wayne Bedggood – Upper Hunter Shire Dr Catherine Chicken – Commerce/Industry Representative Carolyn Obrien - Muswellbrook Shire Council Matthew Parkinson – Power Generation Industry Representative Di Gee – Community representative</p>		

Adoption of minutes and review of actions arising				
No	Agenda Item	Action	Person Responsible	Completion Date
1.1	Acknowledgment of Country	The Chair acknowledged the traditional owners of the Country on which the meeting was held.	Chair	25 July 2019
1.2	Adoption of previous minutes of meeting	The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 23 May 2019 (No 32) were adopted with one change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologies from Geoff Sharrock were added. 	Committee	25 July 2019
Agenda items				
	Agenda Item	Notes	Action/Decision	Status
2.1	Update on NEPM Consultation	<p>Cr Thompson provided an overview of the consultation session for the review of the ambient air quality National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) ambient air quality standards for NO₂, SO₂ and Ozone. He noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the process which was undertaken, including the methodologies, impact statement and cost-benefit analysis (CBA); that some members of the community considered that the CBA should have been a secondary consideration, not a major component; and there was good representation at the event. <p>Cr Thompson suggested that NSW should aim to have the best standards that are used worldwide. He agreed with most recommendations of the review, however he suggested the following amendments regarding SO₂:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation 4 to “retain 1hr standard, and reduce from 200 ppb to 100ppb” should be stricter, in line with Canada who currently have a limit of 75 ppb. Recommendation 7 that “No further tightening of 24 hr standard below 20 ppb in the future” should be removed, as we should always continue to review standards. <p>Dr Dalton advised that SO₂ can be tested on people directly in a chamber, which is probably why the NEPM review can have some confidence in recommending no further tightening of standards. They test this pollutant on people with asthma, as well as people with asthma who are exercising, which is considered worst case scenario.</p> <p>Cr Thompson also made two additional recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> jurisdictions should monitor and model all “at risk” communities in rural and regional areas; and where practicable, abatement measures should be applied in rural and regional areas. 	<p>Action 1: Circulate the proposed submission points to the Committee, as well as provide the details of how to make a submission.</p> <p>Action 2: Circulate the presentation that was provided at the NEPM consultation session.</p> <p>Action 3: The EPA to pass on the meeting minutes to the NSW EPA team involved in the NEPM review to advise it on the Committee’s view.</p>	

		<p>Mr Gilligan noted that the review did not consider the Hunter Valley because of its relatively low population. Instead the focus of the review was on Sydney and Melbourne.</p> <p>Cr Thompson calculated that approximately 25% of SO₂ in NSW is generated in the Hunter Region from power generation, which includes Eraring and Vales Point. Tomago Aluminium is also a contributor.</p> <p>Mr Bennett noted, and Ms Warren confirmed that the air quality newsletters prepared by DPIE already compare Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network results to the National Standards.</p> <p>The Committee discussed providing a joint submission to this review. It was decided that submitting individually was appropriate.</p> <p>Mr Bennett highlighted that the EPA would provide the meeting minutes to the NSW EPA team involved in the review, to advise it on the Committee's view.</p> <p>Cr Thompson noted that Singleton Council would also be making a submission.</p> <p>Action 1: Circulate the proposed submission points to the Committee, as well as provide the details of how to make a submission.</p> <p>Action 2: Circulate the presentation that was provided at the NEPM consultation session.</p> <p>Action 3: The EPA to pass on the meeting minutes to the NSW EPA team involved in the NEPM review to advise it on the Committee's view.</p>		
2.2	Update on planning facilitation workshop recommendations	<p>Mr Gilligan responded to the recommendations made by the Committee at its planning forum, and noted actions that have been proposed, or completed to date. See presentation for more details.</p> <p>All 23 recommendations were grouped into seven main categories:</p> <p>Education and Engagement</p> <p>One recommendation was for the Committee to connect with similar committees.</p> <p>Mr Fulloon noted that the Namoi Region Air Quality Advisory Committee is interested in connecting. The EPA will set up an out of session meeting, potentially somewhere between Namoi and the</p>	Action 4: EPA to explore UHAQAC and NCCCE having a joint meeting	

		<p>Hunter. Mr Gilligan noted that this meeting could be optional for industry representatives, as the benefit was seen more for the community representatives.</p> <p>The communications strategy was discussed, and Mr Gilligan highlighted the importance of ensuring that whatever approach is taken, it should be targeted to the audience, and use the appropriate tools to get the message out. He also identified three useful questions to ask when undertaking communication: 1) What is the message? 2) Who is the audience? and 3) What is the best channel to communicate the message to the audience?</p> <p>Advocating for change Mr Gilligan noted that some of these recommendations are outside the Terms of Reference of the Committee, such as advocating for transition from fossil fuels, and input into development assessment processes.</p> <p>Mr Krey disputed this, suggesting that it was within the committee’s terms of reference to advise the EPA against supporting proposed developments that would have an adverse impact on regional air quality.</p> <p>Cr Thompson noted that the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue provides a forum to raise these issues. He also highlighted that the Joint Hunter Organisation of Councils have recently endorsed a transition academy focussing on ways to transition the Hunter away from coal mining into the future, and that the Mining Dialogue is part of that transition.</p> <p>Mr Gilligan noted that the EPA welcomes the committee’s advice but noted that it must be considered in the context of broader government policy. He also noted that individuals could provide their views on particular developments to the Department of Planning.</p> <p>Source Apportionment Mr Gilligan highlighted that the EPA will be exploring ways with DPIE of assessing PM₁₀, sources, rather than doing another particle characterisation study.</p> <p>The committee discussed the need for understanding where the dust is coming from. It was acknowledged by Mr Krey that there are challenges when mines are next to each other, and it is difficult to ascertain where the dust pollution is coming from. It is important to identify who is responsible, otherwise enforcement can be difficult.</p>		
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2.3	DPIE presentation on Autumn 19 Air Quality Report	<p>Ms Warren provided the results of the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network during Autumn 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper Hunter had average rainfall overall, with March wet and April very dry. • NO₂ and SO₂: no days above the benchmarks. • PM_{2.5}: no days above the benchmark. • PM₁₀: 13 days above the benchmark. All sites were over the benchmark, ranging from two days at Aberdeen to up to ten days at Mt Thorley. 	Action 5: EPA to report back to Committee on 95% benchmark for air quality monitors.	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is less than Autumn 2018 but more than earlier Autumns. • The most extensive events were exceptional events due to long range dust on 6 March and 31 March. <p>See report for more information.</p> <p>Mr Watson noted the DPIE performance benchmark of 95% and asked whether a similar benchmark should be used when reporting compliance with monitoring required under Environment Protection Licences. The EPA will investigate this issue and report back to the Committee.</p> <p>Action 5: EPA to report back to Committee on 95% benchmark for industry air quality monitors.</p>		
2.4	<p>EPA update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on Dust Patrol • Presentation on complaint data 	<p>Mr Bennett updated the committee on Operation Dust Patrol. He highlighted that Operation Dust Patrol involved inspections of Upper Hunter coal mines on days predicted to be high dust risk during September 2018 – February 2019.</p> <p>Overall, compared with similar periods, there were fewer days when the increase in PM₁₀ between Merriwa and Singleton was more than 25ug/m³.</p> <p>See presentation for more details.</p> <p>Mr Krey highlighted that air quality trends are slowly increasing.</p> <p>Ms Warren and Dr Dalton discussed that this is being driven primarily by what is happening in North West and North East NSW. There have been more dust storms and drier conditions.</p> <p>Dr Dalton noted that this is becoming more of a long-term climate change issue.</p> <p>Ms Warren noted that the UHAQMN had only been in place for eight years and that longer periods of data are needed to identify genuine trends.</p> <p>Mr Bennett provided a presentation on dust complaints, with the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mines are now the EPA's biggest source of dust complaints. • complaints about Upper Hunter mine dust are increasing. • Muswellbrook is becoming a focus, compared with Singleton. • more Upper Hunter residents are reporting mine dust than previously. • complaints increase in dry weather, and in Spring. 		

		<p>See presentation for more details.</p> <p>Ms Warren noted that it would be interesting to see the impacts of complaints when you remove the dust storm days.</p> <p>Mr Krey noted that residents will complain when they see dust coming from the mine, which may not reach the closest monitor at the same time/day. This needs to be considered when looking at complaint data.</p>		
2.5	General Business	<p>Mr Newton asked the group to assist in facilitating access to DPIE air quality data. Real time data is needed for a project to improve predictions of dust and blast impacts. He noted that DPIE had advised him that it is undertaking a project to have this type of information available to everyone, but this will take a few years to complete. He requested that this is investigated and expedited if possible. It was noted that there may be financial and technical issues with this.</p> <p>It was agreed that Mr Newton would contact the EPA to further discuss.</p> <p>Ms Morton reminded the Committee that the next meeting is Thursday 24 October 2019.</p> <p>Mr Tate closed the meeting at 12:30pm.</p>		