



Minutes

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| Meeting: | Upper Hunter Air Quality Advisory Committee (No 36) | Date: | Tuesday 23 February 2021 |
| Location: | The Auditorium Singleton Golf Club 51 Boundary Street, Singleton | Time: | 10.00am - 12.30pm |
| Last Meeting Date: | Thursday 19 November 2020 | Next Meeting Date: | Tuesday 25 May 2021 |
| Present: | John Turner – Chairperson Danny Thompson – Singleton Shire Council representative John Krey – community representative Michael White – community representative Bob Vickers – community representative Jan Davis – environmental representative Catherine Chicken – industry representative Ned Stephenson – coal industry representative Gary Mulhearn – coal industry representative Rob Gothard – power industry representative Adam Gilligan – EPA Cathy Ajaka – EPA Megan Whelan - EPA Leanne Graham – DPIE | | |
| Apologies: | Maurice Collison – Upper Hunter Shire Council representative Tracy Ward – Muswellbrook Shire Council representative Wendy Wales – environmental representative Summer Steward – power industry representative Karen Gallagher – EPA | | |

Agenda items:

1. Introduction

1.1. Welcome, Acknowledgment of Country and COVID-19 Procedures

The Chair opened the meeting at 10.05am and acknowledged the Wanaruah people as the traditional owners of the land. Mrs Ajaka ran through COVID-19 procedures and housekeeping.

1.2. Present, apologies and declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed the Upper Hunter Air Quality Advisory Committee (the Committee) and noted the apologies. There were no declarations of interest other than noted previously.

2. Previous Minutes and Outstanding Actions

2.1. Review previous minutes

The previous minutes were adopted by the members present at this meeting.

2.2. Outstanding actions

| Action Item No | Action | Person Responsible | Status |
|----------------|--|--------------------|--|
| 1 | Meeting 35, Action 2: The EPA to provide an update of mine rehabilitation progress in the Upper Hunter | Adam Gilligan | <p>The EPA is currently considering the next steps for this project. We will provide stakeholders with an update when more information is available.</p> <p>The NSW Resources Regulator are in the final stages of finalising a new regulation which will mandate the submission of both current and proposed rehabilitation data into a Mine Rehabilitation Portal. There will be a 12-month transition for companies to comply. As such, rehabilitation data will become readily available following the 12-month transition period.</p> |
| 2 | Circulate presentation with videos from Operation Bust the Dust | Ms Bradley | Ms Bradley has tried on several occasions to circulate the presentation -however file size too large. The file will be uploaded onto the UHAQAC Website. |
| 3 | Consider options for liaising with the Science Teachers Association | Mrs Ajaka | The EPA are currently investigating existing relationships with providers within this space. Further update will be provided in the coming weeks. |

3. Strategic Plan 2020-2022

3.1. Looking forward: goal setting for the future term

No additional agenda items were raised by the Committee prior to the meeting. The Chair asked each member to raise any matters for the Committee to consider for the new term. The following themes were discussed:

Mr Turner touched on the previous points that were raised at last meeting as well as the action items they were:

- Air Quality Management - Mr Gilligan will circulate an out of session update on the Particle Characterisation Study.
- Rehabilitation update with resource regulator - Mr Gilligan will also provide an out of session update to provide further clarity on this topic.
- Characterisation Study discussion has been had with our colleagues in the Environment, Energy and Science Group (EES) and there is an ongoing discussion in place to see if they will revisit the study. More monitoring is underway in better locations, with improved equipment to allow better characterisation studies. There is also ongoing commitment to assess the need for future studies. Matt Riley has also committed to come along to one of these sessions throughout the year.

Ms Chicken flagged up wind and down wind monitoring of mines - when did the study happen and where did it get to? The EPA have been having individual conversations with various mines to change outcomes. Mr Stephenson provided further clarity around the monitors Glencore have specifically within their sites which are site specific. They use it for operational management, not for strict compliance but for real time change (monitoring operations/stopping ops etc). Notifications are sent to Mine workers regarding increase in levels, depending on levels reported, workers could be asked to cease operations. Mr Mulhearn advised each coal mine has a different setup. Yancoal have monitors on their boundary but also utilise the broader network monitors. Mr Thompson raised that each operation has their own community consultant and usually have them as part of their monitoring.

Mr Krey enquired if the EPA investigates every exceedance. Ms Graham advised with the Air Quality Monitoring network across the state that we do look at each exceedance on a case by case basis. We look at all factors including history and then assess if it is an exceptional or non-exceptional event. An exceptional event will be caused by a local source and then we need to investigate. If it is caused by dust or bushfires, then it will be recorded as a non-exceptional event. The information is conveyed to the EPA and a report is prepared. Most local

sources are exceptional events. PM2.5 are usually from a fire. If cause is from a local source, then the EPA will investigate.

Mr Krey mentioned that each mine will blame each other depending on the wind direction. Ms Graham reminded wind direction information is provided in the Quarterly Newsletters and presented to the UHAQAC committee. The exceedance of a monitoring site is a breach and the EPA need to track down the cause, we need to see if has contributed in a breach of the license.

Mr Krey has concerns from a Community perspective that they don't see reports and only hear the alerts. Mr Turner raised this might be something that we discuss as a committee to provide information on how to inform members of the community.

Mr White raised part of this was discussed with the Upper Hunter Particle Characterisation Study. He has concerns around the Muswellbrook readings advising they are consistently over PM2.5. DPIE routinely relies on the study undertaken 9 years ago and this is proving continued levels of exceedance. The community is concerned that the department is consistently advising that PM2.5 is mainly woodsmoke. There is also a significant increase in activity with Mine expansion and is concerned this is having greater effect on the air quality in the region. Mr Gilligan to provide further information out of session.

Is there a date on when a new study will be undertaken?

EPA hope to better inform the community in advance with better forecast projections of air quality. Mr Gilligan noted the useful outcomes and learnings from the UH Particle Characterisation Study and discussed the option of putting resources towards PRPs and the like to achieve better air quality outcomes rather than towards a new study. ANSTO filters are part of a number of sites. Ms Graham will investigate and revert to committee.

NEXT MEETING: How do we want to formalise a report

Ms Graham also advised that a review of the network occurs every five years. The next review will occur in 2023. Maybe we should consider holding forums that could go to the EPA and Air Science team to review network from a technical aspect. Objective of the network is to protect communities. Mr Gilligan indicated that he is more than happy for the committee to come to government to raise these issues.

4. Network feedback – standing item

4.1. Reducing diesel emissions from NSW Coal Mines – How successful has this Pollution Reduction Program been?

Before touching on this topic, Mr White congratulated the EPA on a really good report.

He flagged a senate enquiry was done back in 2013 and one of the recommendations was to introduce the monitoring of Off-road diesel emissions.

From the time the report was released, to-date the following changes have been implemented:

- Page 32 - In terms of Primary PM2.5 emissions, Mr Whites outtake on the report is that Industry is a major contributor to this report.
- Page 118 – 936,440KL/year of diesel consumed in NSW. Over 700,000kl of diesel is being burnt in the Hunter Region alone.
- Page 172 – USA/Canada/Russia have at least had off road standards since the 1990s. This is a fabulous opportunity to translate these solutions for the industry to reduce PM2.5 emissions.
- Page 194 – Forecast Coal Mine Production – a recommendation is put forward from the report for existing EPA licensed mines

Mr Stephenson referenced other operations since the study was undertaken have made a commitment for all new trucks to abide by tier 4 regulations.

Ms Davis asked was there information in the study for Rail, which is a significant contributor as well. Mr Gilligan confirmed the EPA are working with the Rail licensees on this topic.

Mr White stated that diesel engines are changed every 20000 hours.

Dr Vickers flagged that 700,000kl of diesel being burnt in the region is a significant amount of emissions.

Mr Gilligan would like to take the following Question on Notice and something we could consider at upcoming meetings: The committee would like to see if this is a pollution reduction exercise - compliance based requirements?

| Action Item No | Action | Person Responsible |
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| 4 | Distribute copy of NSW Coal Mining Benchmarking Study – Best Practice Measures for reducing Non-Road Diesel Exhaust Emission. | Mrs Ajaka |

4.2. Information sharing and feedback from broader networks

This agenda item is an opportunity for the Committee to hear from community and industry representatives on any issues from their broader networks. Community representatives have previously waited for quarterly meetings to share complaints about the mines, but these issues should be raised directly with the mine and the EPA at the time the issues occur. Where there is a more systemic problem, the issue can be brought to the Committee.

No further issues were raised by members for discussion.

5. EPA Update – standing item

5.1. Regulatory Operations Metropolitan North

Mr Gilligan reflected on last meeting advising we discussed the Bust the Dust indicating we haven't put extra resources into the program due to the better weather considerations experienced over the last six months.

He also advised the EPA negotiated enforceable undertakings for the AGL site and total value was over \$1m where half goes to works on site to prevent a recurrence of ash in pipelines and the other half essentially goes towards community and environmental programs.

Koppers were recently fined for a breach in failing to operate a plant in a proper and efficient manner causing air pollution.

6. Air Quality Monitoring Network Seasonal Newsletter – standing item

6.1. Winter and Spring 2020 Newsletter

The committee were provided with copies of the Draft Winter & Spring 2020 Newsletters.

Ms Graham represented DPIE and informed the committee of Loredana Warren's apologies. Ms Graham provided an overview of the Winter and Spring reporting and looked back on the conditions for the past 12 months where levels have improved from the previous drought conditions. She advised changes to reporting in 2020 in response to community feedback from the 2019/2020 bushfires and the changes implemented now provide more accuracy around how air quality is changing in the short term.

The presentation was well received, and members were given the opportunity for Q&A.

Ms Davis asked if there was less blasting this year versus previous year? Mr Stephenson advised that Seasonal changes in Rainfall/bushfires changes regulatory of blasting. In the last 12 months frequency of blasting hasn't changed, but timing has. If there is a clear safety issue, then blasts will be delayed.

Dr Vickers – is there any reasons why we report parts per 100mn - can we use what is used in scientific literature? Ms Graham advised when the standards were being set by NSW, they chose a metric that the community could understand. Reason is to avoid using large numbers.

Ms Graham reminded members our role as a department is to report to the community in a meaningful way. The Environment line is a channel that feedback can be provided or this committee. Overall, many channels to use to filter feedback.

Mr Krey raised why was the number increased from 50 to 80/100 when change from 24 hours to 1 hour were implemented? Ms Graham advised 1-hour average of 80/100 is more in exceedance to the 50 per 24 hours. The debate has been ongoing and each state in Australia uses a different threshold and at present there is no national standard. They are trying to sustain a national approach.

The alert system is very basic, and the hourly database is currently being upgraded and we hope that future monitoring will be more accurate.

| Action Item No | Action | Person Responsible |
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| 5 | Publish Winter and Spring Newsletters | Loredana Warren |
| 6 | Distribute Air Quality Presentation to members | Cathy Ajaka |

7. General Business

7.1. Other

Mr White raised that he would like the minutes of the meeting distributed closer to the date of when the meeting was held. All members were in favour of this.

Cr Thompson reiterated that he would like to see representatives from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and NSW Health attend these meetings. Mr Gilligan flagged that an invitation will be extended to these 2 departments as well as the NSW Resources Regulator. He also asked members to raise any questions for these 3 departments when the request for calling for agenda items is circulated to ensure when they attend meetings its meaningful.

Cr Thompson asked would the UHAQAC website link directly to the new Department of Planning website which is about to launch which would be useful for information sharing.

The Coal Ash dam report was raised and is scheduled to be released at the end of March. It was suggested that this can be discussed at the next committee meeting.

Ms Davis thanked the committee for the opportunity to represent and the relevance in coming along when coal pits are coming to end of life. The rehabilitation issues and relevance of community involvement.

Meeting concluded at 11.54am.

7.2. Next meeting date

The next meeting date has been scheduled for Tuesday 25 May 2021.

| Action Item No | Action | Person Responsible |
|----------------|---|--------------------|
| 7 | Extend invite to Resource Regulator, NSW Health and DPIE to all future meetings as non-members of the Committee | Mrs Ajaka |