



Minutes

Meeting:	Newcastle Community Consultative Committee on the Environment (No 59)	Date:	Monday 17 May 2021
Location:	EPA Office 117 Bull Street Newcastle West 2302	Time:	5.30pm – 8.00pm
Last Meeting	Monday 8 February 2021 (out of session)		Monday 16 August 2021
Present:	John Tate – Chairperson Keith Craig – Community representative Rick Banyard – Community representative Trudie Larnach – Industry representative Nathan Robinson – Industry representative Leah Cook – Industry representative Scott Thompson – DPIE Adam Gilligan – EPA Megan Whelan – EPA Gina Bradley – EPA		
Apologies:	TBC – Council representative Steven Crick – Environmental representative Christopher Tola – Community representative		

Agenda items:

1. Introduction

1.1. Acknowledgment of Country

The Chair acknowledged the Awabakal and Worimi people as the traditional owners of the land and paid respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

1.2. Present and apologies

The Chair welcomed the committee and noted the apologies.

2. Previous Minutes and Outstanding Actions

2.1. Review previous minutes

The minutes from the previous quarterly meeting and the out of session meeting were adopted with no changes.

2.2. Outstanding actions

Action Item No	Action	Person Responsible	Status
Meeting No. 58: 1	EPA to organise a presentation from HCCDC in relation to long term remediation on Kooragang Island	Adam Gilligan	Ongoing – carry over to the next meeting
Meeting No. 58: 2	Publish a media release detailing the reestablishment of the committee	Gina Bradley / Cathy Ajaka	Ongoing
Meeting No. 58: 3	Circulate EPA Stakeholder Survey results once available	Gina Bradley	Ongoing – a summary report on the survey and the EPA's response will be published on the website shortly and included in the next issue of EPA Connect
Meeting No. 58: 9	Provide picture of vertical rotor sails (wind turbines) on ships	Trudie Larnach	Complete – see agenda item 4.1 below
Out of session: 1	Organise for the Ammonium Nitrate presentations that were presented at the recent Newcastle City Council meeting to be presented to the NCCCE over the coming months, possibly in an out of session meeting	Nathan Robinson	Complete – see agenda item 4.3 below
Out of session: 2	EPA to explore in more detail the complaint data presented	Megan Whelan	Recirculate the presentation from the out of session meeting – see agenda item 2.3 below

2.3. Out of session action 2: EPA to explore in more detail the complaint data presented

This action item opened some general discussion about whether EPA complaint data should be explored by the committee in more detail. This type of data was previously made available during committee meetings. It was suggested that it could be helpful to see this data every second or third meeting, broken down to the Newcastle Local Government Area, to help inform priority topics.

Complaints reported directly to industry are also captured in the EPA's complaint data, as it is a requirement of the annual return process. There was some discussion about how accurately complaints are reflected in the data. The community representatives highlighted that not all complaints are reported to the EPA or industry and they are therefore not all reflected in the data. Research has shown that for every reported complaint there could be ten nonreported complaints.

Mr Craig gave the example of an odour complaint having been raised at a recent Stockton Community Group meeting. Members of this group do not always report to the EPA and have instead asked Mr Craig to raise with the EPA at committee meetings. Mr Gilligan reminded the committee that the community should be encouraged to report complaints to the EPA's Environment Line in the first instance. If community members are not familiar with how to report to the EPA, Ms Bradley suggested providing them with printed copies of the [Reporting to the EPA](#) explainer.

In analysing complaint data from Koppers, the EPA has noticed a trend in reduced community complaints and increased self-reporting. It was acknowledged that industry has been more proactive with responding to the community, by providing information through their own channels.

The community representatives raised concerns with timeliness in responding to complaints reported to the EPA. Mr Gilligan reminded the committee that the EPA's Environment Line is available 24/7 and that priority will always be given to reports relating to urgent environmental issues. Mr Banyard would like to see an increase in the use of technology for reporting to the EPA, for example by utilising footage taken on a smartphone. There is an existing app for reporting to the EPA. The Chair closed the issue and acknowledged that overall, there has been a huge improvement in the complaints process. Mr Banyard

was invited to prepare a short briefing paper if he would like to pursue the idea of improving the complaints process.

3. EPA Update

3.1. Regulatory Operations Metropolitan North

The EPA is working with Koppers and their industrial neighbours. There was a spill at their ship loader on 26 March 2021, resulting in a small loss of product. This is still under investigation. Overall, there continues to be improvements on site following the EPA's successful prosecution earlier this year. A thermal imaging camera will be used as a tool to detect gaseous emissions that are not visible to the human eye.

The EPA Board recently visited Newcastle to gain a better understanding of key issues in the area. During their stay they held their meeting in the EPA office and visited Vales Point Power Station, Orica, the Truegain site at Rutherford and Mount Thorley Warkworth mine.

The Chair asked for a short update on the now insolvent Truegain recycling plant. Mr Gilligan gave a brief background on the site and outlined the issue with managing wastewater and risk of contamination into the nearby creek. Remediation and clean-up efforts are significantly impacted by the owner's financial situation. Legal action is underway.

4. Industry Update

4.1. Port Waratah Coal Service (Port Waratah)

Ms Larnach reported the following updates from Port Waratah:

- A 2020 Sustainability Report has recently been published. The report is transparent about complaints data and environmental performance.
- Significant investment has been put towards water management projects. Water management has been a key environmental concern for the local community.
- There has been a 40% reduction in water consumption in the past year. There have been no water pollution incidents at the Carrington terminal in the past 2.5 years.
- Works on the third stormwater storage tank are in commissioning, in accordance with the PRP attached to PWCS's Carrington licence. All the walls have been installed and the rubber lining is being installed.
- There have also been investments to connect a filtration system to the main water supply storage tank to reduce potable water consumption, meaning process water will be reused for operational purposes.
- Port Waratah has been investing significantly in storm water management in the past few years ensuring all water falling on the site is captured on site.
- There is a community group meeting due to take place later this week.

In relation to Meeting No. 58, action item 9: *Provide picture of vertical rotor sails (wind turbines) on ships*, Mr Banyard distributed a media story from 14 May 2021 containing an image of wind rotors and a short summary of how they work. Ms Larnach agreed to distribute her presentation on the evolution of vessels as this includes further information on wind rotors, including the challenges associated with their transportation.

The committee briefly discussed the unloading of the new crane that arrived in the Port on Sunday 16 May 2021. This \$30million upgrade will have significant environmental benefits and improve the system for unloading bulk cargos. Mr Banyard agreed to distribute a document he has with further information in relation to this.

4.2. Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC)

Ms Cook reported the following updates from ARTC:

- The rail industry met with community to better understand noise concerns that have been raised in Singleton Local Government Area. They also met with the EPA in April 2021 to understand

what more could be done to reduce the noise. It provides a good case example of the rail industry working collaboratively.

- Pass-by noise levels are also being considered by the rail industry. This can be challenging as it is not always possible to say with consistency which type of train creates which noise.
- The EPA is working with a consultant to address issues with wheel squeal noises on the Waverton Wollstonecraft line, which contains the tightest bends in the Sydney Rail Network.
- There is a new Provisioning Centre at Rutherford which has been established so that ARTC can carry out services in breakdown situations. The team based at this Provisioning Centre are skilled in infrastructure maintenance and can be airlifted to wherever they are needed.
- Follow up from the new train regulation is ongoing. The licensing provides some clarity, with it now being possible to hold rolling stock operators to account, but further work and negotiations are required to unpack complex issues around the causes of noise.

4.3. Orica

Mr Robinson presented on ammonium nitrate storage and the status of prill tower scrubber at Orica. This has previously been presented to Newcastle City Council and the Orica Community Reference Group. The presentation focussed on the general characteristics of ammonium nitrate and the management and storage of ammonium nitrate at Kooragang Island.

The following points were raised by the community representatives in response to the presentation:

Ammonium nitrate storage

- The 8,000 tonnes of ammonium nitrate taken from the site to mining operations every seven to 10 days has been raised as an issue previously. Mr Craig still wants to see storage moved closer to the mine sites to reduce transportation.
- Low levels of ambient ammonia detected at the Stockton AQMS are due to fugitive emissions from the Orica plant.
- Safework NSW is responsible for the regulation of Orica's Major Hazard Facility licence.

Prill tower scrubber update

- The key benefits from this project are improving air quality and reducing nitrogen load to the river.
- At this stage the technology vendor is providing a particulate performance guarantee of 5mg/Nm³ TSP/PM₁₀/PM_{2.5}. While this is across all particulate fractions, only the finest particulates (i.e. PM_{2.5}) are likely to bypass the candle (Brinks) filters.
- Mr Craig questioned if the >95% removal efficiency relates to TSP or PM_{2.5}. Mr Craig does not believe it is possible to achieve this for both TSP and PM_{2.5} and would like a more detailed explanation.
- The outlet particles will be tested periodically, most likely 6 monthly or annually. Mr Robinson indicated where the sampling port will be located on the graphic presented to the committee. There will also be a dustometer to provide some process control.
- The characteristics of the prill will not change, other than the stack shortening by approximately 38 metres.
- The reference to 'mist-laden gas' on the graphic relates to ammonium nitrate fume/particulate.
- The design flow rate is 500,000 cubic metres per hour.
- The project status is on track with the schedule.
- Consent modification should go out within the next couple of months and is likely to attract media interest.
- The lifespan of the prill is approximately 10-15 years.
- Operating costs (including maintenance and power) are estimated to be approximately \$700,000 per annum.
- The final detailed design will go to an internal investment committee for review.
- In terms of cost competitiveness of ammonium nitrate production, the scrubber is an additional cost, but natural gas prices have a bigger overall economic impact.

Action Item No	Action	Person Responsible
1	Provide additional context to the ">95% removal efficiency relating to TSP/PM10/PM2.5 <5 mg/Nm3" referenced in the presentation	Nathan Robinson

5. Network Update

5.1. Information sharing and feedback from broader networks

Stockton Community Group (SCG)

Mr Craig provided the following updates:

- Stockton beach is the current focus of this group.
- Concerns have been raised around increased canola oil odours with the westerly winds, indicating the Cargil biofilters are in need of topping up or replacing the biofilter media.
- The committee confirmed that the Air Quality Monitoring Network Seasonal Newsletter can be shared on SCG's new website.
- A few new members have joined the SCG. There was a presentation from the East End group at the last SCG meeting which included discussion around their challenges with council.

Correct Planning & Consultation for Mayfield Group (CPC)

Mr Banyard provided the following updates:

- The group is researching other possible sources of ammonium nitrate transported to Hunter Valley mine sites, outside of Orica. Mr Banyard understands there has been in excess of 18,000 tonnes of ammonium nitrate transported through the Port since the last committee meeting. PWCS have previously explained to the committee how they manage their storage, including the rules and regulations that ships are required to follow.
- The group continues to be dissatisfied with the new train regulation. A submission will be sent as a formal complaint to the EPA, ARTC and NSW Farmers sometime later this week. Mr Banyard distributed images of coal and grain trains to the committee. He explained that these images were taken at the Port, not at silos where grain is loaded, raising concerns about any additional grain lost in transit. Some of the grain is growing on the trains. There appears to be no effort in cleaning the trains, with litter often found in wagons which may not be removed before the wagons are reloaded.

6. Air Quality Monitoring Network Seasonal Newsletter

6.1. Summer 2020-2021 Newsletter

Mr Thompson gave a short presentation on the summer 2020-2021 newsletter to the committee. Air quality for this season was generally good, with levels of fine particulate matter all remaining below the national benchmark concentrations and assessment goals. This is largely due to the wet, cooler summer experienced in the Newcastle region. There were 19 days above the PM10 daily benchmark, all occurring at Stockton predominantly due to sea salt under onshore winds. There was an instrument fault following a power outage at Carrington, resulting in some reduced online hourly reporting.

Mr Thompson was asked about a sub-station being built on the north side of the Stockton station. This large facility is in close proximity to the existing station but as it still has a good range of exposure it should not have any impact on current performance.

Mr Thompson confirmed the criteria for air quality are tightening. The newsletters going forward will reflect the guideline once it has been introduced.

7. Focus area

7.1. Current focus area: coal dust management on Kooragang Island

This focus area was one of the key topics identified in the committee survey at the out of session meeting on 8 March 2021. At that meeting, Mr Gilligan asked the committee to consider what they saw as high-level issues and what they want to achieve as a committee in this area.

The committee has previously heard from Port Waratah about dust management processes onsite, how these processes work during strong westerly conditions and how the system is designed with predictive capabilities. Port Waratah have invited community groups onsite to gain a better understanding of these processes. If community representatives are interested in visiting Port Waratah they should contact Ms Larnach.

The only issue raised by the committee in respect of coal dust management on Kooragang Island was revisiting the Particle Characterisation Study. This has been raised by community representatives previously, in response to the strong complaints that continue to be made by the broader community during strong westerly conditions. It was acknowledged that there is an increase in dust complaints during these conditions. Mr Craig does not believe sufficient research has been carried out and would like to see the data further refined for the winter period, when these conditions are known to occur.

Mr Gilligan strongly encouraged the committee to review the extent of work completed in the existing reports. The Dust Deposition Study looks at the range of meteorology and considers the poorest results. The study also considers the source of dust along the rail corridor as well as at Stockton.

The seasonal newsletter has demonstrated that air quality is generally good, making it difficult to justify the costs of further studies. The previous study cost in the range of \$2million. Mr Thompson is not reluctant to invest in improvements where there are justifications, but this has not been demonstrated in this instance.

It is important to consider any possible achievements if the study were to be revisited. It is possible that a new study would demonstrate a higher per centage of coal in PM2.5/PM10 concentrations, for example, but it is not clear what will be achieved by identifying this. It would need to be established which licensee is responsible for the increased coal dust and then it would need to be demonstrated that the licensee was not in compliance with best practice. A discussion was held about understanding efforts aimed at controlling these issues onsite. This is already occurring, with the EPA working with industry when complaints are received, to determine the source of coal dust and make improvements to existing processes. No further suggestions were made by the committee in relation to this.

The Chair closed the discussion by agreeing that it is important to consider the ultimate goal and if this cannot be achieved the committee should move forward. This focus area will be revisited if new suggestions are put forward or new subject matter emerges.

7.2. Next focus area:

The Chair invited the committee to select a focus area for the next meeting from a list of areas identified in the committee survey from the last out of session meeting:

- Hunter Estuary study
- Water pollution
- Impact of ash dams in Newcastle LGA
- Transport pollutants

The Hunter Estuary study received the majority votes and will be added to the agenda as the focus area for the next meeting.

8. Communications Strategy

8.1. Broader communication with local community

This item will be carried over to the next meeting.

9. General Business

9.1. Other

Nil.

9.2. Next meeting date

The next meeting date was confirmed as 16 August 2021 at 5.30pm.