



Minutes

Meeting:	Newcastle Community Consultative Committee on the Environment (No 62)	Date:	Monday 21 February 2022
Location:	Online	Time:	5.30pm – 7:30pm
Last Meeting:	Monday 15 November 2021	Next Meeting:	Monday 16 May 2021
Present:	John Tate – Chairperson Rick Banyard – Community representative Christopher Tola – Community representative Nathan Robinson – Industry representative Leah Cook – Industry representative Trudie Larnach – Industry representative Peter McMurray – Council representative Steven Crick – Environmental representative Stephen White – DPIE Claire Miles – EPA Gina Bradley – EPA David Gathercole – EPA		
Apologies:	Keith Craig – 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. Housekeeping for online meeting

Ms Bradley outlined procedures for participating in the meeting online.

1.3. Present and apologies

The Chair welcomed the committee and noted the apologies. There were no declarations of interest.

2. Previous Minutes and Outstanding Actions

2.1. Review previous minutes

The minutes from the previous quarterly meeting were adopted with minor changes from Mr Robinson.

No.	Outstanding action	Status	Lead
2.2.1	Meeting 61, Action 1: Any further information to be shared with the committee in relation to the fire incident on 13 November 2021	See item 4 below	Nathan Robinson
2.2.2	Meeting No. 61, Action 2: Ms Bradley to circulate a promotional roadshow poster, for the committee to share with broader community networks	Complete	All
2.2.3	Meeting No. 61, Action 3: Ms Bradley to add a standing agenda item for story ideas at future meetings and will coordinate a process to collate any ideas for consideration	Complete	Gina Bradley
2.2.4	Meeting No. 61, Action 4: EPA to work with HCCDC on any options for a site visit	Ongoing	Mike Bardsley Anthony Van Der Horst David Gathercole
2.2.5	Meeting No. 61, Action 5: Overview on the 4-year review presentation to be circulated to the committee	Complete	Stephen White
2.2.6	Meeting No. 61, Action 6: Investigate any further information in relation to the toxic waste being shipped from Sydney to Newcastle	Complete – a report outlining councils' position will be distributed with the meeting minutes	Peter McMurray
2.2.7	Meeting No. 61, Action 7: Organise an EPA technical expert to attend the next meeting to discuss the EPA's reporting process	Complete – further details below	Gina Bradley

2.2.7 Organise an EPA technical expert to attend the next meeting to discuss the EPA's reporting process

The committee was reminded that changes to the EPA's reporting process are being carried out under the EPA's new digital transformation strategy. This is a whole of organisation approach. The aim is to create a single-entry point for all reporting. This requires an update of all EPA internal digital systems, not just the Environment Line, and is therefore a large-scale project that will take some time. In the interim, all reports should continue to be made through the Environment Line at 131 555 or info@epa.nsw.gov.au. The Digital Transformation Specialist has been notified of the issues previously raised by the committee regarding the current reporting process.

Mr Banyard has been expressing concerns about the reporting process for years and believes there has been a lack of action. It has resulted in a lack of community confidence. Both Mr Banyard and Mr Tola have not received any follow up when they have previously reported to the EPA.

The Chair raised concerns with inequity between individuals and large corporations. An example was given where an individual is fined up to \$400 for driving a smoky vehicle whereas a large corporation does not receive the same instant penalty for smoke plumes coming from ships in the harbour. Mr Gathercole confirmed that ships are regulated by the federal government and the committee was reminded of a previous presentation on this from [AMSA](#). The Chair invited the committee to put a representation forward to AMSA on this issue. Mr Banyard explained that the concerns with the reporting process are not related to this issue. The EPA's jurisdiction on vessel pollution is clear. The issue relates to what happens with a complaint from the moment it is reported to the EPA. The concern is that the current process is not fit for purpose. The 'Report a Tossler' mobile app is a good example of how reporting can work well. Mr Banyard suggested that this would be a good way forward for all EPA reporting.

Mr McMurray asked if there is legislation regulating air pollution from ships and whether or not it is consistent worldwide. Mr Gathercole and Ms Miles gave an overview of how the legislation in this area is structured and the complexities across jurisdictions.

3. EPA update

3.1. Regulatory Operations Metropolitan North

Mr Gathercole gave the following operational updates:

- In relation to the Hunter River pollutant load project, Bartter were found to be adding to the nutrient load and were issued with a PIN in September. The EPA has engaged with them to negotiate the terms of a pollution reduction program. This included identifying that their scold water was problematic. An upgrade of their wastewater treatment plan and possible discharge of all wastewater to sewage is being considered. They are already reporting significant improvements. If the deadlines on the pollution reduction program are not met, further regulatory action can be taken.
- Both the Orica fire and Weston aluminium fire are still being investigated.
- Cargills are doing proactive maintenance to improve the performance of their systems and have engaged a third-party consultant to improve the odour profiling of the prep building. Mr Crick asked why it was so important to identify where the odours were coming from when it appears obvious in the community, as the odours have been an ongoing issue for years. Cargills need to understand the intricacies of their plant from an operational perspective in order to understand it and improve it.
- EPA employees will be returning to the office from next week.

3.2. EPA Roadshows

Ms Bradley gave the following update on the roadshows:

- A community forum was held on Friday 19 November, with around 85 participants attending online (including the Chair and Mr Craig and other Newcastle community members).
- The forum was an opportunity to hear about the EPA's priorities and discuss topics such as waste, odours, forestry, and air quality in small groups.
- Feedback was very positive, with the majority finding the session "relevant and informative" and would "recommend the forum to others".
- The outcomes have been published on the [website](#).
- The next roadshows will be held in person, between 30 March and 7 June 2022. These will be for our [regulated stakeholders](#), bringing councils and licensees together.
- There will be a roadshow in Newcastle on 24 May 2022 which Mr McMurray and all industry reps are encouraged to attend and promote. Ms Bradley will circulate further information on this once it becomes available.
- Community representatives will have another opportunity to attend a roadshow later in the year.

4. Industry Update

4.1. Orica

Mr Robinson shared the following updates:

- The exact mechanism that caused the recent fire at Orica is still unknown. It is possible that the metal on metal contact may have caused it to ignite, but there is no evidence to confirm this. The contaminated firewater was contained, and the effluent was managed. A full report is due to the EPA this week. Details of this report will not be released whilst investigation is ongoing.
- The installation of the tertiary abatement technology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is on track to be completed by the end of 2022. The technology will be installed across all three nitric acid manufacturing plants.
- The prill tower scrubber design phase is underway and the project progressing in accordance with timelines.
- Orica have been working with Mineral Carbonation International (MCI) for approximately nine years and have recently signed an MoU to install a new research plant that will transform CO2 emissions into building materials. This project is going through approvals and is expected to take around 6-12 months.

4.2. Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC)

Ms Cook shared the following updates:

- The ARTC 2022 shutdown dates were shared with the committee to show upcoming trackwork maintenance dates. A substantial amount of communication and planning goes into the shutdown plans. More information is available on the website.
- A commission was recently completed to re-signal the service between Waratah and Sandgate. A number of concerns were raised around parking and access, noise and COVID-19. The project was managed well and has led to a successful improvement of infrastructure in the Hunter Region.

4.3. Port Waratah Coal Services (PWCS)

Ms Larnach shared the following updates:

- A total of 111 million tonnes was shipped through PWCS in 2021 and 1200 vessels were serviced. There were no environmental incidents reported through the whole year. This was celebrated at a recent community meeting.
- The commissioning phase is currently underway for a third storm water tank at the Carrington terminal. The storm water tanks are used for storm water management via a controlled discharge filtration system. The main purpose for using water onsite is dust management. PWCS won an award last year for their significant reduction in potable water.

5. Network Update

5.1. Information sharing and feedback from broader networks

The community representatives raised the following:

- There has been interest in the community following news about the old BHP site going on the market.
- Residents in Mayfield have been experiencing odour issues from Koppers.
- Disposal of surgical masks are a big environmental issue. Further information about managing COVID-19 waste is available on the EPA [website](#).
- There is interest in what will happen with the container terminal at the port. The benefit to the terminal needs balancing with the impacts on the community.

6. Air Quality Monitoring Network

6.1. Spring 2021 Newsletter

Mr White presented on the spring 2021 seasonal newsletter, including the following key points:

- Air quality in Newcastle region was predominantly good in spring 2021.
- Levels of all pollutants were under national standards.
- The annual average PM10 and PM2.5 were the lowest at each station in the region since the network began operation.
- There were 6 days over the PM10 daily benchmark in spring 2021 on 8 and 12 September and 8, 17, 28, and 29 October 2021.

6.2. Four-year review

Mr White reminded the committee that the four-year review of the monitoring network is due on 1 September 2022. Feedback may need to be considered outside of the quarterly meetings if the draft report is not available by the next meeting in May 2022.

7. Bite of Science Presentation

7.1. Reduction in observed SO₂ in Newcastle in 2020

Mr White gave a brief overview on the Bite of Science presentation, due to time constraints.

- SO₂ is a gas emitted into the atmosphere which largely comes from coal fired power stations and

- The new Australian standards were introduced last year.
- The focus of this study was on the LHQAMN and the UHAQMN where higher levels of SO₂ had been identified.
- Stockton and Carrington stations in particular showed distinct shifts in concentrations.
- The reductions in SO₂ in 2020-21 compared to 2018-19 shows that regulatory reform is having positive environmental effects by driving down emissions.

Mr Tola was interested to know if particulates in stormwater runoff would be picked up in the water quality testing equipment being rolled out in Sydney.

The Chair asked if the committee could be kept up to date with impacts to the Newcastle LGA from the new hydrogen energy industry. There have been recent announcements on the move towards renewables and early closure of coal fired power stations, any further detail will be provided to the committee.

8. General Business

8.1. Story ideas

The following story ideas were put forward:

- A day in the life of an EPA officer – example can be found in the [Annual Report, p23](#)
- Orica's positive news stories – published in [community newsletters](#)
- Use of drones and technology – example of how these stories can be published in [media releases](#). Other technology examples includes water quality probing and spatial mapping tools.

It was also noted that some of these stories can be incorporated into the roadshow forums as these are a great platform to communicate with the broader community.

8.2. Other

Ms Bradley invited feedback on the effectiveness of the committee, noting that the current term has recently passed the half-way point. No feedback was provided.

8.3. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date was confirmed as Monday 16 May 2021 at 5.30pm. The meeting will take place in person at the EPA Newcastle office.