

**MINUTES OF THE ASHTON COAL PROJECT  
COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY 11 MARCH 2008  
1.00PM - ASHTON COAL PROJECT SITE OFFICE**

**ATTENDEES:**

Brian Thomas	(BT)	Singleton Council (Chairman)
Deidre Olofsson	(DO)	Community Representative
Paul Ashford	(PA)	Community Representative
John McInerney	(JM)	Community Representative
Peter Barton	(PB)	Company Rep (General Manager)
Lisa Richards	(LR)	Company Rep (Environment & Community Relations Mgr)
Adam Spargo	(AS)	(Environmental Coordinator)
Sherry Russell		Minute Taker

**1. OPENING OF THE MEETING BY THE CHAIRPERSON**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1.08pm.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Greg Summerhayes (Department of Primary Industries), Thelma DeJong (Community Representative) and Cr Fred Harvison (Singleton Council).

DO requested that it be noted Thelma DeJong passed on her thanks to the Ashton underground employees who responded to the fire at St Clements Church on Monday 10 March.

**3. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST BY COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES**

Nil declared.

**4. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes from the meeting held on 11 December 2007 were accepted as a true and accurate record:

**Moved:** John McInerney

**Seconded:** Paul Ashford

## 5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Refer to section 6.3 of these Minutes.

## 6. REPORTS AND OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

### 6.1 ENVIRONMENTAL

LR provided a presentation of the environmental and monitoring activities currently being undertaken on site.

DO advised she had received a query asking why ACOL continue to blast when wind directions are not favourable for the village residents. LR responded if the wind conditions are not within the approved criteria as per the Development Consent, Blast Management Plan – blasting will not go ahead. The only exception to this will be when a shot has been sitting and needs to be blasted due to safety reasons. Whenever this has occurred, all residents on the blast notification list are called and notified of the situation.

Noise monitoring last conducted on 18 February 2008. There were no exceedances recorded during the monitoring period. DO queried, on behalf of a resident, the position of where the noise monitors are located. Why does noise monitoring occur in the same location each time? LR advised that the locations are approved by the Department of Planning and have been set down in the approved Noise Management Plan as required by the Development Consent. DO asked why monitoring was always conducted from Monday-Friday – why couldn't the period be from Sunday-Saturday? LR advised that ACOL does not choose the times monitoring is undertaken. ACOL's noise consultant selects when, in the defined month, monitoring is undertaken. BT asked if the person making the query thought that the noise was louder on weekends? DO advised she thought this was the case. PA requested that a noise monitoring / sound instrument be re-installed at his property to monitor the noise coming from the mine. LR advised that ACOL can arrange for monitoring to be undertaken at PA's property as per his request.

Complaints monitoring. Main issue of complaints was for noise and blasting. The breakdown of the complaint reporting shows the majority of complaints have been received from one household in the village. PB questioned as to why the EPA complaints are included in the total as they are generally a duplication of another complaint. LR responded that as they are recorded as separate complaints, they are included in the register. BT also thought it a bit unusual as they are generally a duplication of the original complaint, but this is how most mining companies report.

AS provided an overview of the rehabilitation works currently being undertaken on site. The spreading of biosolids and Organic Growth Medium (OGM) was discussed. It was advised that ACOL will be undertaking trials in a small area located on the northern side of the mine. ACOL will be looking at mixing the biosolids with the OGM mulch along with grape skins in an attempt to cut down on the potential odour. BT advised he had had experience in the past where stockpiling of biosolids had caused anaerobic conditions when the surface crusted, which made the odour worse when it came to spreading. BT suggested it was better to spread immediately. DO asked if the soil on the dump was dead ie. lacking in the micro-biological requirements for long term vegetation? LR responded that overburden does lack the same micro-biological elements as natural topsoils, however, monitoring is ongoing.

PB requested that the storage period of the biosolids be kept at an absolute minimum. LR advised that there was an issue with being able to spread the material immediately as we were only able to receive one load per day and you would not be able to have a spreader sitting idle on site for that volume of material. LR advised that ACOL would have another look at the logistics of the project. DO asked how long the study had been going on with regard to OGM. AS advised that only ACOL and Integra Mine have trialled the use of OGM. PB advised that the trial had been ongoing for approximately 12 months.

LR provided an overview on the Environmental Regulatory Compliance Audit Report. LR advised that while blast exceedances were identified in the three (3) yearly compliance audit, measures had been implemented over that period and the blasting results have shown continuous improvement. With regard to noise issues – equipment is relocated if proved to be having a noise impact.

DO queried the meaning of section 6.43 with regard to the Noise Management Plan, namely the response provided by the Auditor re: application to Department of Planning to remove the requirement as set in the Development Consent to reassess the acquisition and management zones on an annual basis. DO was concerned that application was going to be made to remove this requirement without consultation with the CCC. LR indicated that this was a recommendation by the Auditors and not something that ACOL had stated they were going to do and, at this stage, were not considering doing so. PB indicated that the only property in the original acquisition zones was 94 Glennies Creek Road (Richards' property) – as referred to in the EIS. DO requested that ACOL confirm that the only property located within the compulsory acquisition zone was in fact the Richards' property located at 94 Glennies Creek Road?

There was discussion about exceedance of noise limits and that the Development Consent stipulates weather conditions within which the noise limits were applicable. These were when wind speeds were less than 3m/s and temperature inversions were less than 3deg C/100m. PA asked what is the percentage of time that there are inversions >3deg C/100m and where winds are greater than 3m/s. LR responded that an answer will be provided at the next meeting.

DO raised the issue of wording in the AEMR – Section 4.5 Community Liaison, page 145 *“Although there are no health impacts from airborne dust entering household water tanks it was clear that the best way to relieve the impacts of mining in the Hunter Valley on Camberwell was to clean both the tanks and roofs of privately owned houses in Camberwell”*. DO stated that this comment was not able to be made – what testing had been done to substantiate this? PB advised he was in agreement with DO's comments. LR also agreed that it did not read how it was intended. The intent was that, although there had been no proven health impacts on dust entering tank water, a community program was undertaken to address concerns.

DO raised the issue of weed control. LR advised that there is an annual weed maintenance program in place. Weed areas will be resurveyed each year to assess the effectiveness of the previous year's work and to enable the next year's program to be developed. JM asked what the location is for green cestrum control and what is being used to kill the weeds. AS pointed out the area of Glennies Creek on the aerial map. JM suggested that ACOL use Tordon to kill-off the green cestrum. LR advised that she will look into the use of Tordon and will liaise with Hunter Land Management – who are managing the weed works on site.

PB gave an overview of the mining operations on site. Open Cut operations are progressing well. With regard to the underground operations, a dyke has been found which is proving to be an issue to mine. Blasting is currently being undertaken to fracture the dyke. To give an example of the density of the material, concrete is about 20mpa where the material in the dyke was up around 120mpa.

JM asked about a portal being installed near the current heli pad? PB responded that there were a few different scenarios being looked at for access to the lower underground seams. A proposal will be submitted to the Board for approval. Still looking at the SEOC and looking at submitting the proposal to the Board on 26 March 2008.

DO asked about a second open cut mine being established? PB showed the location of two proposed sites, one being the SEOC area and the other above the Underground Mine. The underground mine will need to be low enough to enable an open cut mine to be established on top. DO indicated that she did not support the proposal for additional open cuts. DO further advised it had been stated by ACOL, to the community, that they would not open cut in the underground area after approval was given to raise the level of the RL dump.

PB indicated that with the exploration information at the time, there was no reason to think there was any viable coal deposits in the area. However, additional drilling in the last 12 months has shown possible reserves.

PA asked if ACOL will consult landowners with regard to the purchase of properties located on the other side of the highway. PB responded that ACOL is still interested in acquiring properties and when that stage of the project is reached, landowners will be approached.

Peter Barton left the meeting at 3.10pm.

## **6.2 SECTION 94 – LIST OF PRIORITISED WORKS**

LR advised she has been speaking with Gary Woodman from Singleton Council with regard to signage. Currently there is money in Council's budget – Camberwell has been listed as low priority, which means there is a high probability that the work will never eventuate. It was suggested that the Section 94 Contribution monies could be used for the signs.

BT suggested that PB should approach Cr Harvison and propose that ACOL will support the installation of signage for Camberwell if Council were also able to provide some funds in support of their installation.

## **6.3 ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **Meeting with Council – Section 94 Works**

Refer to section 6.2 above.

**Mine Closure Planning – Presentation to Council**

As requested by Cr Harvison, PB and LR presented an information package on what has been happening at Ashton and plans for the future, including Mine Closure Plans. The presentation was well received with questions from Councillors being received. It was stressed during the presentation that the mine was not closing and that mine closure planning is a DPI requirement which is undertaken by all mines.

Notification of the presentation raised a lot of interest from the Newcastle Herald and there were some questions from Fran (a Newcastle Herald columnist) following the presentation. She was, however, referred to Brian Flannery (ACOL's nominated media liaison representative). JM advised he had been contacted by the Newcastle Herald prior to the presentation to Council, but was uncertain as to what they were trying to achieve.

**Unused properties in the Village**

Lawnmowing and whipper-snipping has been undertaken on ACOL owned vacant properties in the village. In future, this maintenance work will be scheduled to occur regularly to maintain the properties.

**7. GENERAL BUSINESS**

DO advised that the Common Trust held a meeting to discuss the request by ACOL to gain access to the Common in order to carry out flora/fauna monitoring. DO advised that access will not be provided to ACOL. DO is to draft a formal letter from the Common Trust indicating this. LR advised that ACOL will make formal application to the Department of Lands in an attempt to gain access for the purpose of monitoring.

DO asked what the status is with regard to the land swap for the area of Common on the southern side of the highway? PB was unsure of the status and advised he thought the matter has been processed as the survey had been completed some time ago and the relevant forms submitted. ACOL will follow up and advise the status.

A copy of the Quarterly Dust Report (September 2007 to November 2007) was provided to each member.

**8. DATE FOR NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 17 June 2008.

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## 9. SITE INSPECTION OF THE OPERATIONS

No site inspection was undertaken. BT suggested that at the next meeting a site inspection be undertaken prior to the meeting.

Suggested time 10.00am for the site inspection – meeting to follow the inspection. Meeting time will be scheduled for 11.00am – lunch will be provided.

Please call Sherry to confirm attendance for the site inspection.

**MEETING CLOSED AT 3.40PM**

### **ACTION ITEMS**

ITEM	RESPONSIBILITY
Advise percentage of inversions and greater than 3m/s wind speeds as per Paul Ashford's request.	LR
Contact Frank Sullivan from Singleton Council and HRLPB to ascertain what the position is with the "land swap" issue.	LR
Further follow up to be undertaken with Singleton Council regarding the issue of signage ie. discuss with Fred Harvison the possibility of Council / Ashton going 50/50 with costs.	LR / PB
Contact HLM to obtain their position with regard to the use of Tordon to eradicate Green Cestrum.	LR
Confirm the Richards' property was only property located in the compulsory acquisition zone referred to in the EIS.	ACOL