
**MINUTES OF THE ASHTON COAL PROJECT
COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 24 MARCH 2009
1:00PM - ASHTON COAL PROJECT SITE OFFICE**

ATTENDEES:

Brian Thomas	(BT)	Singleton Council (Chairman)
John McInerney	(JM)	Community Representative
Thelma DeJong	(TD)	Community Representative
Deidre Olofsson	(DO)	Community Representative
Peter Barton	(PB)	Company Rep (General Manager)
Lisa Richards	(LR)	Company Rep (Environment & Community Relations Mgr)
Adam Spargo	(AS)	Observer (Environmental Co-ordinator)
Cassandra Ferguson		Observer
Alan Wells		Observer
Jonathan Berry		Observer
Sherry Russell		Minute Taker

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING BY THE CHAIRPERSON

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1.06pm. LR introduced Alan Wells, Jonathan Berry and Cassandra Ferguson to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Greg Summerhayes from the Department of Primary Industries) and Cr Godfrey Adamthwaite (Singleton Council).

A tentative apology was received on behalf of Deidre Olofsson as it was unsure if she would be able to make the meeting.

3. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST BY COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Nil declared.

4. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes from the meeting held on 2 December 2008 were accepted as a true and accurate record:

Moved: John McInerney

Seconded: Thelma DeJong

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

SEOC presentation has been uploaded on the Ashton website. DO has been provided with a hard copy of the SEOC presentation.

6. NEW CCC MEMBER

BT advised that Council no longer advertise in local newspapers for vacancies for the CCC. BT advised the best way to notify community members is to advertise via newsletter distribution.

DO – Arrived at meeting and apologized for being late.

7. REPORTS AND OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES**7.1 OVERVIEW OF OPERATIONS**

PB provided an overview of the current mining operations being undertaken onsite. PB advised that the underground mine is currently completing the third longwall move. The open cut is now mining in the north eastern corner – mining is planned to finish in the current pit operations in October 2010. The South East Open Cut Planning Focus meeting with Singleton Council and government agencies will be held next Tuesday (31 March, 2009).

BT queried rehabilitation works with respect to the open cut operations. LR described the schedule of rehabilitation works to be undertaken. PB advised that the current rehabilitation works are ahead of schedule. There were questions in relation to when the Open Cut area will be fully rehabilitated. LR advised that all rehabilitation works will be completed up to the final void by about 2012 with some material being stockpiled with a cover crop for capping of the final void once it has been backfilled with tailings from the underground operations. Completion of the whole pit including the final void is around 2023 – in line with the underground mine ceasing operation.

7.2 UPDATE ON THE PROPOSED SOUTH EAST OPEN CUT

LR provided a presentation on the SEOC proposal. A plan showing the proposed layout design of the new mine was displayed. The preliminary environmental assessment was submitted to the Department of Planning on Thursday 5 March 2009. The environmental assessment is scheduled to be submitted in May 2009 and it is envisaged that the plan will go on public exhibition in June 2009. ACOL are currently aiming for approval to be received in December 2009. Groundwater studies have delayed the process, from the timeline that was presented in earlier CCC meetings– this issue has now been resolved and all aspects of the proposal are moving ahead. Ashton will address Singleton Council on 6 April 2009. Open days will be held on 8 and 9 April 2009 at 2 Alpha Street, Camberwell.

LR discussed the issue of the future long term vision for Camberwell. LR provided copies of handouts showing possible future amenities for the village. LR advised it is Ashton's intention to provide a vision within the SEOC EA (environmental assessment) to ensure that Camberwell is sustainable with a post-mining future. LR advised that proposed future visions would be developed in consultation with Council and local residents. Varying feedback was received from community representatives on the plans. Generally, there was a feeling that they did not like the plans as a whole and were unsure of their purpose. LR expressed that the plans put forward were completed by a landscape architect and are his vision when asked to undertake the design as a town planning exercise; they are a tool to prompt discussion. PB advised that the practicality of the designs is yet to be assessed and consultation regarding the designs with local council and relevant government departments had not been undertaken. PB discussed that the designs put forward to the meeting are not final, nor the only available option, they were put forward to address the following issues:

1. Opinions recently expressed within the local media that Camberwell as a future village will be severely impacted long term by the proposed mining operations; and
2. Ideas to assist in providing a sustainable future for Camberwell.

DO advised she had no interest in discussing the long term vision strategies for Camberwell, as she would like to wait for the outcomes of the cumulative impact study being conducted by the Department of Planning on Tuesday the 31 March. LR further advised that the designs are for a future vision of Camberwell beyond the life of mining operations within the area. The impact of noise and dust, etc, are addressed separately and will be assessed by the Department of Planning when assessing the EA. ACOL are attempting to, within the EA address, the issue of the long term future of the village beyond the mining proposal, and how this can be enhanced by the mining proposal. It was hoped that this CCC could be used to facilitate the consultation process for this. LR reiterated that the plans were only a prompt and asked the community members if they had any ideas/suggestions for the future of the village. JM advised that the visual aspect of the village is important – also the ongoing maintenance of the proposed facilities needs to be addressed. DO advised she did not think the village would change until the mining operations are complete. DO raised the issue of the community hall being run down. PB indicated that use of the hall had stopped prior to Ashton due to its condition. DO also mentioned using Crown Land for the streetscape upgrade project. LR indicated that the proposed purpose of this Crown land had been reviewed with the Department of Lands records and the area proposed as a park is actually set aside as Crown land for camping (there would also need to be consultation with the Department of Lands). PB asked if the community members had any advice for Ashton with regard to the village upgrade. BT also brought up the issue of maintenance on the proposed works. PB reiterated that the plans provided were compiled as a starting point in an attempt to gather comments and suggestions from community members to moving forward on an agreed long term plan for Camberwell. Community representatives were all in agreement with not wanting a park established in the area and also that a reduced the cycleway / pedestrian walking track area may be feasible.

7.3 ENVIRONMENTAL

DUST MONITORING

Dust averages are all in compliance within the current reporting period (12 month rolling average) with the exception of two depositional dust gauges which are remote to the Village proper and located close to neighbouring mining operations. There were no exceedences in the period from December 2008 to February 2009 for the Ashton PM₁₀ criteria.

BLASTING MONITORING

Results for the past twelve months to date – in total 72 blasts were carried out - with no exceedences.

WATER MONITORING

LR provided an overview of the groundwater monitoring results for the past three months.

NOISE MONITORING

No exceedence of criteria was recorded for the period December 2008 to February 2009.

General

LR gave an overview of the daily operational changes undertaken to control impacts and those with respect to complaints received and the follow up actions to rectify the complaint.

LR discussed details of the current rehabilitation program. Total area to be rehabilitated is 30 hectares, 16 hectares to be pasture land and 14 hectares will be native woodland. Total of 1200 trees were planted during Spring 2008 – Organic Growth Matter (OGM) was used.

In co-operation with two other mining companies, Ashton Coal commissioned a lead study undertaken by the University of Queensland. The study focused on the Camberwell and Muswellbrook areas, with control samples being taken from areas remote to mining impact. Samples for analysis were sourced from tank waters and sludge, soil samples (including topsoil), overburden and coal samples. Internal dust samples and high volume air samplers (HVAS) were also tested. Results indicated that all tank water samples were within the Australian Drinking water guideline for lead. Lead was present in tank sludge for all areas tested, (including the areas not directly impacted upon by mining operations), which indicate a need for regular cleaning of rainwater tanks as per NSW health guidelines. Soil samples showed that lead levels in the potential source materials (ie. dust from overburden / coal) were not high enough to cause lead levels in water tanks to exceed Australian Drinking water guidelines. The outcome of the study showed there was no demonstrated health risk from lead impacts from the coal mining operations studied.

7.3 SECTION 94 SIGNAGE

AS provided the meeting with an update on the Section 94 Contributions. He is waiting on feedback on proposed signage location from the Roads and Traffic Authority.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

DO requested that a caution be put in the next newsletter regarding bullrout (similar to a stonefish) advising people to wear shoes when walking in the Creeks. First aid to be used is to run as hot as possible water over the affected area.

DO also advised the meeting attendees that blackberry poisoning is being undertaken in the Camberwell Common. The area is not be entered until spraying is complete.

DO contacted ACOL the day after the meeting to request that the above "cautions" not be included in the next newsletter. DO's request was complied with.

9. DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 10 June 2009 at 1.00pm.

10. SITE INSPECTION OF THE OPERATIONS

No inspection of the site was undertaken.

MEETING CLOSED AT 3.15PM

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM	RESPONSIBILITY