

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BICKHAM COAL BULK SAMPLE

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (BCCC).

**MEETING NUMBER 6 – WEDNESDAY 16TH FEBRUARY 2005 HELD AT UPPER
HUNTER SHIRE COUNCIL CHAMBERS AT 4:15PM.**

PRESENT:	WARREN COOK	Chairperson
	NAT DOONAN	Community Representative
	MICHAEL SATARA	Community Representative
	NEVILLE MOXON	Community Representative
	GREG SUMMERHAYES	Dept. Primary Industry
	DAVID CASSON	Upper Hunter Shire Council
	DARYL DUTTON	Upper Hunter Shire Council
	JOHN HINDMARSH	Bickham Coal Company
	DAVID FOSTER	Bickham Coal Company
	MARK LORENZ	Bickham Coal Company
APOLOGIES:	JOHN RICHARDS	Bickham Coal Company
VISITORS:	CHRIS BOWMAN	Bickham Coal Mine Action Group
	PETER HAYDON	Bickham Coal Mine Action Group

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING:

- It was confirmed that all committee members had received a copy of the minutes from the previous meeting.
- The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the 5th meeting – moved by Nat Doonan and seconded by Greg Summerhayes, declared carried.

BUSINESS MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES:

- The chairperson confirmed that the letter acknowledging Lloyd Rossington's resignation had been sent out by the Secretary.
- The issue of connectivity between ground and surface water in the Pages River was again raised in relation to the two newspaper articles discussed at the previous meeting. The Chairperson agreed to note that the views expressed by him in these articles, were not necessarily the unanimous view of the entire committee.
- The committee discussed the direction of BCC's movements towards the EIS process and asked whether it had actually begun. Greg Summerhayes touched on the processes involved in the preparation of the EIS which is initiated by 4 levels of approval – the first step being the Planning Focus meeting. This meeting had not been convened.
- David Foster said that there were ongoing water and other studies required by the Conditions of Consent of the Bulk Sample both prior to and post coal extraction. Water studies would be carried out for at least 3 months and BCC were also yet to undertake an Environmental Audit. Naturally studies now being carried out may form part of the EIS documentation if and when it was to proceed. However the formal EIS trigger had not as yet been pulled.

REPORTS AND OVERVIEWS OF BCC'S ACTIVITIES:

**OVERVIEW OF THE BCC'S ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT REPORT –
JOHN HINDMARSH, ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER (BCC).**

- The Committee received a detailed overview of the recently distributed 6 monthly report together with a visual slide show from John Hindmarsh detailing results collated from the monitoring of water, air and noise levels during the Bulk Sample period.
- John Hindmarsh informed the committee that the change in format of the report was required to satisfy the DPI Annual Environmental Management Report Guidelines.
- Discussion matters from the report included:-

1. Coal Quality – Assessed by Coal Extracted in Bulk And Bore Testing

- David Foster said BCC had previously determined that the G seam coal was good quality with low sulphur and satisfactory energy values. However it was found to have variable siderite levels. When the E seam was mined it was also found to have a discrete band of siderite that could be removed in the mining process. David Foster said that although the G seam had only been sampled through the bored holes in the pit, he was confident that what occurs in the E seam would also be characteristic of what occurs in the G seam.

2. Ground Water Issues

- BCC'S activities complied with all conditions outlined in their Water Licence. The total water extracted during the Bulk Sample Process was 18.352 megalitres.
- No evidence of direct connectivity between the Pages River and the ground or surface water system was found.

3. Environmental Management and Performance

- During the blasting process, vibration and noise recordings were lower than had been predicted in the REF when measured at the nearest residence. Operational Noise was 3 DB lower than the level detailed in the REF.
- Spontaneous Combustion of the coal extracted indicated that this coal type had a propensity to oxidise and self-heat.
- No bushfires were recorded during the Bulk Sample period.

4. Community Relations

- 2 complaints had been received during the Bulk Sample period.
 1. Starting coal haulage early.
 2. Reported smoke coming from coal stockpile.

5. Rehabilitation Of The South Bickham Coal Extraction Site

- BCC are in the final stages of their River Care Plan and have carried out rehabilitation of the Flint Clay Void Overburden dump. (Various photo slides were presented to the committee comparing before and after shots).
- BCC reported that on the whole, all monitoring results to date were far less than what had been predicted in the REF with no change to ground or river water quality.
- The committee asked about the status of the remaining stockpile. BCC reported that the last 4 loads of remnant coal had been removed on the morning of the 16th February 2005.
- It was reconfirmed by the BCCC that on the 1st December 2004 it was a unanimous recommendation that the remnant coal be removed off-site to avoid possible issues relating to spontaneous combustion of the coal. BCC also confirmed that full approval had been granted to transport residual coal off-site by DPI on the 13th January 2005 with formal notification being received on the 14th January 2005. Transportation commenced on the 19th January 2005 but had been a slow process due to interruptions caused by rain and poor weather.
- Greg Summerhayes informed the committee that a full on-site inspection would be carried out by DPI and DIPNR representatives who would provide a detailed report of their findings post Bulk Sample activities. An independent report would also be carried out as per DIPNR Consent Conditions.
- BCC indicated that they were in the process of submitting names to DIPNR of independent auditors who would be qualified to carry out the auditing process.
- The committee asked whether they could receive a copy of the independent environmental audit once it was completed. BCC said that it had no objection to circulating this document to the committee once it had become public property.

COMPLAINT MATTERS

- A complaint was directed to DIPNR on 5th February 2005 from Mr. Chris Bowman. Greg Summerhayes said that the complaint was addressed both over the phone and in writing. This complaint which related to the status of mining activity at South Bickham and the removal of extra coal material off-site was then documented and forwarded too BCC. It was re-iterated that the removal of remnant coal was deemed to be a better solution due to spontaneous combustion issues but transportation had been sporadic due to poor weather conditions at times.

GENERAL BUSINESS

- The Chairperson tabled a letter from Bickham Coal Mine Action Group signed by Secretary Michaela Malone. The Chairperson suggested that due to the nature of the content, the committee would have complete involvement in the response to the letter.
- The Chairperson in conjunction with the committee addressed each item contained within the letter.

Item 1 & 2:

- Formal complaint regarding the increase in quantity of material approved for removal from South Bickham site. BCC responded by stating that the total amount of material removed was in the vicinity of 8,000 or 9,000 tonnes. David Foster would confirm the exact figure based on the amount measured at the Rix's Creek weighbridge. BCC would table two figures: - the total amount of coal matter removed and the total amount of saleable coal (coal from which the State Government received royalties).
- The committee discussed the claim that the BCCC had "approved" removal of extra "remnant coal material". The BCCC did not "approve" this removal – it made a recommendation based on issues relating to spontaneous combustion and environmental preservation at the site. The recommendation to remove remnant coal was deemed to be the best option in the circumstances – this recommendation was reached unanimously by committee members at the previous meeting on Wednesday 1st December 2004.
- The BCCC's recommendation that all remnant coal be transported off-site was presented to the Minister formally as a Variation to the Consent Conditions. The Minister approved the Variation to remove remnant coal from the South Bickham coal pad. The quantity removed was by no means a large sample of coal.

Item 3:

- BCC's Bulk Sample extraction was originally approved in the REF as 25,000 tonnes. This was a figure that was required by BCC to fill two hatches on the cargo vessel and was considered to be the minimum for a trial burn.
- BCC received written notification of the approval for a Variation by the Minister on 14th January 2005 to remove all remnant coal from the site. Hauling of remnant matter commenced on the 19th January 2005.
- The total tonnes of coal removed by BCC were by no means the largest in NSW. Previous bulk samples for 50,000 – 70,000 tonnes of coal were well documented.

Item 4:

- The primary objective of the Bulk Sample was fulfilled by BCC with a minimum of impact on the environment as per the results presented to the committee by John Hindmarsh – the Environmental Officer for BCC over the Bulk Sampling period.

Item 5:

- The allegation that the BCCC had failed in its function to adequately represent the community was deemed “offensive” by committee members. On the contrary the Chairperson stated that the committee had satisfied all requirements and such comments were unfair. He further stated that the Bickham Coal Mine Action Group “lacks credibility”.
- The decision to run the committee with one less member than originally intended was debated at length by the committee at the previous meeting. It was recommended by the committee that at this late stage, it was not practical to advertise the vacant position as there was only one more meeting of the BCCC scheduled.

Item 6:

- The Chairperson responded to this matter by stating that he had never received notification by the Bickham Coal Mine Action Group expressing interest in the BCCC. Further he said that it was not reasonable to expect that every interested group would be entitled to a position on the committee. On the contrary the Chairperson felt that the committee had a good spread of people representing the whole community.



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- On behalf of the Bickham Coal Mine Action Group, Mr. Chris Bowman verbally expressed his concerns to the committee about BCC breaching the Consent Conditions in terms of the quantity of coal that it stated it would transport from site.
- Mr Bowman also questioned whether the Consent mechanism was valid. Greg Summerhayes confirmed that the Variation was approved in writing by the Minister and BCC advised by letter received by them on the 14th January 2005.

GENERAL BUSINESS – CONCLUSION

- On closing the final meeting of the BCCC, the Chairperson thanked all members for their time and effort in what he felt was a most successful committee.

MEETING CONCLUDED AT 6:20PM