

Good turnout for Bickham presentations

BICKHAM Coal hosted four community information sessions on their water study for the proposed Bickham Coal Mine last week.

Residents from around Scone and Murrurundi gathered at the sessions to learn more about the proposed mine that the company wants to develop at Blandford.

Although the mine is now proposed to be 150 metres from the Pages River and mining would not go below the river bed level until 300 metres from the mine, there was ongoing concern from residents who live near or use water from the watercourses or nearby bores.

Upper Hunter Waterkeepers Alliance president Patricia Newell said the sessions were of little help to those who had read the report and she said some people who had not read the report said they felt bamboozled with data.

Ms Newell said other people she spoke to expressed a desire to visit the site.

"They have tried to appease everyone that had a complaint," Ms Newell said.

"They technically have addressed some of our concerns," she said.

But, Ms Newell said if Bickham Coal really wanted the community to believe the mine was a good idea for the community and they were truly proud of it, they should have a sign at the front gate promoting its location.

At the meeting information from the Water Resource Assessment and Draft Water Management Plan was presented by surface water expert John Verhoeven a senior associate from Evans and Peck and ground water expert Peter Dundon from Aquaterra.

"I thought all four presentations went very well," Mr Verhoeven said.

He said the question and answer period was helpful for people to locate an area of interest in the report which they otherwise may have missed.

"I thought it was a good opportunity for people to understand the issues and how they are being addressed," he said.

Mr Verhoeven said there were no questions raised that could not be answered although there was a question that he had to take on notice so he could make sure the number was right.

"Whether they agreed with the project or not they appreciated the information and we were able to provide," he said of the feedback he received.

Bickham Coal director John Richards was also on hand to answer questions and said he was pleased more than 160 people turned up to the information sessions and comments were received from both sides of the debate.

"It was a voluntary process but we wanted people to be informed and to understand," Mr Richards said.

A number of questions on a range of topics were raised at each of the sessions with many relating to the proposed mine and its relationship to Pages River, Kingdon Ponds and aquifers.

"We were complimented for being upfront and giving everyone a chance to ask questions," he said.

"There were certainly some good questions."