



**Mt Arthur Coal (MAC)**  
**Community Consultative Committee (CCC) Meeting**  
**Wednesday 9 August 2023**

**Attendance**

**Chairperson**

Dr. W.E.J Paradise (WP)

Independent Chair MAC CCC

**Community Representatives**

Di Gee (DG)

Community Representative

Jennifer Lecky (JL)

Community Representative

**Muswellbrook Council**

Theresa Folpp (TF)

Muswellbrook Council

**Company Representatives**

Grant Coulton (GC)

General Manager

Sarah Bailey (SB)

Manager Land Access, Approvals & Cultural Heritage

Ray Marten (RM)

Principal, Approvals

Liz Watts (LW)

Head of Transition

Amanda Walker (AW)

Manager Corporate Affairs NSWEC

Claire Killeen (CK)

Specialist Community

Jimmy Nixon (JN)

Environmental Superintendent

**Apologies**

John Hobden

Community Representative

**Minutes**

Sarah Purser

**1. Welcome & Apologies**

WP opened the meeting at 9.05 a.m. and welcomed members in attendance on site at MAC and via WebEx.  
*Acknowledgement of Country by SB.*

**2. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest**

*Standing;* WP is remunerated for Chairing the meeting, as is SP for taking the minutes.

**3. Minutes of the previous Meeting held 8 February 2023**

WP confirmed the minutes had been circulated and were accepted at today's meeting as being a true and accurate record.

**4. Matters Arising**

**Action Arising;** WP to make contact with Joe Fitell to confirm he is the DPE Officer contact for the MAC CCC and obtain his advice on inviting DPE representatives to future meetings to speak about specific subject matters such as cumulative dust.

- ✓ WP confirmed that Jo Fitell is hoping to attend the next MAC CCC Meeting to cover off any past issues and to talk about the mines current status as well i.e. the modification.

**Action Arising;** Subject to the status of the Draft Modification Report for MOD 2030, this may be tabled at the CCC Meeting scheduled for 9 August 2023, or moved to an Extraordinary Meeting.

- ✓ Presentation delivered at today's meeting.

**Action Arising;** When they become available, MAC to present the visual images that provide a view on how the mine will progress in terms of rehabilitation.

- ✓ Presentation delivered at today's meeting

**Action Arising:** AW to make contact with the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue (UHMD) to get a sense on how they communicate and ascertain what channels they are reaching out to.

- ✓ AW confirmed that MAC will be meeting with the UHMD on 8 November 2023, if there are particular pieces that members are interested in, MAC can ask the UHMD to present on these at a future CCC meeting.

## 5. Report from the Chair - Wej Paradise

### CCC Membership

WP advised that John Hobden has relocated from the local area and formally resigned, as a community representative, from the MAC CCC. WP noted that it is time to bring in new community members and advised that the process for recruitment is outlined in the new NSW Department of Planning (DPE) Community Consultative Committee Guidelines.

WP confirmed he had circulated the new Guidelines to members on 10 July 2023, along with a summary of feedback provided during the consultation review phase and a list of key changes. WP noted that previously applicants were required to live in the Local Government Area (LGA) and this has been relaxed to include those in an area of impact, therefore there is broader possibilities of recruiting people who have an interest, along with Stakeholders, as part of community. Given the MAC Modification and discussions around the pathway to 2030, it was agreed to be a very interesting stage for new members to engage and contribute by joining the MAC CCC.

**ACTION 1: WP to liaise with CK and JN regarding formalising the recruitment process and advertising for new Community and Stakeholder members to join the MAC CCC.**

**ACTION 2: Muswellbrook Council to confirm MAC CCC representatives.**

### NSW Government - Department of Planning and Environment

#### New Community Consultative Committee Guideline - State Significant Projects - June 2023

WP advised the following tasks require completion by the MAC CCC by year end:-

- Code of Conduct and Pecuniary Forms to be signed by all.
- Terms of Reference needs to be agreed by members, this sets out standard processes and suggested time frames for operational matters such as meeting frequency and site inspections.

**ACTION 3: WP to circulate the DPE CCC Guidelines Terms of Reference Template for member comment. Terms of Reference to be placed on the 8 November 2023 Meeting Agenda, for further discussion and confirmation.**

## 6. Operations Update - Grant Coulton - General Manager

### Reporting period: FY23 Q4 April - June 2023

GC advised that Q4 was a successful quarter, dirt and coal movement was well above annual rates and the business had a strong run home. GC noted the contribution of dry weather to be a key element for finishing FY23 positively.

MAC have a major Prep Plant shut down scheduled towards end August, there will be a very large workforce of contractors coming in for that. TF queried if there was any trouble finding accommodation for that workforce and GC explained these are crews that go around the Valley to do shut downs for a number of business' e.g. ARTC, Rail etc. MAC are soaking up the majority of that labour and as most generally are working around the Valley, they are not seeing accommodation as being an issue for shutdown work.

Coal pricing has significantly dropped from a substantial high, GC noted that this does put pressure on the business to streamline internally and be good in what they do. WP asked what caused the drop in coal prices and GC provided an explanation of variations to overseas market demand e.g. Europe are in their summer period. GC noted that gas is also a competitor being less expensive. GC advised that despite these changes, coal is still finding its way back into other markets.

GC advised that MAC will transition their Site Roster from 3 / 2 to 5 / 4 in November 2023, with more consecutive work days equating to more time off for their workforce. TF queried if there was any information on how this Roster change may affect who stays locally in terms of rentals. GC responded that the majority of the workforce is already local, so this should not have a large impact. MAC are also in sourcing a number of contractor workforce into BHP shirts. The pathway for 2030 is for people at MAC to have stable long terms jobs, which is good for the community.

JL advised there had been discussions at Muswellbrook Council regarding travel and queried how many of the workforce are locals versus those travelling, for example; from Newcastle. GC did not have the exact percentage but would estimate around 30% to be travelling, with the balance within the general vicinity. GC noted that there are staff that are required to be on the Roster on-site, which is different to production and maintenance workforces.

JL noted that travel between Muswellbrook and Newcastle is very clear going, especially when compared to peak hour travel in Sydney which can be extremely slow. WP queried if MAC have any restrictions on the distance the workforce can live away from site and GC responded that MAC do try to limit this to one hour travel. There are Journey Management Plans for when travel exceeds one hour that includes safety measures such as the workforce being required to phone someone at a certain point in their travel.

## 7. MAC/MOD Approval Update - Ray Marten - Principal, Approvals

### Modification Snapshot

- ✚ Four year extension of mining activities to 30 June 2030
- ✚ Reduction in approved mining rate from 32 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) to maximum of 25 Mtpa run-of-mine (ROM), similar to current actual ROM coal production.
- ✚ Reduction in maximum total coal rail transportation from 27 Mtpa product coal to 20 Mtpa, and reduction in train movements from 30 to 20 movements per day, similar to actual movements.
- ✚ A minor 25 hectare extension of approved disturbance area in the north-west corner of the operation, predominately to allow for access and ancillary infrastructure (*Modification New Disturbance Area*).
- ✚ An overall reduction of 387 hectares in approved disturbance, as some previously approved disturbance areas are no longer required (*Impact Minimisation Area*).
- ✚ Revised final landform and final void configuration, including a reduction in the approved height of overburden emplacement areas and the final landform, to reflect the current actual height.

### Assessment Pathway

- ✚ The Modification is being sought under section 4.55(2) of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).
- ✚ A Modification Report is being prepared in accordance with the NSW Government *State significant guidelines – preparing a modification report* (October 2022). Consideration of the following key environmental aspects is required; *Noise and Blasting, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas, Social Impact Assessment, Biodiversity Development Assessment Report, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, Visual amenity, Surface water, Groundwater, Road Transport and Economics*. RM provided an overview of the key outcomes for each of the above environmental aspects.
- ✚ The Modification will be referred under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) to assess potential impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES).
- ✚ An EPBC Referral is scheduled to be lodged in August 2023. Bilateral assessment is not being sought.

**Visualisation Tools;** various viewing tools are being prepared for Mt Arthur Coal Mine and the Pathway to Closure, including; a 360 degree Panoramic Viewing Tool, various drive-throughs of sensitive receivers and 3D Mine Interactive Tool. MAC will make these available on the 2030 website and hope these will provide interest from stakeholders to enable them to better appreciate how the mine will evolve.

**ACTION 4: MAC to provide the CCC with links to the Visualisation Tools when available on the 2030 Website.**

JL hopes that something fantastic could be done with the land post mine use and GC noted the importance of understanding from MAC's Modification perspective that they are restrained by what they have approval for i.e. MAC are essentially seeking approval to meet obligations from a final landform perspective, which is 26 hectares of woodland corridor and pasture. MAC are looking at other opportunities and do talk about alternative land use in the Modification Report, however that is not for assessment but for context.

**Modified Final Landform - 2D picture**

Key changes for the modified final landform include:

- ✓ Reduction in the number of voids from three to two (Belmont Void to be backfilled).
- ✓ Change in location and shape of the Northern Open Cut Void.
- ✓ Reduction in height of the northern emplacement areas by approximately 20m AHD.
- ✓ Decrease in net disturbance by approximately 387 ha (*Impact Minimisation Area*).
- ✓ Reconfiguration of post-mining land use areas (location of woodland corridors).

JL has wanted to see some innovative post mine land use over the last 25 years but that has not happened to date, she would very much like for there to be some really inventive uses that may attract people to Muswellbrook from areas such as Sydney. MAC explained their deliberate decision to seek a modification to obtain four years to 2026 and not an approval for something new, therefore the company has had to submit largely in line with what has been previously approved.

**Modification Approvals - Anticipated Timing**

- Finalise Environmental Assessments - August 2023
- Modification Lodgement - September 2023
- Modification Exhibition - Q4 2023

**8. Pathway to 2030 Update - Liz Watts - Head of Transition**

LW thanked the CCC for the opportunity to provide a transition and mine closure update. LW advised there are a large number of elements involved during the period of time through to 2030, particularly relating to the workforce from a transition perspective. Then come 2030, in relation to future after mining, there is the mine closure aspect and possibilities for the site.

LW acknowledged there are a lot of rumours about what is happening and what might happen at MAC, she asked if members have heard any of those pieces to please share them so they can be responded to. LW noted the importance for people to understand that the mine will close, if that is not accepted then it is hard to prepare and visualise possibilities for the future.

LW explained there are two aspects to the Pathway to 2030; 1) Safely operate the Asset and 2) Responsible closure plan and relinquishment of land. LW acknowledged BHP's deliberate decision to diversify out of coal and provided an overview of assets sold, noting that MAC differs to other sites, being a much bigger operation. LW provided an extensive overview of the risk outcomes associated with MAC from an investor point of view, detailing capital intensity points such as; trucks, excavators, ongoing maintenance of the prep plant which would all require ongoing investment and the geological complexities of mining reaching a monocline around 2030 which puts pressure on land and haul activities.

LW explained these operational costs then need to be combined with potential ups and downs in commodity prices, noting that in the long term a downward trend for coal price may be seen. LW acknowledged that there is common thought that the MAC site is still for sale, however the fact is that BHP made a decision to retain Mt Arthur Coal in its portfolio and seek the relevant approvals to continue mining beyond its current mining consent that expires in 2026, as part of a responsible process to cease mining in 2030.

WP queried if people were understanding these operational costs and the geological issue, he noted that most will have seen the ups and downs in commodity prices and understand that as a result things do change. It was agreed that it would be advantageous to get information about MAC's commercial viability out to community, as this should lead to acceptance of what is next and more discussion around post mining land use.

JL noted the large amount of money that comes from mining and reiterated that she would like to see future innovations that bring people into Muswellbrook. JL noted there has been many conversations about post mining land use since 1995, rather than Solar Wind Farms she would like to see concepts that will bring people into town, for example a station to recharge electric cars. JL is also interested in young people's expectations, as they tend to look above and beyond those of twenty years ago.

TF queried if there is an approval for MAC to underground mine that expires in 2030, she had thought that cannot be accessed until mining finishes however asked if it was possible that will be taken up. MAC responded they are focussed on the land they have available from an open cut point of view, in terms of other options, they did attempt an underground excavation on site in the past but this was not viable.

MAC provided a presentation on People, Planet, Prosperity, with the vision to deliver a positive legacy from BHP mining in the Hunter Valley. MAC's objectives are to optimise value during operations and in mine closure, enable their workforce an equitable transition, sustainable landforms and land uses, have an engaged Hunter Community, to secure enabling regulatory approvals and maintain BHP's reputation.

In order to think about what the future could look like from a visual perspective, MAC provided a video presentation on potential land use post mining, noting this does not capture all possibilities and there are no shortage of good ideas. MAC is not seeking these land uses, nor intends to ask for them, rather the presentation was to show that MAC has started to think about the future.

When imagining what is possible for potential land use, MAC presented the following ideas; recreation, renewable energy - solar farms, advanced manufacturing - repurposing of high quality infra-structure e.g. power network, agriculture - cattle grazing, equine industry, adventure park, hiking, mountain biking, pumped hydro, rehabilitation and biodiversity; native woodland corridors, and the protection of culturally sensitive areas

## **9. Discussion; How would you like BHP to engage ?**

AW noted that MAC will be conducting talks with their entire workforce, even though 2030 is a long way off they will have individual conversations about what the workforce see for their future and what support they need, also what suggestions they have for MAC around what they see for the future. These will take place over August and September and from the workforce insights, MAC can add those into planning for their future. MAC confirmed they are happy to provide further information and to share as much information as possible.

TF noted that Bayswater is closing in 2025 and with regard to the closure planning MAC is currently working on, queried if there were plans to document these e.g. to identify what might not have worked and what did work.



TF hoped there may be a document that Council could provide to other mines for future closures. MAC responded that they are taking learning's from the past and sharing openly is part of that process, for example; there was a conference recently at the Minerals Council where there was a presentation on Liddell Mine Closure, it was noted that the people aspect of closure is a key element.

JL feels that the mine closure will have a big impact on the town given the unbelievable opportunities that have been provided to the community in the past e.g. the Conservatorium, noting this is the type of benefit to Muswellbrook that will be missed.

WP noted the importance of communicating with the workforce and AW confirmed that MAC are engaging with them to ensure they have the right information, as do the general community. In addition, MAC have commenced Contractor and Supplier forums. MAC would like to encourage a positive mindset shift towards future possibilities, and will also be out and about talking to people in person i.e. MAC have a stand at the Cattle Dog Muster Event so will be there to answer any questions. In addition MAC have the website and will keep information live and up to date there.

MAC acknowledged whilst they are looking at strategies and over the course of the closure planning, questions will likely continue for the years ahead. AM noted over time there will be changes, so the company will need to be agile, as representatives from the Community and Council the CCC were encouraged to provide their feedback to MAC on how they would like to see company engagement.

TF queried if MAC could provide a general update to Muswellbrook Council bi-annually and it was confirmed that MAC had met with Council's General Manager and Shaylee recently and are awaiting forward dates to provide regular updates. MAC agreed with TF that the State Significant Development (SSD) group would also be a good forum to meet with and confirmed they would be happy to attend any special briefings, noting it needs to be understood that MAC are not putting in an SSD application.

## **10.General Business**

JN asked if members had any questions from the Meeting pre-read and nil were put forward. JN provided an overview of MAC's Y/E 23 rehabilitation, and detail of investigations and actions undertaken to some minor complaints. JN was pleased to report that MAC's availability of uptime for monitoring data was 100% over the quarter. JN advised that MAC have their three yearly Environment Report this year, which is scheduled for around October 2023, with the key report anticipated to come back to the CCC early in 2024.

### **Muswellbrook Council Update**

TF advised that Muswellbrook Council's Director of Planning and General Manager attended a meeting in Sydney with Councils to discuss post mining land use i.e. some short and medium goals in consultation with the Department of Planning. TF noted the work being conducted on the Hunter Regional Plan, she felt it was good that there are some initiatives around land use for other users. TF advised she will provide an update on what was discussed at the next CCC meeting.

In relation to mine sites closing, TF said it would be good to consider what information Council need from these sites before they leave e.g. areas of contamination, weeds etc. TF hopes these will be fleshed out over the next few years as the land needs to be managed for hundreds of years into the future.

## **11.Next Meeting - 8 November 2023**

WP thanked all for their attendance and closed the meeting at 11.15 a.m.

**Action Carried Forward;** AW to make contact with the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue (UHMD) to get a sense on how they communicate and ascertain what channels they are reaching out to. CCC Members to put forward any particular pieces that they are interested in to enable MAC to invite the UHMD to present on these at a future meeting.

### **Actions Arising**

**Action 1:** WP to liaise with CK and JN regarding formalising the recruitment process and advertising for new Community and Stakeholder members to join the MAC CCC.

**Action 2:** Muswellbrook Council to confirm MAC CCC representatives.

**Action 3:** WP to circulate the DPE CCC Guidelines Terms of Reference Template for member comment. The MAC CCC Terms of Reference to be placed on the 8 November 2023 Meeting Agenda, for further discussion and confirmation.

**Action 4:** MAC to provide the CCC with links to the Visualisation Tools when available on the 2030 Website.

### **Specialist Presentations on offer for 2023 & 2024 MAC CCC Meetings**

- ✓ Biodiversity Offset Land Management - Mark Nolan
- ✓ Dust Management - Jimmy Nixon.
- ✓ Heritage Property Update - Jimmy Nixon
- ✓ Environmental Audit Report - Jimmy Nixon