

**MINUTES OF THE DARTBROOK COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING – 15 March 2023**

ATTENDEES:		
Lisa Andrews	LA	Independent Chairperson
Annette Rahn	AR	Community Representative (left at
Arthur Mitchell	AM	Community Representative
Theresa Folpp	TF	Muswellbrook Shire Council (MSC) Representative
Jeff Beatty	JB	AQC Non-Executive Director Dartbrook Operations Planning and Approvals Manager
Geoff MacKenzie	GM	Dartbrook Operations HSEC Manager
Lachlan White	LW	Paspaley Pastoral Company Representative (observer)
James Bailey	JBA	James Bailey & Associates
Dorian Walsh	DW	James Bailey & Associates
APOLOGIES:		
Paul Smith	PS	Upper Hunter Shire Council (UHSC) Representative
Ayten Saridas	AS	AQC Interim CEO
Cr Allison McPhee	AMc	Upper Hunter Shire Council delegate

1. INTRODUCTION & APOLOGIES:

- 1.1 The meeting was opened by LA at 13:02.
- 1.2 LA confirmed the apologies for the meeting per the above list. It was also noted that David Conry had left AQC and that Ms Ayten Saridas had been appointed as Interim CEO. LA advised that LW was attending the CCC as an “observer” and welcomed him as the neighbouring land manager for Paspaley Pastoral Company.
- 1.3 JB stated his association with Tetra Resources and role as an AQC board member and introduced GM and LW to the CCC. It was noted that LW would be the main point of contact for any land management enquiries for the agricultural land operated by the Paspaley Pastoral Company.

2. DECLARATIONS

- 2.1 LA made a declaration in relation to her appointed role as Independent Chair to the CCC.

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 3.1 LA confirmed there were no comments on the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 November 2022.

**MINUTES OF THE DARTBROOK COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING – 15 March 2023**

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 4.1 LA reviewed the actions arising from the previous meeting, noting the three items with DW for response, which were included in the project presentation:
- On the site groundwater monitoring network;
 - A map showing the management status of AQC-owned land and land previously held by AQC but now in the ownership of Trepang Services and operated by Paspaley Pastoral Company, with contact details for any enquiries; and
 - An update on CHPP noise mitigation commitments and the site noise monitoring program.

- 4.2 DW provided an update on the Dartbrook groundwater monitoring network, with reference to an overview plan that indicated what groundwater systems were targeted by each monitoring bore. JBA noted the reduced potential for groundwater impacts from the current bord and pillar mine plans when compared to previous longwall mining operations. DW stated that the groundwater monitoring network will be included in the Site Water Management Plan and could be revised at any time in future to reflect new or updated information.

TF questioned the potential impacts to alluvium expected for the Modification. JBA stated that modelling shows that bord and pillar operations are unlikely to have significant impacts on the alluvium.

TF asked for clarification over the East Site Reject Emplacement Area (REA) bores. DW confirmed that these are monitored to identify potential leaching of materials from the rehabilitated REA and that monitoring includes a six-monthly check of analytes to confirm that there is no migration of contaminants from the REA into the groundwater system.

DW presented a figure identifying the AQC-owned land that would be retained and managed for mining purposes, as well as land that is now owned by Trepang Services and operated by Paspaley Pastoral Company. LW gave an update on the new landholder and JBA encouraged the community representatives to contact LW if they had any land management enquiries over the Paspaley agricultural enterprise. It was noted that any mining-related enquiries should continue to be directed to the Dartbrook site office contact number.

DW summarised the additional controls that were required to be installed at the CHPP prior to the recommencement of plant operations. JB described CHPP operations that would take place during the initial period of mining, including use of Front End Loaders rather than reclaimers on the coal stockpiles, and using only half of the existing coal stockpile footprint. This reduced footprint would be adequate as only roughly 0.1 Mt would be stored on the East Site stockpile during the initial mining period. JB also noted that a final decision on CHPP hours of operation was being worked through, however the plant will not be required to run at its full capacity rate of 6 Million tonnes per annum. The production ramp up period through to 2027 is 3 Mtpa hence there is no requirement to use the reclaimers and the full length of the product stockpiles.

JBA stated that an updated Noise Management Plan (NMP) for the site was being worked through with NSW regulators and was required to include noise control commitments consistent with the DA. DW provided an overview of the noise monitoring and response program in the NMP for the East Site and West Site. GM noted that a key noise control for the East Site would likely be to not operate various components of the CHPP during certain weather conditions.

DW to clarify NMP monitoring arrangements at the East Site after the first 12-month period after recommencement of mining for TF at the next CCC. **ACTION**

**MINUTES OF THE DARTBROOK COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING – 15 March 2023**

5. CORRESPONDENCE

- 5.1 LA confirmed the correspondence that was emailed to CCC members with the agenda:
- 14/12/22 – Email to members with the draft minutes for review.
 - 23/12/22 - Email to members with the finalised minutes together with the presentation.
 - 17/2/23 - Email to members with the meeting notice and agenda for this meeting.
 - 13/3/23 – Email to members with reminder for this meeting.

6. PROJECT / COMPANY UPDATE

- 6.1 JB presented the Dartbrook Mine Restart Schedule, noting that the target was to have first coal out after restarting mining in August 2023, dependent on procurement of equipment arriving on time and final funding being in place. The anticipated start of the construction phase was late March / April 2023, with the mine coming out of 'Care and Maintenance' at that time.
- 6.2 JB stated that five of the six DA-required environmental management plans that need to be approved prior to construction had been approved by Government, with the Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Management Plan (AQGGMP) the only document pending. The AQGGMP has undergone a NSW Department of Planning (DPE) third party peer review. The comments from this review have been addressed in the Plan and it is now back with DPE for approval. GM has also been developing the other Health, Safety and Environmental management plans required by the Resources Regulator to manage underground operations. Two further plans for Water and Spontaneous Combustion management will need approval by DPE before mining operations recommence.
- 6.3 JB stated that the underground Hunter Tunnel is still being dewatered, with associated review and decommissioning of old structures. JB confirmed for AM that the tunnel is generally in a good condition, however the existing conveyor structure would need to be fully replaced. The current maintenance work on site is being completed by two crews largely based in Aberdeen and Muswellbrook.
- 6.4 JB anticipated that the first three to six months of coal to be extracted would be bypass coal, that is, it would not require washing at the CHPP.
- 6.5 JBA asked what activities would be most noticeable as the site transitioned into the construction and operational phases. JB stated that additional road traffic coming to site would be the most noticeable from a community perspective, with more vehicle movements and logistical activities at the East Site likely to occur before the next CCC meeting.
- 6.6 TF asked that the CCC is notified of the date for the start of construction. JB will provide this to LA for distribution to all CCC representatives. **ACTION**
- 6.7 JB clarified that the PBE mining technique would not be used during the early period of operations. It is likely that a trial of the PBE technology would not take place until at least early 2024.
- 6.8 JB acknowledged that there were still some issues to resolve, however he expressed confidence that the required financial and other agreements would be secured to allow the start of construction and mining per the current schedule.
- 6.9 JBA asked what approach AQC was intending to take to secure the site workforce needed for the operational phase. JB confirmed his intention to advertise locally once all regulatory pre-approvals were in place and that he was quietly confident there was a good pool of local underground mining experience that the site could attract.

**MINUTES OF THE DARTBROOK COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING – 15 March 2023**

- 6.10 The general status of the Muswellbrook Bypass was discussed. TF was not certain of timing, but thought that the project was still scheduled to start in 2026/27.

7. PROJECT UPDATE – ENVIRONMENTAL & LAND MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 DW gave an update on environmental compliance monitoring and land management undertaken on site since the previous meeting. All monitoring data were within approved criteria except for an elevated dust deposition result recorded at deposition dust gauge 'MacAirstrip' that was unrelated to Dartbrook activities. No exceedances of any other monitoring criteria were recorded.
- 7.2 GM questioned the relatively high Electrical Conductivity results recorded at various times since 2010 at the surface water monitoring sites in the Dart Brook. DW and JBA confirmed that these elevated results were generally associated with either times of low / no flow or in the periods of 'first flush' of water flows after rain events.
- 7.3 DW stated that no environmental incidents or complaints had been recorded since the November CCC meeting.
- 7.4 DW confirmed the status of the various environmental management plans highlighted by JBA earlier in the meeting and their approval by DPE except for the AQGGMP, which is still under review. TF questioned whether these plans (and other regulatory required management documents) would need to be reviewed again prior to mining restarting and JBA confirmed this was the case.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

- 8.1 TF provided an update on MSC's position regarding access issues in the transport of wind farm components (wind turbines, blades, nacelles, etc) through the Muswellbrook Shire for existing and proposed renewables projects. TF also noted that the proponents of these projects currently planned to transport components via the Dartbrook private access road as a link to the New England Highway.
- JB stated that AQC had been approached and would remain in touch with MSC on this proposal as a key stakeholder. TF confirmed that MSC are currently objecting to these transport proposals until DPE and the proponents of wind energy projects determine a co-ordinated management strategy for associated road impacts.
- 8.2 DW summarised consultation with regulatory agencies that had occurred since the previous CCC meeting. JBA also noted that AQC had recently hosted both MSC and UHSC on site and was in the advanced stages of securing Voluntary Planning Agreements with each body.
- 8.3 TF notified AQC of the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 that had been published by DPE since the previous CCC meeting, gave an overview of the document and outlined potential changes in the adaptive reuse of mining infrastructure in the post-closure phase. While there were some regulatory and legislative amendments required before this could occur, TF encouraged AQC to consider the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 when planning future mine development and closure options. JB confirmed that under current approvals, areas of site currently disturbed for surface infrastructure were required to be rehabilitated to agricultural land after closure.
- 8.4 LA confirmed that there was no further General Business.

**MINUTES OF THE DARTBROOK COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING – 15 March 2023**

9. MEETING CLOSE

- 9.1 LA scheduled the next CCC meeting for Wednesday 14 June 2023, starting at 10:00am.
- 9.2 The meeting was closed at 14:04, with LA thanking all for their attendance.

Action Items

ITEM	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
1.	Confirm the noise monitoring program at the East Site after the first 12 months of mining operations for TF at the next CCC meeting.	DW
2.	Notify LA in advance of the date for commencement of construction.	JB