

Community Consultative Committee Details

CCC / Project Name:	Austar Coal Mine	Reporting Period:	January - December 2020
Independent Chairperson:	Margaret MacDonald-Hill	Proponent Contact:	Carly McCormack

1. Executive Summary

The Austar Community Consultative Committee was established in 2006 as part of a modification to the existing 1996 consent approval DA29/95 by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. The Committee operates in accordance with the 2019 Department of Planning and Environment's Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects.

The Austar Coal Mine is an underground coal mine situated in the Cessnock Council Local Government area, approximately ten kilometres south west of the town of Cessnock and in proximity to the villages of Paxton, Ellalong and Pelton in the Lower Hunter Valley of NSW. The Austar Coal Mine incorporates the former Pelton, Ellalong, Cessnock No. 1 (Kalingo) and Bellbird South Collieries and includes coal extraction, handling, processing and rail and road transport facilities. Extensive mining has been undertaken within the Austar Coal Mine since 1916. Historical mining was predominantly via bord and pillar mining and more recently via conventional longwall mining and Longwall Top Coal Caving (LTCC) methods.

The committee comprises:

- four local community representatives;
- one elected Cessnock City Council representative;
- one representative from the Cessnock Police Local Area Command;
- two Austar Coal Mine representatives, with attendance from other personnel as required;
- one independent Chairperson.

As advised in previous reporting, the majority of the community representatives on the committee are long term members with comprehensive knowledge of the mine's operations and have a well established rapport with Austar personnel.

With the announcement of the mine moving to care and maintenance at the end of March 2020, the February meeting of the committee decided to reduce the schedule of quarterly meetings to biannual, with the option of any member to request an extraordinary meeting, should the need arise. With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, this was a timely decision. Both meetings for the reporting period were well attended. Austar personnel provide detailed PowerPoint presentations to each meeting.

Matters discussed during the reporting period were current operations and exploration, employee numbers; redeployment opportunities and redundancies because of the mine going onto care and maintenance, security risks with limited onsite personnel, bushfire risk management and resultant increased dust from regional events, weather contrast causing an environmental incident because of a regional rainfall event and the Bellbird

South Mining Area. Other topics of discussion for the reporting period also included but not limited to:

- general environmental management and monitoring, including air quality, noise, surface water and groundwater
- land management and rehabilitation activities, including the Aberdare Reject Emplacement Area and West Pit Stockpile Area
- review of environmental management strategy and management plans to care and maintenance status
- renewal of mining leases
- exploration boreholes rehabilitation and drilling planning
- Bushfire management
- subsidence and vibration monitoring
- environmental incidents
- community complaints
- community sponsorship and donations
- Covid-19 response
- Annual Review
- Independent Environmental Audit.

As stated in previous reporting, the long history of mining in the area indicates an understanding and coexistence with the mine's operations. The number of community complaints remain minimal.

The strong rapport amongst all members indicates the committee serves its purpose. Committee members also volunteer additional time to assist in the assessment of community support applications beyond the normal meeting schedule. Unfortunately, this program has been suspended with the shift to care and maintenance.

2. CCC activities over last 12 months

- Committee meetings were held in the months of February and August 2020.
- Attendance at meetings is consistent, other than occasional apologies due to unforeseen commitments. The committee sets its meeting dates at the end of each calendar year for the ensuing year to avoid any known potential conflicts.
- No site tours were undertaken during the period because of Covid-19 restrictions.
- No joint CCC meetings were held during the period.

3. Key issues

The 2019 geological structures and management of coal burst events which impacted on mining operations in the Bellbird South Area presented further challenges for the Austar Mine during 2020 and the subsequent announcement of the mine's operations moving to care and maintenance. The committee remains supportive of the Austar mine and personnel.

Issue	Actions Taken	Next Steps
Future mining	Austar provides updates to the committee at each meeting on the status of future mining potential.	Ongoing.
Bellbird South Mining Area	Results of subsidence survey	Final results to be provided to February 2021 meeting.


4. Focus for next 12 months

The planned activities for 2021 will continue to be guided by the contributions of the CCC members. These activities are likely to include:

- Transition of care and maintenance status to mine closure
- Austar workforce
- Rehabilitation.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no outstanding or emerging issues that have not been addressed or are in the process of being so, to the committee's satisfaction.

Committee Meeting minutes and presentations are available on the website within two weeks of each meeting.

Signature of Chair:	
Date:	March 15 2021