

Duralie Coal Community Consultative Committee Annual Report for Year 2020

Community Consultative Committee Details

CCC / Project Name:	Duralie Coal Mine	Reporting Period:	January - December 2020
Independent Chairperson:	Margaret MacDonald-Hill	Proponent Contact:	Michael Plain

1. Executive Summary

The Duralie Community Consultative Committee was established in 2003 as part of the Duralie Coal Mine Development Consent approval and operates in accordance with the Department of Planning and Environment's 2019 Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects. The Committee is currently comprised of:

- three local community representatives;
- two Mid Coast Council representatives (elected and staff);
- two Duralie Coal representatives, with attendance from other personnel as required;
- one independent Chairperson.

The Committee continued to hold biannual meetings throughout the reporting year as mining operations ceased at Duralie in late 2018. The February meeting was carried out with normal face to face attendance. However, the August meeting was held via video/teleconferencing with only one community member able to participate remotely. The meeting proceeded via video conferencing with the Council representatives, Duralie Coal personnel, one community member and myself.

Early in the year the committee accepted with a degree of sadness the resignation of one of the inaugural members because of ill health. Owing to Covid-19 and the cessation of mining, recruitment and refreshment of the group was postponed. Even though the committee is only small, meetings are usually well attended, however, the combination of Covid-19 and technology problems reduced attendance numbers throughout the year.

Mine closure has been a regular agenda item at each meeting for the past few years, as has rehabilitation and future land use. A community member asked about the Duralie Biodiversity Offset Area, which is protected by a Public Positive Covenant. He expressed concern that the restriction on the land titles for this area may not be in perpetuity and could be changed by a future Government Minister. He suggested that the area would be better served by the relatively new Biodiversity Conservation Trust Voluntary Conservation Agreement Program. The discussion was ongoing throughout the year. Duralie Coal provided the committee with the Land Titles searches and instruments and an explanation of how the biodiversity security mechanisms for the Duralie Biodiversity Offset had been finalised in accordance with the Development Consent and the fact that the Biodiversity Conservation Trust post dates the Consent requirements. As Chair, this matter was discussed at length with the Department's Team Leader for Resource Assessments, who confirmed the information already provided to the committee was correct, the land was held in perpetuity and additional agreements were not required. This information was shared with the committee.

During late 2019 as NSW was greatly affected by bushfires, the biodiversity offset was also impacted by a nearby bushfire. Many RFS and volunteer fire fighters, who are also committee members, were able to control the fire. With the enduring drought, the committee had voiced its dismay in preceding years that the proposed controlled burns were delayed. The committee was pleased to hear Yancoal's response to the emergency situation throughout the state, the contribution of \$500,000 to the RFS and SES and policy support for employees to assist communities during these circumstances. The RFS also had access to water storages at Stratford and Duralie throughout the bushfire season.

In the wake of the previous years' drought and extreme bushfire events experienced across the State and prior discussions on controlled release of water in times of drought, the committee welcomed the news of the approval of the Stratford Water Access Modification to allow offsite water transfer by a public authority, the Mid Coast Council, and access to water by the RFS for fire fighting purposes. A water reuse order from the EPA is still required to be finalised before water can be transferred onsite.

Mid Coast Council is a major contributor at the committee meetings. The Catchment Officer is a regular invited speaker as the members have a strong interest in his work. The Duralie community enhancement contributions paid to Council are part of an environmental fund which has greatly assisted catchment management and garnered additional funding opportunities. The Council has been successful in establishing the Karuah Catchment Management Project and Grants Program in partnership with Landcare Australia and targeted landholders. The \$900,000 grant supports many projects such as Beyond the Shed Pilot Project, connectivity mapping of the Karuah and Myall Catchments, a business case for private conservation, wetland mapping and development of an MOU between Council and Hunter Local Land Services.

The achievements and proposed works form part of Council's annual financial report presented to the committee by Council's Coordinator, Community Strengthening and the Director of Community Spaces and Services. The Duralie CCC maintains its interest in the process and allocation of the community enhancement contributions paid to Council each year and acknowledges the benefit to the community these contributions bring. With mining operations coming to a close at Duralie, the committee is aware that this component of the contribution ceases in 2021, although contributions under Stratford's consent are still payable to Mid Coast Council

Other topics of discussion for the reporting period also included:

- general environmental management & monitoring, including air quality, noise, surface water and groundwater
- water management
- community complaints
- biodiversity management & Duralie Nest Box program
- broader community engagement and the CCC's print media articles
- Yancoal land management
- Yancoal Community Support Program
- Agricultural rehabilitation possibilities
- Stratford Extension Project updates and transition from Duralie Mine.

- Triennial Independent Environment Audit

All the committee members are an integral part of the local community, excepting the Chair. As long term residents, they are well known to their neighbours and in the area.

Duralie Coal Personnel continue to provide a high standard of information in advance of each meeting and in response to committee requests.

2. CCC activities over the last 12 months

- Committee meetings were held during February and August 2020. The August meeting was held via video/teleconference. The committee reviews its meeting schedule for the ensuing year in November each year. The number of meetings is likely to increase during 2021 in anticipation of further activity towards mine closure.
- A site visit of the newly completed rehabilitation area was undertaken prior to the February meeting.
- No joint Committee meetings were held, although the Duralie Committee maintains an interest in Yancoal's sister operation at Stratford. Stratford updates are included on the agenda for each meeting.
- Through aligned networks, the committee is kept informed by Duralie Coal and Mid Coast Council of other events occurring in the region throughout the year such as Karuah Catchment Landcare group and Land Service field days.
- Two representatives of the Duralie CCC are members on the Duralie Community Fund Panel under the auspice of Mid Coast Council,

3. Key issues

Issue	Actions Taken	Next Steps
Stratford Coal Education Program	Actively support ongoing success of Stratford Coal Education Program through CCC networks and media	Ongoing
Yancoal Community Support Programs	Disseminate information through CCC networks and media.	Ongoing
Post mining requirements	Planning for post mining landforms	Ongoing interaction through CCC and workshops as required


4. Focus for next 12 months

The planned activities for 2021 will remain consistent with those of previous years and will be guided by the contributions of the CCC members. These activities are likely to include:

- to investigate potential opportunities to increase agricultural land capability whilst meeting rehabilitation requirements.
- Engage with Yancoal and the broader community on post mining options, including landscape and potential uses.

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 5 2020