

Community Consultative Committee Details

CCC / Project Name:	Austar Coal Mine	Reporting Period:	January - December 2019
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 version of the 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 meets quarterly each year and 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, operations and have a good relationship with Austar personnel.

During the reporting period, a request to attend a committee meeting was received from the newly appointed Chief Inspector from Cessnock Police Local Area Command, who expressed an interest in forming relationships with the local community and the Austar CCC. An invitation was extended to the May meeting, wherein the committee agreed there was considerable merit in his attendance and participation at the quarterly meetings and acknowledged the opportunity to forge strong and valuable community links effective beyond the meetings. The Department approved his appointment as the representative of a stakeholder group and he was welcomed as a member to the CCC at the August meeting.

Meetings continue to be well attended with detailed PowerPoint presentations given by Austar representatives to each meeting.

Matters discussed during the reporting period were current operations and exploration, employee numbers, potential bushfire risk with increasing drought conditions, fuel reduction burns and increased dust from regional dust events. 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
- coal burst and management techniques
- Bushfire management
- subsidence and vibration monitoring
- environmental incidents
- community complaints
- community sponsorship and donations
- proposed underground site visit

As stated in last year's report, the long history of mining in the area indicates an understanding and coexistence with the mine's operations. The number of community complaints are minimal.

The strong rapport amongst all members indicate 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.

A survey of the committee members' views on the efficacy of the CCC reveals positive feedback and vindicates this view:

"In short, I see the committee as a valuable resource to both keep the community informed and as an opportunity to receive feedback about issues of concern to the community".

"I am very happy with the CCC. I feel it is achieving all of its objectives. I do not have any ideas for improvements".

"I think the CCC provides an ideal forum to enable members to be briefed on Austar's mining plans, progress and future intentions, giving the opportunity to ask questions of them, in a spirit of co operation and goodwill. The electronic circulation of meeting minutes provides a practical reference point for interested parties. With a very suitable and focused chairperson, the format certainly achieves the key objectives of such a CCC structure and should be continued, for the mutual benefit of Austar, the members and the wider community. Thanks for the opportunity to comment".

"I find the CCC very rewarding, I feel Austar is willing to answer any questions I have and give me any information I require. The meetings are efficiently run with plenty of time for detailed presentations and any questions people may have. This is the first mining ccc I have been on, I came to it suspicious of the process being a box ticking exercise. I was pleasantly surprised that it dealt with such detailed information and with such candour".

"I believe the CCC at Austar is doing a great job at maintaining relationships between community and council. Austar communicates well to the community through the local paper and are very willing to provide answers to any questions or concerns from the CCC. Their community sponsorship program was wonderful this year.

In answer to your questions.

o establish good working relationships and promote information sharing between the company, local community, council and stakeholder groups?

YES

o keep the community informed about projects/proposals, seek community views and respond to matters raised within the community?

YES

o allow you the opportunity to seek information and give feedback on the development and implementation of projects/proposals to assist in achieving a balance of social, environmental and economical outcomes within the community? YES".

2. CCC activities over last 12 months

- Committee meetings were held in the months of February, May, August and November 2019.
- 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.
- A site tour and demonstration of Austar's Remote Longwall Monitoring system operations was part of the May meeting.
- During March an underground mine tour was arranged through the CCC for the Cessnock City Councillors at the request of the Councillor representative.
- In August, at the request of stakeholder CCC member, Austar personnel arranged an underground mine tour for officers from Cessnock Police.
- No joint CCC meetings were held during the period.

3. Key issues

Austar Coal Mine faced some challenges in 2019 with geological structures and management of coal burst events impacting on mining operations in the Bellbird South Area. Continued assessment of future mining operations in the Stage 3 area was also carried out during 2019. The committee remains supportive of the Austar mine and personnel and will continue a watching brief on its future.

Issue	Actions Taken	Next Steps
Future mining	Austar provides updates to the committee at each meeting on the status of future mining and proposed sequence.	Ongoing.
Ongoing drought	Committee briefed on bushfire management plans.	Completed. Updates as and when required.

conditions and fire implications	Discussion on support for Austar employees who are RFS volunteers.	To be provided at February 2020 meeting.
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4. Focus for next 12 months

The planned activities for 2020 will continue to be guided by the contributions of the CCC members. These activities are likely to include:

- Exploration program updates
- Austar workforce and future progress of the mine

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:	April 9 2020