

Stratford Coal Community Consultative Committee Annual Report for Year 2020

Community Consultative Committee Details

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

1. Executive Summary

The Stratford Community Consultative Committee (CCC) is a long established committee initiated in 1995 as part of the Stratford Coal Mine Development Consent approval. With the subsequent approval of the Stratford Extension Project, the Committee members oversee the Stratford Mining Complex in accordance with the Department of Planning and Environment's 2019 Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects. The mine's area of operation is a 1,500 ha site of former grazing land, east of The Bucketts Way and situated between the villages of Craven and Stratford.

The committee comprises:

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

The Committee meets quarterly, although with Covid-19, the May and August meetings were conducted via tele/video conferencing with most members resuming normal attendance at the November meeting. Despite the technology challenges that accompanied Covid-19, attendance numbers remained high. The committee continues to enjoy the benefit of long term community members and their knowledge is a well respected asset to the successful function of the whole committee. The committee sets its meeting dates at the end of each calendar year for the ensuing year to avoid any known potential conflicts.

Since the merging of two former Local Government Areas into the MidCoast Council, staff and elected representatives have shown a keen interest in the area, ensuring a consistent and vital link into local and regional affairs and greatly contributing to the efficacy of the committee. A much improved financial account of the Stratford Coal Community Enhancement contributions paid to Council is now provided to the committee annually.

The incumbent Stratford Coal personnel have remained the same for some time. Their expertise and good rapport with the committee, together with the high standard of pre-meeting information reports and comprehensive presentations given ensures a proficient community consultative committee.

For the reporting period and because of Covid-19 restrictions, only one invited speaker from the Yancoal Tenements Team joined the August meeting. This was in response to concerns raised at the May meeting on the advertisement of renewal of Yancoal Exploration and Assessment Leases and the lack of communication, which raised criticism and confusion within the local community, of the company and the name

changes of the Division of Resources and Geoscience (DRG) contributing to incorrect website accessibility. The Yancoal Tenements Manager briefed the committee on the specific requirements of the DRG, formerly the Division of Resources and Energy, provided information on the difference in the mining tenements and an explanation for the inclusion of biodiversity offset areas. Stratford Coal agreed to advise the committee of future renewals to avoid any further ructions within the local community.

In the wake of the previous year's drought and extreme bushfire events experienced across the State and prior discussions on controlled release of water in times of drought, at the February meeting the committee welcomed the news of the approval of the Stratford Water Access Modification to allow offsite water transfer by a public authority, the MidCoast 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. Bushfire management in the biodiversity offset areas has been discussed in recent years as the drought conditions worsened, as had the value of being aware of the GPS and access tracks. This information was collected and provided to the committee.

Other topics of discussion for the reporting period also included:

- general environmental management and monitoring, including air quality, noise, surface water and groundwater
- weeds, pest and pasture management, including wild dog control
- community complaints
- broader community engagement and community enhancement contributions to Council and allocation thereof
- progress at the mine and the Stratford Extension Project including proposed road closures
- Rehabilitation progress
- Biodiversity offset strategy
- Successful Nest Box Program
- Yancoal land management, including rural leased lands
- Bushfire mitigation
- Post mining land use and mine closure planning
- Triennial Independent Environmental Audit
- Covid-19 Site response

2. CCC activities over last 12 months

- Committee meetings were held in the months of February, May and August via tele/video conference, and November 2020.
- Committee site tours were restricted because of Covid-19. During the November meeting, four members of the committee viewed Avon North and Bowens Road North, Stratford East, Stratford Main Pit from the top of the Stratford Rehabilitation Area.

- No joint CCC meetings were held during the period, although the committee is appraised of Yancoal's sister operations at Duralie as the mine approaches end of life stages.

3. Key Issues

The CCC applauded Stratford Coal in progressing the modification and the infrastructure to allow transfer of offsite water to the MidCoast Council for civil construction works and associated dust suppression. The committee is very aware of strategic planning and utilisation of mine infrastructure that could provide valuable water resources for future use.

The Stratford CCC continues support for the long running Stratford Coal Education Program and the benefits it brings to the youth of the local community. It remains vigilant that the benefits of such funding, along with other community enhancement contributions and Yancoal Community Support Programs should flow through to those communities directly impacted by mining.

Improved annual reporting by MidCoast Council on the allocation of community enhancement contributions has led to an ongoing refinement of information and better understanding of the process. The Council continues to review its management practices and financial reporting back to the committee.

Community complaints of lighting and noise have increased this year and the committee has requested a review of mitigation measures.

Issue	Actions Taken	Next Steps
Stratford Coal Education and Yancoal Community Support Programs	Actively support ongoing success of Stratford Coal Education Program and Stratford Coal Community Support through CCC networks and media.	Ongoing
Stratford Extension Project	Update management plans and include relevant changes to committee presentations for discussion at CCC meetings.	As and when required
Biodiversity and Conservation Areas information exchange	GPS survey of access tracks used by emergency services and contract services completed. Information shared with Committee.	Available for future fire fighting Integration of biodiversity connectivity projects with MidCoast Council planning. Ongoing

Community complaints	Review lighting compliance: installation of timer in heavy vehicle wash down bay Lower wattage lights used Lights turned off when not in use Noise from blasting Noise monitoring	Monitor Location to be included in complaints summary Early hours of day shift to be included at sites where higher predicted noise affectation is occurring
Request for production tonnages split	Report on thermal/coking ratios	To be included in future reporting from February 2021

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:

- to investigate potential opportunities to increase agricultural land capability whilst meeting rehabilitation requirements
- interest in management of Yancoal owned land, including rural lease areas
- bush fire control
- MidCoast Council Catchment Officer to attend 2021 meeting to present on Karuah river Catchment Management Improvement works and biodiversity connectivity projects
- The committee resumes its meeting schedule in February each year and will maintain a similar schedule as the previous year.

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 3 2021