Response to the Newcastle Herald – mine conditions

The department is continually working to improve and strengthen the conditions which apply to mining operations, particularly with respect to management of issues such as blasting and dust.

Recently granted consents require mines to install real time dust monitors, to regularly assess monitoring data and to relocate, modify and/or cease operations to ensure they comply with the relevant air quality criteria. Further, recently granted consents require that mines minimise visible off-site air pollution, to reduce dust impacts on privately owned land.

These conditions are applied into conditions for new open cut mining proposals and are progressively being incorporated into revised conditions for existing open cut mines.

In the timeframe of your inquiry, it’s not possible to give an exact breakdown as to which conditions are applied to which mines.

However, the majority of the 13 operating open cut mines in the Upper Hunter have specific operating conditions in their consents regarding air quality management and dust.

A small number of mines operate under planning approvals which substantively date back more than 10 years and do not have such detailed air quality management conditions.

However, as with all mines in the Upper Hunter, the department works with these mines to ensure that best practice air quality management is applied.

The Environmental Protection Authority also has a role in working with mines to implement best practice air quality management through Pollution Reduction Programs.