

## Dartbrook Underground Mine Community Consultative Committee – Annual Report for 2021

<b>CCC / Project Name:</b>	Dartbrook Underground Mine CCC	<b>Reporting Period:</b>	February 2020 to March 2021
<b>Independent Chairperson:</b>	<b>Lisa Andrews</b>	<b>Proponent Contact:</b>	<b>Dorian Walsh (consultant)</b>

### 1. Executive Summary

Dartbrook is owned and managed by AQC Dartbrook Management Pty Limited (AQC) and is located 10 kilometres north-west of Muswellbrook and 4.5 km south-west of Aberdeen, NSW. From 1993 until October 2006, Dartbrook operated as an underground longwall coal mine. Former owners of the mine elected to suspend mining and the operation was placed under Care and Maintenance from 1 January 2007. Under Care and Maintenance, site activities are generally limited to the maintenance of:

- The Hunter Tunnel, which along with the Kayuga interseam drift, are the only areas of the underground mine that are still accessible. The Hunter Tunnel and Kayuga interseam drift connect to the Eastern and Kayuga Western mine entrances, respectively;
- The Western Facilities (West Site), which is located west of the New England Highway and comprises the administration office, a small workshop, and Wynn and Kayuga mine entrances to the underground mine; and
- The Eastern Facilities (East Site), which is located east of the New England Highway and comprises the Coal Handling and Preparation Plant (CHPP), rail load out facilities, cleared coal stockpiles and the rehabilitated Reject Emplacement Area.

In February 2018, AQC lodged an application to modify DA 231-7-2000 (MOD7) to provide further operational options for Dartbrook (in addition to those already approved) to recommence mining via limited bord and pillar underground mining within the Kayuga Seam and to extend the approval period under DA 231-7-2000 by 5 years (to 5 December 2027). DA 231-07-2000 (MOD7) was determined by the NSW Independent Planning Commission (IPCN) on 9 August 2019. The IPCN approved the proposed recommencement of mining activities but rejected the proposed five-year extension to the consent approval period. It was AQC's opinion that without the extension to operate under DA 231-7-2000 for a further five years it was impractical to recommence mining at Dartbrook, accordingly, in November 2019, AQC announced its decision to lodge an appeal against the IPCN determination in the NSW Land and Environment Court.

This matter is currently before the L&E Court.

An Independent Chairperson was appointed by DPIE in February 2020 in accordance with the guidelines and since has met in March 2020 (virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions), September 2020 (on site) and December 2020 (on site), with some members electing to participate via video-conferencing. Whilst there can be technical difficulties associated with this type of forum, members were able to receive a comprehensive presentation from the proponent's consultant.

The Upper Hunter Shire Council has objected to the Dartbrook Mine application throughout its assessment process with DPIE and the Independent Planning Commission in accordance with its views and the majority of its residents, by advocating UHSC's "Position Statement" regarding coal and coal seam gas activities in its shire. A number of questions are posed at each CCC by Council's delegate on its behalf and that of the community. Where questions are deemed appropriate, they are answered on the day or taken on notice for response at the earliest convenience.

All members have completed their governance requirements in accordance with the Department's guidelines.

## CCC activities over last 12 months

The committee met in March (virtually due to COVID 19 restrictions), September & December 2020 (on site) and received comprehensive presentations regarding activities that have occurred, including:

- Management changes with AQC
- Dartbrook Underground Modification 7 Update
- Independent Environment Audit 2019
- Environmental Monitoring - results provided for Rainfall, High Volume Air Sampling, Dust Deposition, Surface Water – Hunter River and Dart Brook
- Complaints and Incidents Summary
- Land Management
- Stakeholder Consultation
- Mining Operations Plan (Care and Maintenance)
- Attendance at the meetings is high, with the occasional apology due to competing commitments of volunteers.
- There were no joint CCC's held.

## 2. Key issues

Trending topics of committee discussion can be summarised as:

Issue	Actions Taken	Outcome
<b>NSW Land &amp; Environment Court Proceedings</b>	MOD 7 appeal is currently before the L&E Court. This decision will determine whether AQC will recommence mining activities at Dartbrook.	CCC to be advised of the outcome of the appeal. (This still appears to be several months away.)
<b>Environmental Monitoring</b>	The proponent provides detailed information of its environmental monitoring on site and its commitment to meeting legislative and regulatory compliance.	Ongoing presentations to CCC.
<b>Land Management</b>	Sale of agricultural land, above and surrounding the project site.	AQC are currently seeking expressions of interest to sell some of its land assets.
<b>End of Mine Life Plan</b>	Potential changes to the mine's end of life plan if the L&EC appeal is successful	Should the appeal be determined in AQC's favour and the mine reinvigorated, then AQC will likely prepare an

		updated MOP; whereas if the appeal were unsuccessful then an updated Mine Closure Plan would be prepared.
<b>Mining Operations Plan (MOP)</b>	The updated draft Mine Closure Plan was provided to MSC, UHSC, DPIE and DPIE-Water for review and comment. The document was proposed to be finalised in February 2021 and submitted for consideration/approval.	The draft MOP is currently undergoing review by relevant agencies.
<b>Management Plans</b>	Management Plans are updated/revised where required.	The CCC are advised of approval of updated management plans.

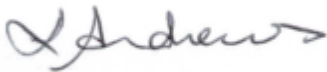
### 3. Focus for next 12 months

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

- Continued updates on environmental monitoring of the site (under care and maintenance).
- Continued updates provided on environmental performance.
- Continued updates on Management Plans, Mining Operations Plan, End of Mine Life Plan
- Proposed site inspection.
- MOD 7 and outcome of the Land & Environment Court Proceedings for the recommencement of mining at Dartbrook.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no outstanding or emerging issues that have not been addressed.

CCC minutes and presentations are available on the website.

Signature of Chair:	
Date:	21 April 2021