

Community information sessions

Coal & Allied's Lower Hunter Lands conservation lands transfers, residential and industrial developments

Background

Coal & Allied owns 4,078 hectares of land in the Lower Hunter Region of NSW. This land is located within the four local government areas of Newcastle, Cessnock, Lake Macquarie and Wyong. The sites are not required for future mining or other operational purposes.

In 2004, Coal & Allied commissioned a preliminary review of its Lower Hunter land holdings. This review made a number of recommendations with regard to the potential future land development opportunities that may exist. In late 2004, Coal & Allied established a Lower Hunter Project team.

In mid 2007 the communities surrounding this land were consulted about possible residential developments at the southern estates of Middle Camp (Catherine Hill Bay), Gwandalan, Nords Wharf and the northern estate of Minmi/Link Road as well as possible industrial development at Black Hill. This process included one-on-one meetings, community workshops, charettes, community reference groups and public exhibitions.

Concept plans and supporting studies were submitted to the NSW Department of Planning in late 2007. A high number of community submissions and an Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel (IHAP) suggested a number of changes including a reduction in the number of lots proposed, further environmental considerations and heritage impact mitigation.

These initial plans were withdrawn by Coal & Allied in mid 2010.

In August 2010, the NSW Department of Planning provided updated Director General's Requirements for the Minister to consider the new applications for the proposed developments at Nords Wharf, Middle Camp (Catherine Hill Bay), Gwandalan, Minmi/Link Road and Black Hill.

Coal & Allied is preparing to submit environmental assessments, concept plans and supporting studies in late 2010 for all estates.

Coal & Allied's objectives

The overall focus of this project is on sustainable regional conservation, sustainable urban outcomes and supporting valued communities with a sense of place.

The project proposes to develop more than 800 hectares of land located at Black Hill, Minmi, Link Road, Gwandalan, Nords Wharf and Middle Camp. The aim is to achieve sustainable residential development and employment generating development in these areas.

The project will also assist the NSW Government realise the long sought after 14,600 hectares Watagans to Stockton Bight and Wallarah Peninsula conservation corridors by contributing over 3,200 hectares of land.

This contribution will provide a great boost to the environment and to the health and enjoyment of the community through the recreational opportunities that will be available as described in the Lower Hunter Regional Conservation Plan.

Community information sessions

To help the community learn more about Coal & Allied's revised plans for the proposed residential land development and conservation land transfer in the Lower Hunter a number of community information sessions were conducted in October and November 2010.

The following table details the information session schedule.

Date	Time	Location
Thursday 14 October 2010	3.30 to 6.30pm	Gwandalan Community Hall
Friday 15 October 2010	4.00 to 7.00pm	Nords Wharf Community Hall
Saturday 16 October 2010	9.00 to 12noon	Catherine Hill Bay Surf Club
Friday 4 November 2010	4.00 to 7.00pm	Minmi Progress Association Hall
Saturday 5 November 2010	9.00 to 12noon	Minmi Progress Association Hall

The purpose of these sessions was to:

1. raise awareness of the plans being resubmitted
2. provide an overview of the process to lodge the Environmental Assessment and State Significant Site studies
3. highlight revisions to previously submitted concept plans
4. provide an avenue for personal interactions with impacted communities
5. provide details of submission process (submissions not accepted at information sessions)

The sessions were hosted by Coal & Allied representatives General Manager Property Development, Keith Dedden, Property Specialist, Geoffrey Rock, Principal Community Investment, Stephen Sneddon and community relations consultant Justine Voigt.

Information session outcomes and feedback

Minmi and Black Hill – 5 and 6 November 2010

A sign-in register available at the entrance of the Minmi Progress Hall lists a total of 65 names and addresses (35 names and addresses, for Friday and 32 names and addresses for Saturday). Most of those who attended session signed the sheet. It is estimated that approximately 70 locals attended the sessions. The sessions were advertised extensively in the local paper and supported by a “letter box drop” by one of the locals who participated in the 2007 consultation process. Members of the local progress association, environmental groups, adjoining owners and a Newcastle City Council Councillor attended the sessions.

The attitude among those who visited the sessions was mixed however all appreciated Coal and Allied’s efforts in running the information sessions and keeping the community informed on the project status and proposed timelines to date.

The majority of those who attended the session were aware of a need to provide housing,, job opportunities and infrastructure for the future and recognized the need for the proposal and the benefits both through improved facilities and conservations outcomes it could bring the area. There were some who attended the session who were not in favour of the proposal and were concerned about losing the small village feel currently existing at Minmi.

Some of the comments made during the sessions at Minmi included the current traffic flow from Marylands, Outlook etc, and drainage flow lines around the area and swamp lands. Others commented on the opportunities for walkways and cycleways along with recreational areas. The conservation outcomes from the proposal were recognized on the whole as a positive for the project however some landowners were skeptical on how these lands would be managed by the State in the future.