

Woodsreef Taskforce Presentation

7.00pm 26 July 2012, The Playhouse Hotel, Barraba

Welcome and introductions

Brad Mullard, Chair of the Woodsreef Taskforce, Executive Director Minerals at Industry and Investment NSW.

Thanks to The Playhouse Hotel for a wonderful venue.

Welcome to Tamworth Regional Councillors Col Murray, Russell Webb, Helen Tickle, Ray Tait, Paul Durant, Phil Betts. Juanita Wilson sent her apology.

Welcome also to Kevin Anderson MP (arrived 8.20pm)

Most of the Woodsreef Taskforce members are here today - introducing

- Dr Wayne Smith, Professor of Medicine and Public Health at Newcastle University, NSW Director of Environmental Health
- Professor David Durrheim, Public Health Controller, Hunter New England Area Health Service
- Craig Lamberton, Director, Environment Protection Authority Hazardous Incidents and Environmental Health
- Phillippe Fulino, Hunter New England Area Health Service
- Scott Stanton, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Crown Lands Division
- Kate Maddison, Project Manager, Woodsreef Mine Major Rehabilitation Project

The Taskforce also invited

- Barry Robson, President Asbestos Disease Foundation of Australia
- John Ringling, WorkCover

Local introductions

Danny Ballard, Barraba CDC

Thanks to the Taskforce for coming to Barraba. Thanks to so many Councillors for being here today.

Kevin Anderson is tied up at a meeting, will be here after 8pm. Juanita Wilson sends her apologies, family comes first. Please leave questions to the end. Please refrain from chatting as it causes makes it hard for others to hear.

Project Background

Kate Maddison, Project Manager, Woodsreef Mine Major Rehabilitation Project, NSW Trade & Investment

Woodsreef Mine Major Rehabilitation Project

The NSW Government has provided funding of \$6.3 million to address the most significant health, safety and environmental issues at the Woodsreef Mine, including:

- The containment of processed friable chrysotile asbestos
- Removal of the derelict mill, silos, and administration buildings
- Implementation of a comprehensive air quality monitoring program and health risk assessment before, during and following remediation works
- Closure of Mine Road, Woodsreef

Update as at June 2012

- NSW Trade & Investment has engaged the Department of Finance & Services, NSW Public Works to project manage the demolition works. A number of specialist consultants have been engaged to assist in planning the demolition works and environmental assessments.
- A flora and fauna study has found that the threatened Large-eared Pied Bat is roosting in the mill building, which is intended to be demolished. The NSW Government will undertake additional survey work including a species impact statement to determine the likely impact on the bat species. It is anticipated that Commonwealth and State Government environmental approvals are required and may delay the commencement of the demolition works.
- NSW Trade & Investment and the Soil Conservation Service are conducting a comprehensive stormwater management assessment of the site.
- A competitive tender process for the Air Monitoring and Health Risk Assessment Project has been undertaken by NSW Trade & Investment with members of the Woodsreef Taskforce. The successful consultant will enter into contract negotiations with NSW Trade & Investment. The long term health risk assessment will assist the NSW Government in assessing and managing the ongoing risks associated with the Woodsreef Mine.
- The Minister for Resources & Energy has made an application to the Minister for Primary Industries to close a section of Mine Road, Woodsreef. Closure of the road is a key recommendation of the NSW Ombudsman's report "Responding to the asbestos problem: The need for significant reform in NSW, November 2010". The Department of Primary Industries, Crown Lands Division will advertise the closure application and conduct a 28 day consultation period.
- A key initiative of the Woodsreef Taskforce was completed in June 2012 with the erection of warning signs for motorists approaching the derelict Woodsreef Mine site. The signs describe mitigation measures which will lessen the exposure risk for the travelling public.

- NSW Trade & Investment is implementing additional security measures for the mine site including installing and maintenance of perimeter signage, and regular inspections of the perimeter fence and main site access points.
- \$550,000 was spent on the following tasks in the 2011/12 financial year:
 - Actioning recommendations from the NSW Ombudsman's report
 - The main demolition project management and planning assessments
 - The main demolition early tender involvement procurement process
 - Environmental assessments and approvals
 - The additional assessments of the Large-eared Pied Bat
 - The selection of the Air Monitoring and Health Risk Assessment Consultant
- The overall planning phase of the project has been extended into the 2012/13 financial year to allow for additional work relating to the threatened Large-eared Pied Bat roosting in the mill building.
- The main demolition works are intended to commence in January 2013, subject to environmental approval processes.

Community Health Concerns

Barry Robson, Asbestos Diseases Foundation Australia presented a short film

"There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos." "Blue, brown and white asbestos have all killed."

Please do not expose yourself or your families to this site.

Professor David Durrheim, Public Health Controller, Hunter New England Area Health Service

Compelling evidence that all forms of asbestos cause cancer 30-40 years after exposure. Higher the exposure and the longer the exposure the greater the risk.

New studies, meta analyses of studies done on crocidolite, conclude that there is no doubt that every form of asbestos causes cancers, in particular mesothelioma, and lung cancer. Rather than the type of asbestos, it appears that the length of fibres is more relevant in whether it is cancer causing.

Air Monitoring & Health Risk Assessment

Craig Lamberton, Director, Environment Protection Authority Hazardous Incidents & Environmental Health

Dr Wayne Smith, Professor of Medicine & Public Health at Newcastle University, NSW Director of Environmental Health

Hazard Identification -Where the more hazardous forms of asbestos are on the site. Overburden has little asbestos, tailings have some friable asbestos, building has lots of processed asbestos, also around the road, flowed down gullies, etc.

Air Modelling - Where would the levels of dispersed asbestos be? Based on climate modelling. Using theoretical worst case scenario, to choose where to measure. Will also help to determine where average levels might be. Community collaboration will be welcomed.

Air monitoring - Will begin before remediation works begin, during and after works are completed.

Samples will be close to the site and further away, also control site at another town far from Barraba.

Community also has opportunity to ask for specific areas to be monitored

Activity based assessment - for example, Measuring air while driving along representative roads

Health Impact Assessment

Long Term health risk assessment

Outcomes

Mine Road

Scott Stanton, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Crown Lands Division

David Baiba, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Crown Lands Division

Key risk is actually people visiting the site - hi risk activities include exploring the buildings, removing material from the site, trailbikes over the site, anything which will disturb the site.

The site has been fenced, however the fence has been cut, and the chain on the access gate has been cut. Due to this, the Ombudsman recommended the road be closed to ensure access is restricted.

Public consultation relating to the closure of the road -

Advertised in local paper 14 July Northern Daily Leader and 18 July Barraba Gazette

Written to landholders identified as being potentially affected

Closing date for submissions is 15 August

Written submissions to be sent to Tamworth Crown Lands Office, which will then present a substantial report to Tamworth Regional Council for consideration

Crown lands will forward the decision to the Minister for Lands for final determination

Crown Lands expect to provide a number of options to the Minister rather than only one.

Questions

Woodsreef Taskforce answered the following questions-

Question about the relevance of the Pied Bat? All part of the Environmental Impact of the project. Finding and creating alternative habitats for the bats. Encourage them to relocate. The bats would certainly not stop the project.

Question about the data regarding white asbestos causing disease?

Dr David Durrheim presented his slides which had been previously missing. 2 times higher risk of lung cancer, 11 times mesothelioma people only working with chrysotile asbestos. All forms of asbestos cause mesothelioma, and cancers of the lung, larynx and ovary. Exposing the public to the known risk of chrysotile would be negligent on the part of the government.

Do you know of anyone who worked solely in chrysotile mining who has fallen victim to asbestos related diseases?

Yes. The Taskforce is aware of 7 known workers at the mine who are victims of asbestos related illness linked to Woodsreef, registered with the Dust Diseases Board, including one who's only exposure was at Woodsreef.

Is there a plan to reopen the mine?

No. What was the last dust sampling? When and what was the results. Studies done 10 years ago. Modelling will be done to ensure it is representative, so that there is good data. Monitoring will be done before the project begins to ensure that a good baseline understood. Monitors will be in place, any increase in dust will immediately involve WorkCover.

Why is there no community representation on the Taskforce? Mr Ben Burgess. Local Landowner and affected stakeholder. Community is very concerned about the risk at Woodsreef. Great concern that the Taskforce left it until now before community consultation. Closure of The Mine Road will have a great effect on local business. Just following process to tick boxes, without consultation with affected community. Community has sought to engage with the Taskforce, asking more than 3 years ago to have a representative on the committee. Outcomes requested, evidence based monitoring process and community consultation on the Taskforce.

Taskforce has no jurisdiction over closure of the road. There is an opportunity for the community to express the impact of the road closure, to ensure the best decision is made. Get written submissions in to Crown Lands Tamworth.

Does the Taskforce made recommendations regarding the road?

No. Remediation of the site and reduction of risk is the role of the taskforce. All submissions go to Crown Lands, they liaise with Council and put a recommendation to the Minister.

Will the closure of the road be the first part of a process which ends up limiting all access around the mine and limiting use of all land backing on to the mine? Potential to shut down peoples livelihood.

Will Kevin Anderson be putting a submission in?

There may not need to be a complete close of the road, so that access can continue during remediation of the site. There needs to be a way to find another way. Taskforce cannot make the decision. Crown Lands and Council will make the decision. He will be happy to receive submissions to include with his. Road is important in floods, and bushfire. This is a great argument which needs to be included in a written submission.

Why is it all of a sudden a health hazard? Why now? Why were we not told of the risks before?

One of the problems with asbestos illness is the very long timeframes 30-50 years from exposure to illness. There is a growing body of evidence that asbestos is a health risk, and there is a greater understanding of what levels of exposure causes risk.

In 2000, Barraba Shire in consultation with Mineral Resources developed a plan to reroute the road, to minimise the risk of the mine. Why did nothing happen then, and why can that not happen now? (Barraba Council was looking for assistance from the State Government to get the road rerouted.)

There is an opportunity to present the reroute of the road as part of the submission process.

Is the liability on both the roads, the tar road Woodsreef Road, and the unsealed road Crow Mountain Road?

Just Crow Mountain, as it runs through the mine, and has material washing down from the tailings.

Risks should include economic risks of the closure of the road, which is why there should be a community member on the Taskforce.

(no comment)

Can the Lung Bus be brought to Barraba?

First it needs to be determined what the level of risk is.

If the mine road is closed, does that mean that the Woodsreef Road must be closed too?

(no answer was given to this question)

Who owns the title to the mine site?

Most of it is Crown Land, some owned by the Chrysotile Corporation, which is only an operating company, the parent company Woodsreef is defunct.

What is the contained cell for the material?

Excavated land completely capped, with overburden all left onsite.

Is the closure of the road to ensure all access is denied, so that the public can't see what is happening?

Yes, closure of the road is designed to deny access to the site, to minimize risk. In addition, material that washes out over the road causing additional risk.

Will there be an observation lookout available so that activity can be monitored by the community?

Not recommended.

Containment cells are designed to seal any material in the cell so that weather, etc, cannot erode the cell. the risk of removing the material is too great, so the material will be contained.

How will we know whether this site becomes an asbestos dump site?

There are no plans for this to occur.

The NSW government should immediately set up a dust sampling committee.

(no comment)

There are five dams around the southern side of the site. They seem to have been let go. Why have they not been maintained? Are they going to be operational?

An assessment is being completed on this issue.

Why has Barraba community been refused membership on the Taskforce?

The taskforce was a highly technical committee, an interagency organisation set up by the government.

How long will the monitoring take before something happens?

Start of the works at present are dependent on the Bat.

Dr Deepal sent a letter, read out by Paula McIver.

(no comment)

Letter from David Witten and Bill Spencer, read out by Saran Marrett.

(no comment)

Close and thank you to all attendees

This is the start of the process, and only the beginning of the community consultation process.

Many thanks to all the Taskforce for coming all the way to Barraba.

Thanks to the audience too.

Mayor Col Murray

From a local government point of view, responsibility is to advocate on behalf of the community.

Council was asked to close the road, and chose not to initially. Sent it back to the State to consult with the community. Strongly encouraged the community to write their submissions to Crown Lands, and strongly recommended the community to ask for the road to be rerouted.