

# Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group

## “NSW Rehabilitation Reform Program”



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*A community-based group looking to address Environmental issues affecting Singleton Shire residents*

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We seek identification as to what is making our Children and Community Sick so they can be mitigated by OH&S Compliance Orders.

### **SSHEG Focus on Health**

SSHEG is Not Anti Mining or Anti Power Stations

## **“Mine Rehabilitation in Hunter Valley Feb 2018”**

We view Rehabilitation from the Community Health Impact point of view; and this encompasses, Physical, Mental, Social, Sense of Place with recognition of our Ancestral (Aboriginal, Colonial, Convict & Emigrant) Heritage that is trampled upon and often destroyed especially by Open Cut Coal Mining in the Hunter Valley.

Coal Mine Leases lock away land use for multiple quarter Century Years of Mining approvals, while the Heritage significance is mostly ignored and left to decay to a point when they are Government Approved to be Bulldozed, or not prevented by Compliance.

Firstly, we argue, that Archival Heritage pertaining to Mine Lease Lands is fundamental to the understanding the Short, medium and long-term significance of “Land and Water”. Presently this is mostly ignored or viewed in modern times with rose coloured Mine Glasses.

Clearly the Land Heritage significance pertains to remnant pockets from Gondwanaland, Megafauna Era, Early Aboriginals 65,000 BP, the Hunter Valley Aboriginals 5-10,000BP, Aboriginals present 100BP, Sydney NSW Settlement 1788-1820, Hunter Valley Settlement 1820-1865, and ongoing through to the Commonwealth of Australia 1901 present day influences.

We see Heritage based Tourism to be the Community Employment Opportunity today, (**Attachment 1**) which has a component in conjunction with showcasing Mine Operations as annual events; in much the same way recent Hunter Valley Mining Dialogue School Educational Activity initiatives have showcased this approach. Mining needs to recognise their “Social Licence” also involves the protection of Heritage aspects on their Mine Lease and other lands while they are mining. Many in the community and their siblings cherished Memories of prior generations living on these lands. Mine Heritage Preservation is thus multifaceted and are - an all of Mine - Rehabilitation responsibility.

MTW SSHEG Submissions over 7 years and involvement with the Rio Tinto Coal & Allied Community Heritage Advisory Committee and their Heritage Conservation Areas over 5 years has been without a concrete response so far: question of Bank Guarantees and Land Mortgages against Mine Commitments, Local Compliance Officers involvement, Sense of Place and local Residents connection to Mine Land & Water, Bulga Culture Centre & Tourism Hub, Aboriginal Museum Archaeology & Water Shed significance, and PAC comments without action are outlined in **Attachment 2**.

We therefore contend that Mine Heritage Rehabilitation begins at the earliest stages of “The Resource” identification and continues throughout the life of the Mine Leases. Mines are a party to allowing Heritage to deteriorate with ever Heritage Listed Estate Buildings under threat; such as Wambo and Ravensworth Estates as recent examples.

Two of the three Reforms relate to “During and Post Mining”: SSHEG makes the point that Heritage/Tourism should also Coexist !

**Why are reforms to the current regulatory framework for mine rehabilitation needed?**

- The NSW Government is committed to ensuring major mining projects use best practice rehabilitation and land can sustain another use once mining operations end.
- Reforms are needed to ensure rehabilitation and post mining land uses are properly considered early in mine planning, including the assessment of any final voids, and to improve regulatory coordination at the planning, operational and closure stages of the mine life cycle.

## Open Cut Mine Rehabilitation Community Health Impacts

*“The Question here is What is Mine Rehabilitation or rather What should it be?”*

### What is mine rehabilitation?

- The *Mining Act 1992* defines rehabilitation as the treatment or management of disturbed land or water for the purpose of establishing a safe and stable environment. In practice mining rehabilitation can cover a range of activities, such as demolition of infrastructure, remediation of contaminated land, establishing a final land form and revegetation. Rehabilitation can be carried out both during mining operations and after operations have ended.

Having been present when details were presented to Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue Annual Meeting in December 2017, there is a clear rationale behind these reforms. However, SSHEG consider that better wording of these Reforms will still see their implementation circumvented. As a result, better Bond and Rehab Benchmarks are needed.

For a 25year mine Approval, Rehabilitation Bonds should be set against Mine Plan Rehab 5 Year status, that is 5 Rehab benchmarks. Default at a benchmark sees the Bond loss for two periods.

Also to overcome the current Mine Practice of part way through a Mine 25 Year Approval, an Application for a new Mine Approval should see the Total 25 Year Bond forfeited.

## Rehabilitation Impact on Air Quality

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In many ways the Mine Impact on Air Quality relates to the Wind orientation to the Mine Working Void and the Overburden Dumps, and thus the Air Drifting Patterns from these areas that expose “Near Neighbours” to the Mine Air Pollution Emissions.

Mine Orientation Designs that considers the locality classic trade winds; Southerly Busters, August Westerly Winds, Summer Dirty North

Eastern, Summer Rain Squalls are examples where Community reports unbearable dust levels whipped into Air from Mining. In Rehabilitation terms for mines the short answer is not to approve Mines in amongst Rural Farming Families and Villages but to establish Forest Buffer Zones for Community Health Protection.

SSHEG Rehabilitation concerns are centred around the practical implementation on the ground. The wording in the Proposals will not alter the implementation of best practice. What is needed are practical documented examples of the sort of expertise and results shown by Bill Baxter of Coal & Allied- a copy of his how to do Rehabilitation book is needed.

Thanking you in anticipation of your acknowledgement

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Attachment 1     “Holistic Vision of Ancestral Heritage in Hunter”  
Valley 2017-Patricks Plains State Significant Precinct

Attachment 2     “MTW 2015 Approval - Conservation Heritage  
Advisory Group – Historic Heritage Management  
Plan”.

Figure 1. Life of mine rehabilitation regulatory process

