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NEW SOUTH WALES
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New air monitors provide real time information to the local community

First regional air quality monitors launched in Singleton and Muswellbrook

The Upper Hunter community will be able to access credible, reliable and relevant information about the region's air quality, in real time and available online twenty-four hours a day, as the first two monitoring stations go live in Singleton and Muswellbrook today.

In a partnership between the community, industry and government, local miners and power generators are jointly funding the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network. It has been designed by a leading air quality expert and the 14 stations will be independently operated by the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

At the official launch in Singleton, NSW Minerals Council CEO Dr Nikki Williams said that the mining industry had listened carefully to concerns that information on air quality had been hard to find, technical or difficult to piece together and has partnered with the Government to provide an innovative solution.

"The result is an extensive, independent monitoring network that will give the people of the Upper Hunter access to real time information that's reliable and that makes sense," Dr Williams said.

"It will also give industry and government regulators a better understanding of regional ambient air quality, complementing the current local monitoring that mines undertake around their operations.

"We understand the genuine concerns in the community about the impacts of what we do and we take them very seriously. Mine sites have comprehensive plans to manage dust. Mines can minimise dust by modifying their operations in response to real time monitoring of air quality and weather conditions. Appropriate mine design, progressive rehabilitation and water suppression also contribute to dust management.

"The industry is continually evaluating and improving dust management practices across all of its operations. For example, we're trialing the use of aerial seeding over larger areas of overburden, growing a cover crop to hold the soil together and reduce any disturbance from wind. We're also trialing the use of synthetic dust suppressants on haul roads and funding research to determine their effectiveness in different situations.

"We're thinking about things differently and we're open-minded about doing things differently too.

"The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue is also underway, where the region's coal producers are taking part in an open-ended discussion with the community about the role of mining and its impacts, the local economy and the region's future.

"This is not about telling the community what to talk about. It's up to those people taking part to identify the issues and the key point is that we are listening. We're looking forward to sharing those results with stakeholders in the New Year."

For more information on the Network go to <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/aqms/upperhunter.htm>

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