

Austar Community Consultative Committee (CCC) – 2025 Annual Report

CCC project name:	Austar Coal Mine	Reporting period:	January 1 to December 31 2025
Independent chairperson:	Margaret MacDonald-Hill	Proponent contact:	Carly McCormack – Environment & Community Manager, Austar Coal Mine

• Executive summary / introduction

The Austar Coal Mine Community Consultative Committee was established in 2006 as part of a modification to the 1996 Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning’s approval of the underground coal mine. The mine is situated in the Lower Hunter Valley within the Cessnock City Council Local Government Area, approximately ten kilometres south west of the town of Cessnock and in proximity to the local villages of Paxton, Ellalong and Pelton. Coal mining has taken place since 1916 and the Austar mine incorporates the former Pelton, Ellalong, Cessnock No. 1 (Kalingo) and Bellbird South Collieries. Early mining was predominantly bord and pillar and later moved to Longwall Top Coal Caving. The mine was placed on care and maintenance in March 2020 and Yancoal subsequently announced its permanent closure in February 2021. As site activities are entirely on rehabilitation and mine closure, the Committee’s main focus, the meeting schedule has been reduced accordingly over recent years.

The committee was comprised of:

- Four local community representatives;
- One elected Cessnock City Councillor representative;
- A representative from the Hunter Police District, Cessnock Police;
- Three Austar Coal Mine representatives with attendance from other personnel as required;
- An independent Chairperson.

• CCC activities over last 12 months:

The committee was due to hold its annual meeting in October this year, however, with all the community members unavailable to attend on the day and subsequent resignations, the meeting was cancelled and not rescheduled. Unfortunately, the resignation of one of the younger members because of work commitments became the momentum for the three remaining and exceptionally long-term members to review their positions (as residents of what was the Stage 3 mining area and no longer impacted by mining or closure operations), all considered it was time to pursue other interests and enjoy retirement. Following discussions with myself to gauge their interest in any future meetings, all subsequently tendered their resignations from the Austar CCC.

Their collective experiences, gained over nearly two decades as voluntary community members and in their own words *“very pleased to have participated on the committee over the years and the guidance and gained knowledge of the various State Government requirements”, “interactions with Austar, who have done a good job”* and *“the task has been both practical and enjoyable”* a clear endorsement of an effective committee which has played a significant role with the local council and district Police, working together with Austar in providing a framework for genuine community engagement.

- **Key issues**

There are no existing issues for this committee. All matters have been dealt with expeditiously over the years.

- **Focus for next 12 months:**

The way forward and consensus of the committee is for the formation of a new committee to be established in 2026 in accordance with the Department’s 2023 Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects to continue as the mine moves towards permanent closure.

- **Conclusion**

Having established the original committee in 2006 and returning as Chairperson in 2014, it has been my pleasure to work with a group of people interested in the wellbeing of the local community, its past, present and future. Apart from past mining activities, with their sponsorship and support programs, over many years Austar have contributed significantly to local projects and are well integrated in the area as being part of the community and good neighbours. The retiring community members are proud of such achievements and I believe this extends to all members realising the aspirational purpose of these committees.

Name of chairperson:	Margaret MacDonald-Hill
Date:	November 14 2025.