



Mineland Chats 2021

Community members and other interested stakeholders were invited to take part in Mineland Chats in October and November 2021. These events were promoted as informal and interactive chats where participants could ask questions and give opinions on matters relating to the rehabilitation of the Latrobe Valley's brown coal mines. Promotion was via print media and social media including Facebook and LinkedIn.

What We Did

Four webinars and two face-to-face events were offered. Ticket numbers were capped to ensure everyone had the opportunity to speak. Registrations for the webinars were strong. Engagement with the face-to-face events was less strong and these events did not proceed.

In total 28 people attended the webinars, in addition to the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority team. People who attended largely had a connection with or history in the mining or mine rehabilitation sector. Attendees also came from environmental groups and local advocacy groups. Stronger engagement from the broader community is an area for the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority to focus on in future. To encourage questions and conversations to flow freely, industry stakeholders (like mine licensees and Environmental Protection Authority Victoria) did not attend. The themes were *Rehabilitation Options and Residual Risks (x2), Access to Water and Environmental Assessments and Approvals*.

What We Heard

Key themes from the chats were:

Water

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy Discussion Draft was discussed.

Participants conveyed a desire for decision-making around water usage and allocation that allows for revisions in the future. Participants asked robust questions around what the community would prefer if given the choice between pit lake mine rehabilitation solutions and healthy local river systems.

There was a desire for more education in the community to ensure people understand complex issues around water as it relates to mine rehabilitation.

Risks

Discussions were had around what level of risk the community is willing to accept if a material to stabilise the mines cannot be sourced. Participants expressed a desire for a detailed study ranking the different elements of risk and their costs versus priorities.

Rehabilitation Options

Some of the rehabilitation options discussed included shallow lakes with community access, wetlands and park spaces, and benches retained as cycling tracks. Participants were interested in positive economic outcomes as part of mine rehabilitation and final landforms which were productive, useful and attractive. This echoed the views expressed in previous feedback.

Economic considerations

Participants expressed a desire to be informed about economic considerations around mine rehabilitation options, and were anticipating the upcoming publication of the Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy's costings. Surveys that did not include costings were not seen as meaningful.

Information and Consultation

Participants expressed a desire to remain informed and engaged in the process of decision-making around mine rehabilitation. There was a perception that information that is of interest to the community is currently held as confidential. Discussions were had around the extent to which the broader community could reasonably understand the complex science behind these issues. Participants expressed the opinion that the level of understanding around mine rehabilitation in the broader community was generally low, meaning the need for information remained high.

What we will do next

The Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority's vision includes broad-based and transparent stakeholder engagement. As part of this vision, the Mineland Chats built on prior conversations held with the community, and further conversations will continue in future. Feedback from the Mineland Chats will be used to inform the Authority's future engagement and education activities and will be shared with key stakeholders involved in the rehabilitation of declared mine land.

Want to know more?

If you have any questions or comments, you can contact us by calling 1800 571 966, emailing contactus@mineland.vic.gov.au, following us on social media, or subscribing to our mailing list at www.mineland.vic.gov.au.

