

Anglesea community open house sessions draw a crowd

Alcoa hosted three open house sessions in Anglesea in late-May, inviting local community members to learn about a potential strategy to fill the mine pit and hear the latest on rehabilitation of the former mine and power station sites.

The community events followed three years' worth of technical work, exploring the possibility of using groundwater to fast-track filling the mine pit within the next decade, rather than remain restricted for what could be 50 years at the current natural fill pace.

Over 100 members of the local community dropped in to the sessions, taking up the opportunity to discuss the technical findings with representatives from the Alcoa team and their technical experts.

The feedback collected during the open house sessions is now being collated for consideration ahead of any potential application for a formal groundwater licence amendment with Southern Rural Water.

The sessions form part of Alcoa's efforts to finalise an approved mine water filling strategy to fill the mine pit in a timely manner, and subsequently accelerate the return of the site to the community.

Alcoa's Anglesea Site Asset Manager Warren Sharp said the open house sessions provided opportunity for members of the community to hear firsthand how the technical work is informing Alcoa.

"We have a regulatory obligation to deliver the final Anglesea Mine Rehabilitation and Closure Plan, which is independent of any future land use considerations.

"And so, this process is about finding the safest and most responsible way to achieve that, without adverse impact on the environment, while also realising potential environmental and social benefits of a waterbody as soon as possible.

"With the final pieces of technical work due for completion within the next few weeks, and following consideration of the feedback collected during the sessions, we expect we will be in a position to advise the community and relevant stakeholders of what the path forward will look like very soon," Sharp said.

An approved mine water filling strategy is the key outstanding deliverable of Alcoa's Anglesea Mine Rehabilitation and Closure Plan, which was developed in consultation with the community following the permanent shutdown of operations in 2015.

Other deliverables of the plan, completed in 2020, include major earthworks and revegetation activities to achieve a safe and stable landform.

Since closure, the mine pit has been naturally filling, with a small amount of groundwater added during the 2021 pumping test.

Filling former mine pits with water to provide environmental and social benefits has become common global practice, including throughout Australia.

Over the journey, Alcoa has investigated a wide range of options to support filling the pit in a timely manner, including restoration of Salt Creek, recycled water, seawater and desalination.

Investigations into a natural fill have also been undertaken, with modelling indicating it would take approximately 50 years to fill, during which time community access to the area would remain restricted.

Any potential groundwater licence amendment application will be subject to approval by Southern Rural Water following their application and approval process.

Welcoming statement

Passersby the gated entrance to our Anglesea site might notice the addition of a new welcome sign.

Proudly displaying a recently commissioned piece of art by Wadawurrung artist Billy-Jay O'Toole, the sign pays respect to the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the land where we operate - Kuarka Dorla Dja.



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