

work TOGETHER working TOGETHER

Response sought on Bird-in-Hand overflow

The Brukunga Mine Site Remediation Board has given a high priority to liaising with SA Water about combating the problem of sewerage overflow from the utility's property at Bird-in-Hand.

At present, overflow from the treatment plant is seeping into the waters of Dawesley Creek, which is significantly contributing to the creek's pollution problem.

The Board contacted SA Water about the problem in January and SA Water's response on the matter is now being awaited.

Let's Talk

The Board welcomes members of the community voicing their questions and opinions on mine issues in person at its regular meetings.

An hour has been set aside for interested people to drop in:
From: 11am to 12 noon
On: Monday March 27
At: Brukunga Hall

Council upgrades Brukunga sewerage treatment

At last Brukunga has a safe, effective sewerage treatment system thanks to Mount Barker District Council, and the improvement should have a positive effect on water quality in Dawesley Creek.

The antiquated septic system in place since 1956 was installed by the SA Housing Trust when Brukunga was a boom mining town in the 1950s. Now, effluent will no longer be discharged into Dawesley Creek.

Board member and local councillor, Carol Vincent, said it was a pleasure to move the Council recommendation that the upgrade proceed.

"After 44 years, Brukunga deserves a modern effluent system, and this also removes one more problem for Dawesley Creek," she said.

The new system involves pumping effluent from Brukunga via pipeline to the Mount Barker treatment plant.

A new pump to transport waste away from the township of Brukunga's sewerage plant will significantly improve conditions in Dawesley Creek.



From the Brukunga Mine Site Remediation Board

On the ground at Brukunga

The rehabilitation of the Brukunga Mine site is an ongoing commitment of care and wide-ranging hands-on labour for Ray Cox, Peter Grindley and Mark Seinfert.

Based in Adelaide but regularly visiting the site, Ray is Principal Mining Engineer of the site, while Peter (Mine Site Supervisor) and Mark (Senior Plant Operator) are based at the site daily working on a range of improvement projects.

Ray Cox

Ray is responsible for the full-time management and supervision of the rehabilitation work at the site.

This includes supervising projects at the treatment plant itself, as well as acting as an adviser to State Government personnel developing strategies aimed at solving the site's contamination problems.

Ray has been working on the Brukunga project for two years. Previously, he worked for 16 years for PIRSA and the former Department of Mines and Energy. Prior to this he worked as an inspector of underground mines in New South Wales and Victoria.

Speaking about the Brukunga Mine site, Ray says that in the 20 years rehabilitation work has been underway, "major changes have been made to the place - so much so that people no longer recognise the tailings storage facility as being part of a mine site".

Peter Grindley

In Peter's 15 years of working at the Brukunga Mine site more than 275,000 square metres of land has been backfilled and more than 54,000 trees have been planted.

A long-time Nairne local, Peter said that when he first began work at the Brukunga Mine site its only feature was the tailings dam, which at the time was filled with acid water.

When asked to describe an average day on-the-job Peter says "there's no such thing".

"My role at the mine is a diverse one which includes water monitoring, pump repairs, showing university students around the site, giving lectures on water testing - there's no 'typical day' around here!" he said.

Mark Seinfert

Mark has been employed as plant operator at the Brukunga Mine site for the past nine years.

Also a local, he lives at Mount Torrens.

Mark said the most enjoyable aspect of his job was the opportunity to work in the outdoors.

He especially enjoys land care tasks, such as working with school students on tree-planting projects at the site.



Peter Grindley



Ray Cox



Mark Seinfert



Reminder:
Don't use the water in Dawesley Creek for human or stock consumption.

Paddocks adjoining the contamination-affected areas along Dawesley Creek have been fenced off.

Liming and fencing project nearing completion

Farmers with stock grazing on land bordering Dawesley Creek will soon realise the results of a 12-month project initiated by Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA).

The project, which is now nearing completion, has seen sections of land which are affected by contamination from the Brukunga Mine site fenced off to prevent stock from accessing the areas.

In addition to the fencing component of the project, lime has been applied to a number of properties on river flats in the Dawesley Creek area to suppress the availability of heavy metals to pasture grasses and uptake to stock.

Paddocks adjoining the contamination-affected areas along Dawesley Creek have been fenced off.



"Come on, fellas... anybody would think you've planted 54,000 trees!"

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"If anyone can do it, Betina can!"



ANSTO conferences lead to contamination solutions

Valuable data aimed at providing solutions to the contamination problems associated with the Brukunga Mine site has been developed as a result of three conferences hosted by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Association (ANSTO) over the past few years.

Board member, Rolly MacDonald, said the conferences, part of ANSTO's "Managing Mine Wastes" project, were specifically designed to focus on the impact of pollution emanating from mines such as Brukunga.

The third and final conference in the series took place at the Australian Water Quality Control Centre at Bolivar in November 1999, following previous seminars in February 1999 and November 1997 at Adelaide University and Flinders University respectively.

The concluding conference saw Chairman of the Brukunga Mine Site Remediation Board, Hume Macdonald, make a presentation outlining the Board's responsibility to address the short and long-term solutions to rehabilitating the mine site.

This includes:

- Identifying and documenting the extent of the problem
- Consulting with the community
- Identifying and implementing solutions to fix the problem
- "Selling" the extent of the problem and its funding requirements to the State Government

A widespread group of representatives from a range of organisations attended the conferences, including the CSIRO, Land Care, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, PIRSA, Flinders University, University of South Australia, SA Water, the Australian Water Quality Control Centre and the EPA.

"All of the represented groups had a strong interest in finding solutions to the pollution problems at the mine site," Rolly said.

"In line with this, the conferences brought home the point that we have to work together to quickly and properly fix the Brukunga Mine's pollution problems.

"Rectifying the contamination hazards associated with the Brukunga Mine site is South Australia's chance - Australia's chance - to demonstrate to the world that these types of environmental problems can be acknowledged, addressed and eliminated."



Extensive revegetation projects and backfilling are integral components of the Environmental Improvement Program

EIP update

As previously reported in Working Together, a number of projects associated with the latest Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) for the Brukunga Mine site are underway.

Water and soil sampling project complete

Recent progress with these activities includes the completion of a water and soil sampling project to determine the distribution of heavy metals in both Dawesley Creek and the Bremer River.

The CSIRO has audited the project report and recommended that a second phase of more detailed sampling take place in specific areas along the river. Overall, however, the organisation stated it was satisfied with the results of the analyses.

Alleged infertility study being reviewed

In addition to this, a CSIRO study into the alleged infertility of livestock in the Dawesley Creek area has been completed and the results are being reviewed.

The study demonstrated the Board's commitment to having an independent party review all available information on the Brukunga Mine site and identify any gaps in the many number of reports that have been undertaken on the mine site in past years.

Study begins on the "biosolids question"

A tender has been let for the important study into the impact of biosolids and plant precipitate at the Brukunga mine site.

Australian Water Technologies (AWT) has won the job of investigating whether this process – currently on hold pending the outcome of this study – is beneficial in rehabilitating the site.

AWT will report its findings to the Board in three months.

Public comment noted

In the public forum at the Board's meeting on November 18 last year, local resident Ian Hartley raised the following question:

"Are John Olsen, Rob Kerin and the Board aware that the Brukunga Residents Association, Nairne Community Association and the South Australian Federation of Residents and Ratepayers are totally opposed to the use of biosolids on the Brukunga Mine site?"

Board Chairman, Hume Macdonald's, response to Ian's query follows:

"Ian, your comment is noted so far as the Board is concerned," he said. "You may wish to draw your association's view to the attention of the Premier and the Deputy Premier.

"So far as the Board is concerned, it (as I have announced tonight) has commissioned a study into the use of biosolids on the mine site and, when that is completed, this will be evaluated and any decision made will then be announced publicly.

"Personally, I have an open mind."