

## **ANNUAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT EL 8064**

EL 8064 Grant date: 27/02/2013, Expiry date: 27/02/2024

Reporting Period: 27/02/2024–27/02/2025

Prepared for SRK Consulting and Ridgeland Coal Resources Pty Ltd

by Dr Sheridan Coakes, Practice Lead Social, Umwelt Newcastle. Ph: 02 4950 5322

**FINAL**

March 2025



## **ANNUAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT EL 8064**

EL 8064 Grant date: 27/02/2013, Expiry date:  
27/02/2024

Reporting Period: 27/02/2024–27/02/2025

Prepared for SRK Consulting and Ridgeland Coal  
Resources Pty Ltd

by Dr Sheridan Coakes, Practice Lead Social, Umwelt  
Newcastle. Ph: 02 4950 5322

### **FINAL**

Prepared by

**Umwelt (Australia) Pty Limited**

on behalf of

**Ridgeland Coal Resources Pty Ltd**

Project Director: Dr Sheridan Coakes, Practice Lead Social

Project Manager: Sarah Bell, Senior Social Consultant

Report No. 3782/R19

Date: March 2025



#### **Newcastle**

75 York Street  
Teralba NSW 2284

Ph. 02 4950 5322

[www.umwelt.com.au](http://www.umwelt.com.au)



This report was prepared using  
Umwelt's ISO 9001 certified  
Quality Management System.

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

*Umwelt would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the country on which we work and pay respect to their cultural heritage, beliefs, and continuing relationship with the land. We pay our respect to the Elders – past, present, and future.*

### **Disclaimer**

This document has been prepared for the sole use of the authorised recipient and this document may not be used, copied or reproduced in whole or part for any purpose other than that for which it was supplied by Umwelt (Australia) Pty Ltd (Umwelt). No other party should rely on this document without the prior written consent of Umwelt.

Umwelt undertakes no duty, nor accepts any responsibility, to any third party who may rely upon or use this document. Umwelt assumes no liability to a third party for any inaccuracies in or omissions to that information. Where this document indicates that information has been provided by third parties, Umwelt has made no independent verification of this information except as expressly stated.

**©Umwelt (Australia) Pty Ltd**

### **Document Status**

Rev No.	Reviewer		Approved for Issue	
	Name	Date	Name	Date
1	Dr Sheridan Coakes	19/03/2025	Dr Sheridan Coakes	19/03/2025

# Executive Summary

This report is the twelfth statutory annual community consultation report for coal exploration licence EL 8064 for the period 27 February 2024 to 27 February 2025. This report has been prepared by Umwelt on behalf of Ridgeland Coal Resources Pty Limited (Ridgeland).

## Community Consultation – Survey and Drilling Activities

Community consultation in the reporting period involved continuing to engage with landholders that would be impacted by the proposed 8-hole drilling program planned for 2024–2025.

In order to facilitate these works, SRK continued to engage with existing landholders for the relevant drilling sites and future planned sites. Compensation rates where new owners were identified were updated in the 2023-2024 reporting period, and all other existing agreements will also be updated with the new compensation rates as and when access is required.

During the 2024–2025 reporting period one complaint was received.

## Community Fund Implementation and Evaluation

During the 2024–2025 reporting period, the Ridgeland Community Fund Community Investment Committee (RCFCIC) as funding has been fully allocated.

Amendments to the Deed Poll that came into effect on in November 2021 now state that meetings are no longer required if funds are below \$1,000. Therefore, the next committee meeting has not been scheduled.

Consultation during the reporting period has focused on the ongoing management and evaluation of the Fund, including liaison with Community partners around their reporting requirements and general matters relating to their funding agreements.

Future consultation during the 2025–2026 reporting period with Community Partners will continue to centre on evaluation of Fund Projects and with landholders in relation to drilling and rehabilitation.

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>i</b>
Community Consultation – Survey and Drilling Activities	i
Community Fund Implementation and Evaluation	i
<b>1.0 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Project Description	1
1.2 Authorisation History	1
1.3 Licence Details	2
<b>2.0 Consultation Approach</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Engagement Strategy Objectives	3
2.2 Identified Stakeholders and Community Context	3
2.3 Identified Stakeholders and Community Context	4
2.4 Engagement Approach	4
2.5 Engagement Mechanisms	6
<b>3.0 Consultation Completed During the Reporting Period</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 Community Consultation – Survey and Drilling Activities	7
3.2 Community Fund	7
3.2.1 Summary of Funding Allocation	9
3.2.2 Outcomes of Community Fund Consultation	11
<b>4.0 Enquiries</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1 Nature of Enquiries	13
4.2 Actions Taken	13
4.2.1 Project Information	13
4.2.2 Land Access	13
4.3 Complaints	14
<b>5.0 Future Consultation</b>	<b>15</b>

# Tables

Table 1.1	EL 8064 Licence Details	2
Table 2.1	Ridgelands Key Stakeholders	4
Table 2.2	Ridgelands' Engagement Program	5
Table 2.3	Ridgelands' Engagement Mechanisms	6
Table 3.1	Round 1 Applications Approved for Funding	9
Table 3.2	Round 2 Applications Approved for Funding	9
Table 3.3	Round 3 Applications Approved for Funding	11
Table 3.4	Ridgeland's Community Fund Activities During Reporting Period	12

# 1.0 Introduction

This report is the twelfth statutory annual community consultation report prepared for coal exploration licence EL 8064 for the period 27 February 2024 to 27 February 2025. This report has been prepared by Umwelt on behalf of SRK Consulting (Australasia) Pty Ltd (SRK) and Ridgелands Coal Resources Pty Limited (Ridgелands).

This report has been prepared to meet the reporting requirement of EL 8064 and the NSW Department of Mining, Exploration and Geoscience's (MEG) Exploration Code of Practice: Community Consultation (May 2023).

## 1.1 Project Description

The Ridgелands Project is secured under EL 8064, which covers 78.9 km<sup>2</sup> and is located approximately 20 km west-northwest of the major regional centre of Muswellbrook in the Hunter Coalfields in New South Wales (NSW). The Ridgелands Project is located approximately 150 km from the Port of Newcastle. Access to the Project is from Ridgелands Road, which connects to Yarraman Road and Wybong Road. Road access to the project is readily available from Muswellbrook.

Wybong Creek and its associated alluvial floodplain flows from north to south through the central part of the Project area. To the east of the creek in the northern and central parts of the Project area, undulating ground generally slopes westward from the base of the escarpment to the edge of the floodplain. To the south, several prominent ridges protrude from the adjacent escarpment. The eastern parts of the area are dominated by rugged, heavily vegetated hills and escarpments. Along the western boundary, the narrow north-south trending Dry Creek Valley bisects two (2) rugged topographic highs.

The valley area between the rugged escarpments is largely private holdings in the form of relatively small (up to 40 hectare) farm lots, cleared and mainly used for cattle grazing, with lesser crops (including one (1) vineyard) grown along the alluvial floodplain associated with Wybong Creek. The rugged escarpments flanking the valleys are predominantly Crown Land.

The Wybong Creek alluvial valley is categorised as Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL) and both Equine and Viticulture – Critical Industry Cluster (CIC) Land zones are located in the southern portion of the licence along the Deep Creek and Wybong Creek valley floors.

## 1.2 Authorisation History

EL 8064 was granted to Ridgелands on 27 February 2013. In February 2018, an EL Renewal Application was submitted to the former Division of Resources and Energy (now MEG). The Deputy Secretary MEG approved the renewal of EL 8064 on 6 April 2020.

In February 2024, an EL Renewal Application was submitted to the Division of Mining, Exploration and Geoscience (MEG). At the time of reporting, the renewal documentation has been accepted but no response had been received from MEG regarding the outcomes of the renewal request.

## 1.3 Licence Details

Details pertaining to the exploration licence EL 8064 are summarised below in **Table 1.1**.

**Table 1.1 EL 8064 Licence Details**

Licence No	Status	Area (ha)	Grant date	Reviewed date	Expiry
EL 8064	Granted	7,643	27 February 2013	6 April 2020	27 February 2030*

Source: Exploration Licence EL 8064 renewal, dated 6 April 2020 between the Minister for Energy and Environment (NSW) and Ridgeland.

\*Renewal pending.



## 2.0 Consultation Approach

### 2.1 Engagement Strategy Objectives

To facilitate engagement with the community and key stakeholders, a stakeholder engagement strategy was developed for the Ridgeland Project. The overarching goal of the engagement strategy is to keep landholders informed about the Ridgeland Project, with timely communications of Ridgeland's exploration activities. Specific objectives of the overall engagement strategy are to:

- fulfil the NSW MEG community requirements for exploration
- minimise misinformation and misrepresentation of the exploration project, within the community
- establish an effective engagement process to build trusted landholder relationships
- facilitate land access agreements
- minimise the potential for public concern and sustained adverse media coverage.

The strategy was developed in accordance with the Guideline for community consultation requirements for the exploration of coal and petroleum, including coal seam gas (NSW Trade and Investment, 2012), and meets the requirements of the revised Guidelines (MEG, 2023). The strategy also meets the requirements of the conditions of the exploration licence.

### 2.2 Identified Stakeholders and Community Context

The Ridgeland exploration licence is located within the suburb and localities (SAL) boundaries of Manobalai, Castle Rock and Wybong<sup>1</sup> within the Muswellbrook Local Government Area (LGA). Approximately 307 people reside within 140 dwellings within these suburbs (ABS QuickStats 2021).

There are 62 individual landholders within the licence area with many having large holdings of multiple adjacent lots.

Glencore's Mangoola Coal operation is located immediately south of the licence area, with Glencore owned land also situated within the Ridgeland licence area.

Land users/owners within the licence area include:

- private residences
- NSW crown land
- Mangoola owned land, used for impact offsetting and other purposes
- other commercially owned land

---

<sup>1</sup> A small section of the EL also lies in the Rossgole SAL, however in the 2021 Census there were no people living in the suburb.

- Wanaruah Aboriginal Land Council
- vineyards
- equine operations
- small scale farming, mainly beef grazing
- lifestyle and hobby farms.

Key stakeholders identified for the Ridglands Project are summarised in **Table 2.1**.

## 2.3 Identified Stakeholders and Community Context

**Table 2.1** Ridglands Key Stakeholders

Group	Stakeholder
Landholders	62 landholders across the licence area
Indigenous Groups	Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council
Government and Political Members	Muswellbrook Shire Council Representatives
	Muswellbrook Mayor and Councillors
	Department of Mining, Exploration and Geoscience (MEG)
	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
	Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW)
	Land and Water Commissioner
	State Member
	Federal Member
Industry	Minister for the Hunter
	Mangoola Coal
	NSW Minerals Council
NGOs	Australian Coal Association
	Wybong Action Group
Community Partners	Refer to <b>Table 3.1</b> , <b>Table 3.2</b> and <b>Table 3.3</b>

## 2.4 Engagement Approach

The two (2) key phases of the Ridglands Exploration Project Engagement Program are detailed in **Table 2.2**.

Phase 1 has specifically focused on landholder engagement and securing land access agreements for proposed field activities; with these activities comprising the extent of community engagement during the reporting period.

Phase 2 of the program expands consultation to include other key stakeholders and is ongoing as required.

Activities involved in each of the key phases are outlined below and will be continually evaluated and refined as the project progresses.

**Table 2.2 Ridgeland's Engagement Program**

Phases	PHASE 1		PHASE 2		
	Introduce	Access	Expand and Maintain	Position	Monitor & Report
<b>Key Project Objectives</b>	Introduce company, and provide an overview of the Project and processes	Secure sufficient land access in priority areas to enable commencement of drilling and field activities Develop initial Community Fund framework	Maintain relationships and access to land; and further develop and ratify Community Fund framework	Manage landholder and community expectations, implement Community Fund and establish CCC	Fulfil government requirements and position for future
<b>Key Stakeholders</b>	Landholders Former DRE (now MEG) Muswellbrook Shire Council Staff Wanaruah Aboriginal Land Council Glencore – Mangoola Other interested parties	Landholder access agreements REFs 1 and 2 – site inspections Wanaruah Aboriginal Land Council Crown Lands Glencore – Mangoola	Landholder access agreements REF 3 – inspections/ surveys Needs assessment – fund Local Media	All EL landholders All stakeholders DECCW Fund Committee Funding launch	MEG Ridgeland's Funding Partners CCC representatives All EL landholders
<b>Engagement Methods</b>	Telephone calls – setup Website Landholder letters – across all EL Personal meetings Project Info Sheet 1, 2 and 3 Enquiry mechanism Media release/ response	Telephone calls – setup Personal meetings Project Info Sheet 1, 2 and 3 Website updates Enquiry mechanism Landholder Agreements Media (as required)	Landholder Agreements Enquiry mechanism Website Project Info Sheet 4 RCFCIC meetings Communication with community partners Meetings (as required) Media (as required) Potential shop front	Project Info Sheet No. (as required) Personal and small group landholder meetings (as required) Media as required	Personal and small group meetings (ongoing) Project briefings
<b>Timeframe</b>	2014–2017 (completed during 2014–2017)		2016–Feb 2025 (ongoing)		Ongoing

## 2.5 Engagement Mechanisms

Engagement mechanisms utilised throughout the project are summarised in **Table 2.3**.

**Table 2.3 Ridgелands' Engagement Mechanisms**

Mechanism	Objective
<b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.ridgелandsresources.com.au">http://www.ridgелandsresources.com.au</a>	To provide information on various aspects of the Project, activities, resources and contact details.
<b>Email and dedicated 1800 line</b> <a href="mailto:contact@ridgелandsresources.com.au">contact@ridgелandsresources.com.au</a> <b>Phone: 1800 137 958</b>	To field enquiries and complaints and provide an avenue for stakeholders to make contact in relation to the Project.
<b>Community Information Sheet No. 1</b> – October 2014	To introduce the company, the Project and the activities to be undertaken. The newsletter was mailed to all landholders in the EL and made available on the website.
<b>Community Information Sheet No. 2</b> – April 2015	To provide an update on the Project regarding site surveys for completion of Review of Environmental Factors #1 and provide indicative timing for commencement of drilling. The newsletter was mailed to all landholders in the EL and made available on the website.
<b>Community Information Sheet No. 3</b> – December 2015	To provide an update on the Project regarding delays to expected commencement of drilling. The newsletter was mailed to all landholders in the EL and made available on the website.
<b>Community Information Sheet No. 4</b> – June 2016	To provide an update on the Project regarding expected commencement of drilling in Q3–Q4 2016. The newsletter also informed residents of site works that related to the second REF completed during the 2016–2017 period. It also described the purpose of the REF process and outcomes and controls that Ridgелands will adopt during any proposed drilling.  The newsletter was mailed to all landholders in the EL and made available on the website.
<b>Community Information Sheet No. 5</b> – August 2017	To provide an update on the drilling program, community consultation and the community fund.  The newsletter was mailed to all landholders in the EL and made available on the website.
<b>Community Information Sheet No. 6</b> – September 2017	To provide details on the Airborne Geophysical Survey and its planned commencement dates.  The newsletter was mailed to all landholders in the EL and made available on the website.
<b>Landholder notification letters</b>	To provide information regarding the Project, Lot and DP information and map of the EL area, links to guidelines and other information e.g. provision of guidelines and agreement template in advance of consultation.
<b>Key Stakeholder meetings</b>	To present project information, identify any emerging issues and set expectations for ongoing engagement.
<b>Personal Landholder meetings</b>	To provide an overview of the project, to identify landholder issues and any specific conditions relating to their properties and to commence property access discussions.

## 3.0 Consultation Completed During the Reporting Period

Community consultation in the reporting period involved re engaging with landholders that would be impacted by the proposed 8-hole drilling program planned for 2024-2025.

In order to facilitate these works, SRK re-engaged with existing landholders for the relevant drilling sites and identified new owners for two of the properties impacted, one private individual and one Company. Compensation rates were also updated, and all other existing agreements will also be updated with the new compensation rates as and when access is required.

Other consultation during the reporting period focused on the ongoing management and evaluation of the Community Fund (refer to **Section 3.2**).

### 3.1 Community Consultation – Survey and Drilling Activities

On ground exploration commenced in August 2016, with a limited exploration drilling program being undertaken. To date, a total of 29 land access agreements have been secured across the project area; with a further 12 landholders refusing to discuss access for exploration purposes since the exploration program commenced.

Access for drilling clearances was successfully achieved for all planned drilling locations.

One complaint was registered during the current term which was resolved with the satisfaction of all parties.

### 3.2 Community Fund

As part of the licence arrangements Ridgeland was required to establish a Community Fund.

Specifically, EL 8064 Condition 58 (2013) required that:

58. *The licence holder agrees to:*

- a) As soon as reasonably practicable after the grant of the licence, set up a local community fund (the "Community Fund") to fund initiatives to benefit the community; and*
- b) Contribute a minimum of \$5,000,000 (\$5 million) to the Community Fund over the initial five (5) year term of the licence; and*
- c) Publicise to the Local Community the existence of the Community Fund and guidelines for applying for grants from the Community Fund; and*
- d) Remain responsible for the administration of the Community Fund and for any taxation or other obligations arising from or in connection with the Community Fund; and*

- e) Provide bi-annual written reports to the Minister through the Director Industry Coordination, in a form satisfactory to the Minister, detailing the payments made into and from the Community Fund and the results of initiatives funded; and*
- f) Respond to any request for information from the Minister related to the status and progress of the Community Fund, and provide such information in a timely fashion when requested; and*
- g) In good faith continue to contribute to and support the administration of the Community Fund after the grant (if any) of a mining lease, until such time as the licence holder ceases mining operations in the area.*

Umwelt was commissioned by Ridgeland in April 2017 to provide advice relating to the development of the Ridgeland Community Fund (the Fund) and since this time has provided input to the Fund development and focus areas for contribution based on a review of relevant strategic plans and documents within the locality. Umwelt currently has an administrative role in the Fund's implementation – provision of advertisements for funding rounds and recording of meeting minutes.

A Deed Poll was finalised on 26 September 2017 and outlines the framework for how the Fund operates.

In 2018, the Ridgeland Community Fund Community Investment Committee (RCFCIC) was established to facilitate the administration of the Fund. The RCFCIC membership comprises:

- Ridgeland representatives.
- A Muswellbrook Shire Council representative.
- Two community representatives.

The role of the RCFCIC is to review project proposals against a Funding Proposal Criteria, as outlined in the Deed Poll, to vote on project recipients, and allocate funding.

In June 2018 Ridgeland has entered into an Enforceable Undertaking agreement with Resources Regulator (NSW DPE) in which an additional \$200,000 was made available to the community fund for projects providing an economic, social or environmental benefit. Details on the enforceable undertaking can be found on the NSW DPE website.

To date, the RCFCIC have contributed funding to 45 local projects over three rounds of allocation, to the sum of \$5,203,244.28. The funding was exhausted by February 2019, however as some of the funded projects have not yet been completed the RCFCIC is still active but is not required to meet. A summary of the funding allocation is provided in **Section 3.2.1**.

The EL8064 renewal (2020) did not require Ridgeland to provide any additional contribution to the Fund.

### 3.2.1 Summary of Funding Allocation

#### 3.2.1.1 Round 1

The inaugural meeting of the RCFCIC was held in the Wybong Hall on 14 December 2017, with four committee members in attendance. Following consideration of the 18 project applications received, the following nine projects were allocated funding as part of Round 1 of the application process. Project funding for the nine projects approved totalled **\$548,565.00 (Ex. GST)**.

**Table 3.1 Round 1 Applications Approved for Funding**

Project	Applicant
1. Recycling Facility Fund Raising (Muswellbrook Men's Shed)	Muswellbrook Men's Shed
2. Ridgeland Precinct Road Safety Improvements	Muswellbrook Shire Council
3. Upper Hunter Innovation Hub	Muswellbrook Shire Council
4. Sandy Hollow Masterplan	Muswellbrook Shire Council
5. Denman Recreation Ground Grandstand	Denman-Sandy Hollow Junior Rugby
6. Upper Hunter Education Fund	Upper Hunter Education Fund Inc.
7. Wybong Public Hall Maintenance and improvement	Wybong Public Hall
8. NAIDOC 2018 "Because of her, We Can" Celebrations	Hunter Valley Aboriginal Corporation
9. Sustainability Hub, Penguins Community Garden Group	Hunter Valley Aboriginal Corporation
<b>Total: \$548,565.00</b>	

#### 3.2.1.2 Round 2

The third meeting of the RCFCIC was held in the Muswellbrook RSL Club on 28 May 2018, with four committee members in attendance. During the meeting the 44 project applications received for Round 2 were considered for funding, and in addition the nine (9) project applications received during Round 1, that were not supported during the initial round, were also reconsidered. Following consideration of all 53 project applications the Committee decided to fund 28 projects in total.

Project funding for the 28 projects approved totals **\$4,452,692.76 (Ex. GST)**, equating to a combined total funded amount of **\$5,001,353.76** (Round 1 and Round 2) at the time.

**Table 3.2 Round 2 Applications Approved for Funding**

Project	Applicant
1. Replacement of Vehicles for Children's Mobile Outreach Service	Children's Mobile Outreach Service – UHCS – Toy Box
2. Denman News and community Technology Centre	Denman and District Development association Inc.
3. Denman and District Heritage Village Inc.	Denman and District Heritage Village Inc.
4. Provide onsite-staff accommodation at Denman MPS	Denman Branch of the United Hospital Auxiliaries of NSW Inc
5. Pony Club Canteen Complex	Denman Pony Club Inc.
6. Muswellbrook Child and Family Wellbeing Clinic	Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle

Project	Applicant
7. Sandy Hollow Junior Landcare and Outdoor Classroom	Landcare – The Hunter Region Landcare Network
8. Dolphin Swimming System	Muswellbrook Amateur RSL Youth Swimming Club Inc
9. Glenalla Revegetation Project – Stage Two	Muswellbrook Girl Guides
10. Canteen Kitchen upgrade	Muswellbrook High School P&C Canteen
11. Discus Cage	Muswellbrook Little Athletics Centre Inc.
12. Learn to Swim Pool	Muswellbrook Shire Council
13. 'Black Box Studio' dance and flexible performance space	Muswellbrook Shire Council
14. Expansion of Denman Children's Centre	Muswellbrook Shire Council
15. Denman Memorial Hall	Muswellbrook Shire Council
16. Expansion of Memorial Park (Denman)	Muswellbrook Shire Council
17. Tertiary Education Centre (Stage 2)	Muswellbrook Shire Council
18. Sandy Hollow Hall	Sandy Hollow Progress Association
19. Honey Lane	Sandy Hollow Progress Association
20. The Sandy Hollow Community Cattle Growing Initiative	Sandy Hollow Progress Association
21. TransCare Muswellbrook Seniors Expo	TransCare Hunter Ltd
22. Completion of Upper Hunter RDA Arena	Upper Hunter Riding for Disabled Association
23. Professional Certificate of Education (Positive Education)	Upper Hunter Where there's a Will Pty Ltd
24. Wybong mobile phone/call tower project	Wybong Brigade
25. Wybong Community Hall Addition and refurbishment Project	Wybong Public Hall
26. Wybong Rural Community workshops	Wybong Public Hall
27. Wybong Integrated Pest Control project	Wybong Wild Dog Association
28. 2018 Zone 7 Pony Club Camp	Zone 7 Pony Club Inc
<b>Total: \$4,452,629.76</b>	

### 3.2.1.3 Round 3

As a result of an Enforceable Undertaking decision between Ridgeland and the Secretary of DPE on 22 June 2018, Ridgeland has provided an additional \$200,000.00 to the Community Fund. Accordingly, the fourth RCFCIC meeting was held on 31 August 2018, at the Muswellbrook RSL Club, with three committee members in attendance. During the meeting the 37 project applications from Round 1 and Round 2 were once again considered for funding.



The following eight Projects submitted during both Round 1 and Round 2 of applications, were approved for funding during the 31 August 2018 meeting. Project funding for the eight projects approved totalled **\$202,049.52 (Ex. GST)**. This equates to a combined total funded amount of **\$5,203,244.28** (Round 1–Round 3).

**Table 3.3 Round 3 Applications Approved for Funding**

Project	Applicant
1. Teacher Training (\$6342 per teacher x 6)	Upper Hunter Where there's a Will Pty Ltd
2. Additional application for seating/handrails	Denman Sandy Hollow Junior Rugby League
3. Previously partially funded	Wybong Wild Dog Association
4. Vicinity of Honey Lane. Construction of Public Toilet amenities.	Sandy Hollow Progress Association
5. Equipment, apparel, etc.	Group 21 Junior Rugby League
6. Outdoor Seating	Muswellbrook High School P&C Canteen
7. Communications Tower (GST component for approved Feasibility Study)	Wybong Brigade
8. Provide air conditioning to approved staff accommodation	Denman Branch of the United Hospital Auxiliaries of NSW Inc
Total: \$202,049.52	

### 3.2.2 Outcomes of Community Fund Consultation

During the reporting period consultation undertaken to support the Community Fund has included email and telephone communication with community partners regarding progress reporting.

As per Section 7.2 of the Funding Agreements, between Ridgellands and the Community Partners (applicants), each Project is required to meet the following Reporting Schedule:

- a) *A written progress report is required to be submitted to Ridgellands every 6 months and will include progress against the activity timeline and key performance indicators identified in Schedule 2, as well as details of any relevant media engagements pertaining to the project. More frequent reports may be requested by Ridgellands with which the Community Partner will comply. Progress reports must include (but are not limited to) the following details:*
  - (i) *amounts of money expended on the Project in total up until the report date*
  - (ii) *amount of money provided under this agreement expended on the Project up until the report date*
  - (iii) *progress of Project, including what elements have been completed*
  - (iv) *extent to which the Project has satisfied requirements and expectations set out in this agreement and departures there from*
  - (v) *expected activities remaining to completion of the Project.*

- b) An Acquittal/evaluation report shall be provided by the Community Partner to Ridgeland within one month of the Project conclusion outlining details of expenditures achieved, project outcomes and identified key performance indicators relevant to the time period.*

On a bi-annual basis, the successful Projects funded across all rounds are provided with Progress Report Templates and reminded of their reporting obligations by telephone and/ or email. Community Partners are asked to submit a bi-annual Progress Report that outlines project expenditure over a six-month period, key milestones and outcomes and challenges, and to provide an assessment of the benefits of the Project to the community to date.

Regular reminders are sent to Community Partners who have outstanding reports to encourage them to submit a report.

In addition, Community Partners from Rounds 1, 2 and 3 have been provided with Acquittal Forms to be returned at project completion. At the time of writing, 30 projects (of the 45 projects funded) have completed and have returned Acquittal forms.

Communications with Community Partners focused on the individual project's progress including financial spend and general enquiries relating to their projects. As such a summary of what was discussed, issues raised and outcomes achieved has not been provided within this report due to privacy concerns. A summary of the individual Project's progress can be provided to MEG if required.

**Table 3.4** outlines the key activities relating to the implementation of the Fund and RCFCIC during the reporting period.

**Table 3.4 Ridgeland's Community Fund Activities During Reporting Period**

Date	Key Steps
<b>31 January 2025</b>	January 2025 Progress Reports due. At the time of reporting, there were 3 outstanding Progress Reports for this reporting period. The remainder of the Community Partners had returned either a Progress Report or an Acquittal Form.
<b>31 July 2024</b>	July 2024 Progress Reports due. At the time of reporting, there were 3 outstanding Progress Reports for this reporting period. The remainder of the Community Partners had returned either a Progress Report or an Acquittal Form.

## 4.0 Enquiries

### 4.1 Nature of Enquiries

The main nature of enquiries raised by stakeholders during the 2024–2025 reporting period related to the community fund, including reporting requirements and general matters regarding their funding agreements, as well as general discussions relating to the status of the Project.

From August 2024 to February 2025, landholders were engaged for the purposes of land access. Landholders were notified via phone call, email or in person visits (with prior consent was received). Additional ad-hoc engagement was conducted whilst drilling was occurring to ensure landholders were happy with the on-site activities.

Furthermore, Umwelt received a query from ABC Newcastle on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024, seeking information regarding the nature of exploration activities and proposed timelines. SRK provided a response with relevant information.

### 4.2 Actions Taken

#### 4.2.1 Project Information

To keep the community updated of the progress of the exploration program and Community Fund, the following mechanisms have been utilised:

- dedicated project website <http://www.ridgelandsresources.com.au>
- email ([contact@ridgelandsresources.com.au](mailto:contact@ridgelandsresources.com.au))
- dedicated 1800 line; phone: 1800 137 958
- Community Information Sheets – these have been and will continue to be updated at various milestones during the ongoing exploration
- landholder notification letters
- key stakeholder meetings
- personal landholder meetings (if requested).

Records of landholder consultation are recorded in a consultation database.

#### 4.2.2 Land Access

To address previously raised issues regarding land access, Ridgelands has provided landholders with copies of the NSW Land Access Guidelines and utilised the Deed of Access template. A decision was also made not to enter into individual negotiation of compensation rates, to ensure equity between landholders at this stage of the Project. Site specific requirements are addressed as required, e.g. temporary or permanent gates where necessary.

Landholders were also strongly encouraged to utilise the Annexure C (Farm Protocols) and Annexure D (Special Conditions), of the Deed of Access template, to ensure their interests and specific circumstances are accounted for during exploration.

### **4.3 Complaints**

One complaint was recorded during the 2024–2025 reporting period. The complaint pertained to drilling activities and potential impacts to livestock given proximity of drilling.

SRK returned the landholder call and addressed concerns regarding drilling activity and re-iterated the controls put in place. This included willingness to conduct temporary shutdowns to facilitate movement of livestock in and out of the affected vet shed and/or while treatment was being conducted.

## 5.0 Future Consultation

Future consultation during the 2025–2026 reporting period will continue to focus on Fund evaluation, including engagement in relation to project reporting requirements. Due to changes in the Supplementary Deed Poll (taken into effect 28 November 2021), the RCFCIC is no longer required to meet if the Ridgeland Community Fund is less than \$1,000. As a result, no meeting was held in 2021, 2022, 2023 or 2024 and no meetings are currently scheduled.

Landholder engagement will continue in the next term to support ongoing exploration and rehabilitation activities as required.

