



Essential Energy Bush Spirit Award for 2012 Awards

A Bush Spirit prize is awarded to community projects that refuse to 'give in' when facing a challenge. They must demonstrate proper planning, community partnerships and real outcomes in the solution.

Please Read Carefully: *Your submission is used to brief the assessor who visits your town and to assist the judging process.*

When entering multiple categories for your group please save each category **individually**, not multiple categories on one file. Save it as "town name & correct category name" e.g. Condobolin Heritage.

Electronic WORD FORMAT copies are preferred. We only require a maximum of 5 photos per submission. Please compress them in size and *send them in the document.*

All extra supporting material should be retained for the assessor to view on their visit to your site. Please also retain any videos, DVD's etc for the assessor to view on their site visit if necessary. Please do not send this material in with the submission.

For those who cannot send electronic submissions, please mail **TWO** hard copies.

We will not return any materials sent in with your application, so please make sure you have duplicates.

Name of your town:

Bulga, Singleton Shire, NSW

Name of your Project:

Our Home-Our Place

Note: It is essential you answer all judging criteria below with no more than 100 words per answer.

1. Please tell us about your Bush Spirit project including exactly what the challenge is that had to be addressed.

In 2010, Rio Tinto announced that it intended to expand its large open cut Warkworth mine westward to within 2.6 kilometres from our town of Bulga. The expansion posed a severe and real threat for the future of Bulga. Generally the people of Bulga felt if the mine expanded then the village would lose its identity and social structure etc. and become a ghost/mining town as has happened to other villages in the area, namely Warkworth, Ravensworth and Camberwell.

In addition to losing Bulga there were areas of Endangered Ecological Communities (Warkworth Sands Woodlands) that were required to be permanently protected by a Ministerial Deed under the previous approval. This new expansion would destroy these EECs, aboriginal heritage areas (ancient Bora Grounds), close a major road, destroy the protective landmark, Saddle Ridge and cause increased health hazards with additional noise and dust than is already produced from the large open cut mine.

The mine expansion had to be stopped to save our village and the local environment.



View of the mine wanting to expand to the west (left of the picture) toward Bulga.

2. Please tell us how the project was planned and if so can you briefly describe this?

In 2010 on receiving the advice that the mine had intended to expand, a public meeting was called. The danger to Bulga was discussed and the meeting voted unanimously to oppose the project. A subcommittee of the BMPA was formed and a plan of action discussed and agreed to at the public meeting. The subcommittee comprised retired people with experience in mining engineering, project management, environmental skills and was led by a person who had lived in Bulga all of his life as did his father, grandfather etc.

The subcommittee met urgently and formulated a final plan of action including the proposal to employ independent experts to interpret the complex technical documents and advise the BMPA on matters for our submission against the project. Funds for the plan were secured and fee submissions called from expert independent consultants in acoustics, dust, ecology and water.

A program was agreed and budgets allocated against each discipline. A communication strategy was set up to ensure the residents of Bulga received updates on progress etc.

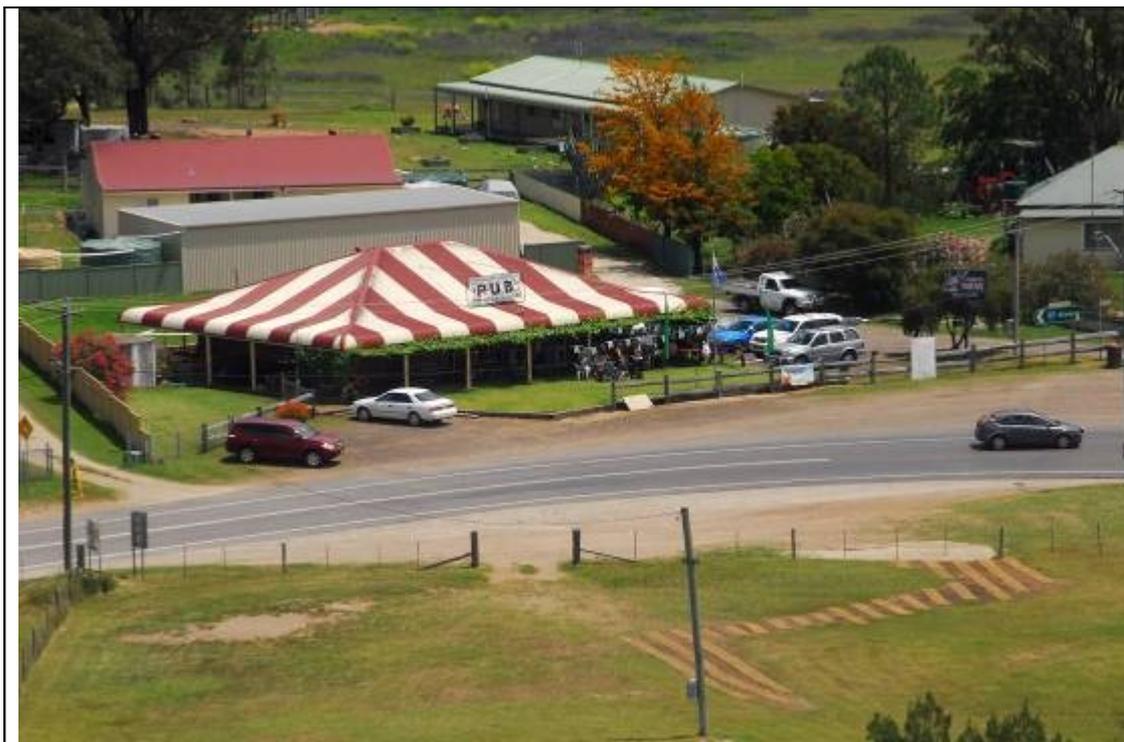
In preparing submissions we provided residents with information to assist them in their understanding of the project.

3. Tell us about the partnerships that have been formed with: businesses, council, and other community groups in the project.

This project saw good working arrangements with local businesses that would be affected by the mines expansion. These businesses also have contributed to the funds required to continue the legal battle against the mine.

Approaches to the Singleton Council were well received and another good working relationship established. Council voted on many occasions to support the group's fight against the mine and publically supported moves to prevent the mine expansion.

Other environmental groups assisted in our challenge, in particular the Hunter Shire Healthy Environment Group, SOS, Hunter Communities Network, etc.



The local Tavern which may be bought out by the mine and closed down.

4. Who is responsible for the project being run and for the monitoring of the plan?

Generally the project was run by the subcommittee but was managed by a retired Project Manager John Krey in conjunction with Stewart Mitchell, the president of the BMPA and a lifelong resident of Bulga. Regular reports were provided to the subcommittee and the BMPA on progress, budgets recommended directions etc.

5. How is your project promoted/advertised? Please list any media coverage? Save attachments where necessary for the assessor's visit.

During the course of the submission in the public exhibition period we had very good coverage from the local newspapers

- the Singleton Argus and the
- Newcastle Herald including photographs of the personalities involved fighting the closure of Wallaby Scrub Road, the removal of Saddle Ridge etc.
- Several radio interviews with local radio stations
- Television appearance on the ABC news item
- Television appearance on NBN Newcastle
- Five page article in the Australian Weekend Magazine.
- Articles on the local Cockfighter newspaper.

6. Project Evaluation and Outcomes

Did the project meet your needs? Please state any economic, social & or environmental benefits that support the positive results of the project.

To date we have not been successful in stopping the project but the decision for the project to proceed is currently being contested with an appeal by the BMPA against the Planning Assessment Commission to approve the project.

We believe that if we are able to stop the mine expansion, the economics, social and environmental benefits will be enormous not only to our village but to the surrounding areas. It will also give confidence to small town residents that even the biggest corporations in the world can be held accountable if they are 'not doing the right thing' and not protecting the environment and peoples health.



Blasting and Nitrous Oxide fumes like this will be even closer to our village if the expansion proceeds.

7. What has your community/group learnt from the experiences of working on this project?

Importantly, there are many matters that are harmful to the environment but people generally are accepting for the sake of 'jobs and economics'. When villages are threatened people from all walks of life will come together and fight. Also villages like Bulga cannot expect support from government. Government is actively promoting the mining interests of large corporations against the interests of small (and large) communities. The Dept. of Planning and Infrastructure should be independent from the mines but appear to act as agents for the large overseas corporations.



A typical scene around country Bulga

8. What level of volunteer support has there been for the project? Approx how many hours have gone into it in the last financial year? For example if there are 5 volunteers working 6 hours a week on average for 40 weeks the total number of volunteer hours is 1200.

All of the residents working on this project are volunteers. The coal action working group was a committee of five. The project has received the support of the majority of residents. Many others supported the campaign and the appeal by providing information, comment and affidavits

We estimate that around 3,000 hours have been provided by the volunteers for this project.



The local Historic Bridge due to celebrate its centenary this year. Worth saving.

If you email, please ensure that:

- (1) Each project is sent individually and labelled correctly.
- (2) The 3 photos are compressed in size.
- (3) Do not email photographs and document separately. Place them in one document.

Alternatively please mail your electronic submission (s) on a CD to:

Yolande Presland
2012 Tidy Towns Sustainable Communities
Keep Australia Beautiful NSW
1/83 Marion Street Harris Park NSW 2150

THANK YOU

**YOLANDE PRESLAND
PROGRAMS MANAGER**