

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and  
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)  
Meeting 46, 30-31 August 2017**

**MINUTES  
Brisbane**

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**Attendance and Apologies**

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Chris Pigram (Chair)  
Professor Craig Simmons  
Professor Joan Esterle  
Dr Jenny Stauber  
Dr Andrew Boulton  
Dr Wendy Timms  
Dr Glen Walker  
Dr Ian Prosser

SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Matthew Dadswell  
Emily Grant  
Lily Knife  
Miriam McMillan

STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Peter Baker Office of Water Science	Taysha Le Compte (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Carl Zimmermann (Item 2) Office of Water Science	John Higgins (Item 3) Office of Water Science
Natasha Amerasinghe (Item 2) Day 2 only Office of Water Science	

INVITED GUESTS

Sanjeev Pandey (Item 5.4) Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment	Keith Phillipson (Item 5.4) Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment
Carolyn Collins (Item 5.5) GasFields Commission Queensland	Kate Dawsley (Item 3.1) Jacobs
Andrew Tangay (Item 3.1) Jacobs	

The meeting commenced at 8.50am on 30 August 2017.

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair, Dr Chris Pigram, welcomed members of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development (IESC) to the meeting.

### **1.1 Acknowledgement of country**

The Chair acknowledged the traditional owners, past and present, on whose land this meeting was held.

### **1.2 Declaration of interest**

Before the meeting commenced, IESC members completed the Meeting Specific Declaration of Interest and an Advice Specific Declaration of Interest for the Western Surat Gas Project.

No actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest were recorded for this meeting.

The members also completed a bi-annual private circumstances declaration.

### **1.3 Confirmation of agenda**

The IESC endorsed the agenda for Meeting 46.

### **1.4 Action items**

Ongoing items were noted and an update was provided on the timing of completion.

### **1.5 Confirmation of out-of-session decisions**

The IESC noted the following items have been agreed out of session:

- advices on Santos Narrabri Gas Project and Wambo Coal Mine South Bates Extension Modification Project were finalised consistent with the IESC's deliberations and provided to the decision makers; and
- minutes of the IESC's forty-fifth meeting on 26-27 July were confirmed and agreed for publication .

### **1.6 Correspondence**

The IESC noted the status of correspondence to 15 August 2017.

### **1.7 Forward Planning Agenda**

The IESC noted the forward planning agenda and the 2018 meeting dates. It was agreed the next meeting would be scheduled for 11-12 October in Canberra.

### **1.8 Environmental scan**

The Office of Water Science provided an update on developments since the July 2017 IESC meeting, including:

- the NSW Planning Assessment Commission facing questions of bias over meetings with Santos around the Narrabri Gas Project;
- the NSW Department of Planning and Environment engaging with experts to review Santos' Environmental Impact Statement and provide independent advice;
- Recent media articles on the IESC advice provided on the Wambo coal mine and the Narrabri Coal Seam Gas project; and
- The Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing of Onshore Unconventional Reservoirs in the NT.

## **2. Advice on projects referred by governments**

### **2.1 Western Surat Gas Project**

The IESC received a request from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy to provide advice on the Western Surat Gas Project in Queensland.

The proposed Western Surat Gas Project is a coal seam gas project consisting of 425 wells and associated infrastructure, including gas and water collection lines, up to three gas field compression facilities, three medium pressure gas pipelines, a central processing plant and a number of water storage dams. The proposed project is located between Wallumbilla and Roma in southern Queensland.

The proposed project is located in the Surat Cumulative Management Area (CMA) in Queensland. The Surat CMA contains a number of existing and proposed large-scale Coal Seam Gas developments. Modelling of cumulative groundwater impacts within the Surat CMA is undertaken by the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment who publish their findings in the Underground Water Impact Report (UWIR).

The latest UWIR (released in September 2016) was predicated on the proposed project containing 760 wells and modelling was undertaken to simulate their impact. The proponent has since amended the proposed number of CSG wells to 425. For the Preliminary Environmental Review (PER), the proponent requested that OGIA undertake new modelling to simulate the cumulative impact of 425 CSG wells. OGIA undertook the requested modelling and the output files were provided to the proponent, who used them to present the results in the PER. Therefore the results presented in the latest UWIR differ from those provided by the proponent in the PER.

The IESC reviewed and discussed the information provided and considered the key potential issues as follows:

- declines in groundwater level and pressure in landholder bores as a result of groundwater depressurisation;
- reductions in water availability to springs and other groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs) as a result of groundwater depressurisation and drawdown; and
- changes to surface water and groundwater quality as a result of inappropriately stored or unintentionally released drilling chemicals, co-produced water and brine.

Consistent with the EPBC Regulations, the advice will be published on the IESC's website within 10 business days of being provided to the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy.

## **3. Bioregional Assessment Program**

### **3.1 Evaluation of the Bioregional Assessment Program**

The Department of the Environment and Energy contracted Jacobs to evaluate the Bioregional Assessment Program, with a final report due later in the year. The IESC discussed the evaluation of the Bioregional Assessment Program and provided feedback.

The Chair thanked Kate Dawsley and Andrew Tangay of Jacobs.

## **4. Research**

No research update was given.

## **5. Other Business**

### **5.1 Stakeholder Engagement Strategy**

The draft Stakeholder Engagement Strategy was presented to the IESC. The strategy covers the approach to stakeholder engagement activities to be undertaken by the IESC, and supported by the Department in its capacity as Secretariat, for the period 2017-2019. The members agreed to endorse the strategy subject to some minor changes.

### **5.2 Information Guidelines and Groundwater Modelling Supplement**

At its June meeting the IESC agreed to conduct an update of the Information Guidelines. The IESC agreed to a minor update of the guidelines but that they would develop explanatory notes to better explain some of the requirements to assist proponents in preparing Environmental Impact Statements.

These explanatory notes will include:

- characterising and modelling faults;
- Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem assessment and modelling;
- site-specific triggers and monitoring; and
- incorporating an uncertainty analysis in groundwater modelling.

### **5.3 Presentation – Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment (OGIA)**

Mr Sanjeev Pandey, Acting General Manager, OGIA presented to the IESC about the latest updates of cumulative impacts in the Surat and the work OGIA is doing in the Galilee.

The Chair thanked Mr Pandey.

### **5.4 Presentation – GasFields Commission**

Ms Carolyn Collins, General Manager, GasFields Commission presented to the IESC on the views of the Commission and changes that took place this year, the work program for the year/s ahead and the recently released report, *On New Ground*.

Ms Collins' presentation to the committee included the QLD onshore gas industry and the GasFields Commission's current work. The discussion focused around the committee's roles and improving community understanding.

The Chair thanked Ms Collins.

### **Close of Meeting**

The meeting closed at 10.30 am on Thursday 31 August 2017.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 11-12 October 2017 in Canberra.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Chris Pigram  
IESC Chair

12 September 2017