

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)
Meeting 47, 11-12 October 2017**

**MINUTES
Canberra**

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
Jason Smith
Lily Knife

STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Peter Baker Office of Water Science	Natasha Amerasinghe (Items 1.1-1.7, 2, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.7 & 4.8) Office of Water Science
Carl Zimmermann (Item 1.1-1.7, 2, 4.7 & 4.8) Office of Water Science	Mitchell Bouma (Items 1.1-1.7, 2, 4.7 & 4.8) Office of Water Science
Taysha Le Compte (Items 1.1-1.7, 2, 4.1, 4.7 & 4.8) Office of Water Science	Mio Kuhnen (Items 1.1-1.7, 2) Office of Water Science
Mick Welsh (Items 1.1-1.7, 2, 4.1, 4.7 & 4.8) Office of Water Science	Jo Brennan (Items 4.6, 4.7 & 4.8) Office of Water Science
Ann Hartley (Items 4.6, 4.7 & 4.8) Office of Water Science	John Higgins (Items 3 & 4.2) Bioregional Assessments
Emily Turner (Item 3) Bioregional Assessments	

INVITED GUESTS

Julie Burke (Item 3) Bureau of Meteorology	Brent Henderson (Item 3) CSIRO
Chas Savage (Item 4.7) Ethos CRS	

The meeting commenced at 9:30am on 11 October 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 Spring Gully North-West and North-East CSG Project.

The meeting specific determinations recorded at this meeting are available at *Attachment A*.

1.3 Confirmation of agenda

The IESC endorsed the agenda for Meeting 47 with a couple of minor changes.

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:

- advice on Santos Western Surat Gas Project was finalised consistent with the IESC's deliberations and provided to the decision makers; and
- minutes of the IESC's forty-sixth meeting on 30-31 August were confirmed and agreed for publication.

1.6 Correspondence

The IESC noted the status of correspondence to 21 September 2017.

1.7 Forward Planning Agenda

The IESC noted the forward planning agenda, including changes to meeting dates in May and June 2018. It was agreed the next meeting would be scheduled for 14-15 November in Sydney and will coincide with a workshop with New South Wales regulators.

1.8 Environmental scan

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

- review of COAG's National Harmonised Regulatory Framework for Natural Gas from Coal Seams 2013 by the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science;
- recent media about the Narrabri Coal Seam Gas project;
- recent media about Dendrobium Underground Coal Mine impact on water catchments; and
- the Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in Western Australia.

2. Advice on projects referred by governments

2.1 Spring Gully North-West and North-East Coal Seam Gas Project

The IESC received a request from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy to provide advice on the Spring Gully North-West and North-East CSG Project in Queensland.

The proposed project is an extension to the existing Spring Gully CSG project located approximately 70 km north-east of Roma and 30 km east of Injune in southern central Queensland. The proposed project will have a disturbance area of approximately 601 ha over its 30-year life with the installation of 114 wells and associated infrastructure including gas and water-gathering flowlines, access roads, power and communication systems, temporary accommodation camps, laydowns, stockpiles etc. The proponent does not propose to undertake any hydraulic fracturing as part of this project. Therefore, the IESC has not considered any potential impacts from hydraulic fracturing.

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 CSG developments. Modelling of cumulative groundwater impacts within the Surat CMA is undertaken by the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment (OGIA) who publish their findings in the Underground Water Impact Report (UWIR). The proposed project and its aquifer reinjection have not been assessed in the latest Surat CMA UWIR.

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

- changes in groundwater level and pressure in landholder bores as a result of groundwater depressurisation;
- changes to water volumes available at springs and other groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs) as a result of groundwater depressurisation and drawdown;
- changes to water volumes discharged at springs and other GDEs as a result of the aquifer injection scheme;
- possible discharges of co-produced water to Eurombah Creek which may change its water quality and flow regime with associated impacts on downstream environmental values, noting that this discharge is already occurring under the current Environmental Authority (EA).

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 Assessments

3.1 Bioregional Assessment update

The IESC was updated on the review of the final bioregional assessment products, the progress of the program evaluation and the release of BA Explorer.

3.2 Legacy of Bioregional Assessments

The IESC discussed ways to make use of the bioregional assessment (BA) products for IESC business.

4. Other Business

4.1 SETAC Australasia Conference 2017

The IESC was presented with a brief overview of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) Conference that was held in early September 2017. This presentation highlighted areas of research and emerging issues relevant to the IESC.

4.2 Research update

The IESC received an update on the National Assessment of Chemicals Associated with Coal Seam Gas Extraction in Australia and the Faults, Aquitards and Models project.

4.3 Geological and Bioregional Assessment Program

A brief update was provided to the IESC on the new Geological and Bioregional Assessment Program.

4.4 Hydraulic Stimulation Fluids

IESC member Dr Jenny Stauber gave a presentation on hydraulic stimulation fluids.

4.5 IESC Operating Protocol

The Committee Operating Protocol for the IESC was updated to include protocols for social media and for members to make a declaration of interest before they access papers on projects referred by governments. The IESC agreed to undertake a review of the existing protocols.

4.6 IESC Annual Review of Activities 2016-2017

A draft of the IESC Annual Review of Activities 2016-17 was provided to the IESC for comment. The IESC discussed the review and made changes. The IESC agreed for the Chair to endorse the final version of the review for publication out of session.

4.7 Improving Science Communication

Mr Chas Savage, Chief Executive Officer of Ethos CRS presented suggestions for communicating scientific information in the IESC advice to broad and diverse non-scientific audiences.

The Chair thanked Mr Chas Savage.

4.8 Improvements to the Advice Process

The IESC discussed areas of improvement to support their objective to continually improving their advice.

Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 1:30pm on Thursday 12 October 2017.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 14-15 November 2017 in Sydney.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Chris Pigram

IESC Chair

30 October 2017

Item	IESC member	Disclosure	Determination
4.2	Craig Simmons	I consider that there may be a possible conflict of interest in relation to agenda item 4.2 arising from NCGRT/Flinders University being current/potential providers of research for OWS	Participation was limited to expert advice, discussion and consideration only