

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)
Meeting 55, 30-31 August 2018**

**MINUTES
Melbourne**

Attendance and Apologies

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Chris Pigram (Chair)
Professor Wendy Timms
Dr Jenny Stauber
Dr Andrew Boulton
Associate Professor Rory Nathan
Professor Jennifer Davis
Professor Craig Simmons
Professor Joan Esterle

SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Matthew Dadswell (Day 1)
Emily Grant
Peter Baker
Benjamin Klug
Elesha Curran

STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Carl Zimmermann (Items 1, 2, 3.2, 3.3) Office of Water Science	Natasha Amerasinghe (Items 1, 2, 3.2, 3.3) Office of Water Science
Jo Brennan (Items 1, 2, 3.1, 3.2) Office of Water Science	Mitchell Bouma (Item 3.2 via telephone) Office of Water Science

The meeting commenced at 9.00am on Thursday 30 August 2018.

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 Disclosure of interest

Before the meeting commenced, Committee members completed the Meeting Specific Declaration of Interest and an advice specific declaration of interest for MRA2C Project, South Walker Creek Operations, BHP Billiton Mitsu Coal Pty Ltd.

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

1.3 Confirmation of agenda

The Committee endorsed the agenda for Meeting 55.

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

- advice on the Central Queensland Coal Project was finalised consistent with the IESC's deliberations and provided to the decision makers; and
- the Committee noted the minutes of the IESC's fifty-fourth meeting on 25 - 26 July 2018 were agreed out of session and published.

1.6 Correspondence

The Committee noted the status of correspondence to 15 August 2018.

1.7 Forward planning agenda

The Committee noted the forward planning agenda. It was agreed that the next meeting be scheduled for 3 – 4 October in Brisbane and will coincide with a workshop with Queensland regulators.

1.8 Environmental scan

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

- the Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan; and
- CSIRO commencing monitoring landscape methane concentrations in the Beetaloo Sub-Basin.

2. Advice on projects referred by governments

2.1 Advice on MRA2C Project, South Walker Creek Operations, BHP Billiton Mitsu Coal Pty Ltd.

The proposed project is an expansion of the existing Mulgrave pit at the South Walker Creek Open Cut Mine. The mine is approximately 25 km west-south-west of Nebo in the Bowen Basin. The project will include further diversion of Walker Creek, construction of two additional water storages, and new final void development. The proposed project has a specific mine life extending to 2063.

The activities of the proposed project present risks to a number of *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) listed species and threatened ecological communities, nearby wetlands and unregistered landholder bores.

The IESC reviewed and discussed the information provided, and considered the key potential impacts of the proposed project to be:

- direct removal of 8 km of Walker Creek and associated aquatic habitat, riparian vegetation and groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDEs), with likely impacts on riverine ecosystem connectivity;

- changes to surface water flow regimes as a result of the proposed diversion and associated direct and indirect impacts to downstream ecosystems, including cumulative impacts associated with the doubling of contributing catchment area and the potential of increased erosion and sedimentation;
- groundwater dewatering and associated impacts on nearby GDEs and changes to connectivity between surface water and groundwater systems;
- intentional and unintentional untreated additional discharges to surface water and leakage to groundwater; and
- cumulative impacts (surface water and groundwater) with existing and proposed coal and coal seam gas operations in the surrounding area. This includes cumulative groundwater impacts with nearby existing and proposed operational and final voids.

Consistent with the EPBC Regulations, advice will be published on the IESC's website within 10 business days of being provided to the regulators.

3. Other Business

3.1 Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan for 2018-19

The Committee discussed and agreed to the proposed IESC Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan for 2018-19.

3.2 The use of faults in groundwater modelling Explanatory Note

The Committee discussed the proposed attendees and invitation list for the use of faults in groundwater modelling Explanatory Note stakeholder workshop.

The Committee agreed to the proposed agenda for the workshop.

The CSIRO symposium on characterisation of geological fault zones was discussed and the Committee agreed on IESC members' attendance.

3.3 IESC advice and OGIA assessments

The Committee discussed the draft paper about the functions of the IESC and the Queensland Office of Groundwater Assessment (OGIA).

The Committee agreed to further discussions with OGIA.

Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.15pm on Friday 31 August 2018.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 3 – 4 October 2018.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Chris Pigram

IESC Chair

11 September 2018