

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and  
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)  
Meeting 58, 30-31 January 2019**

**MINUTES  
Canberra**

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**Attendance and Apologies**

IN ATTENDANCE

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

APOLOGY

Associate Professor Rory Nathan

SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Tia Stevens (Day 1)  
Jo Brennan  
Peter Baker  
Elesha Curran  
Carol Nelson  
Jason Smith (Item 1 and Day 2)  
Benjamin Klug (Day 1 and Items 3, 4)

STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Mio Kuhnen (Items 1, 2) Office of Water Science	Les Betland (Items 1, 2, 3.1, 3.2) Office of Water Science
Sarah Brown (Items 1, 2) Office of Water Science	

The meeting commenced at 9.00am on Wednesday 30 January 2019.

## **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 Declaration of Interests and an advice specific declaration of interest for the Surat North CSG Project, QGC.

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 58.

### **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 that:

- advice on the Maxwell Coal Mine Project, Middlemount Coal Mine Western Extension and Vickery Extensions were finalised consistent with the Committee's deliberations and provided to the decision makers;
- the minutes of the Committee's fifty-seventh meeting on 6– 8 November 2018 were agreed out of session and published; and
- the explanatory note '*Uncertainty Analysis – Guidance for groundwater modelling within a risk management framework*' was published on the IESC website on 17 December 2018.

### **1.6 Correspondence**

The Committee noted the status of correspondence to 15 January 2019.

### **1.7 Forward planning agenda**

The Committee noted the forward planning agenda. It was agreed the next meeting be scheduled for 6 – 7 March 2019 in Sydney.

### **1.8 Environmental scan**

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

- announcement of a \$6.5 million investment in the Great Artesian Basin Groundwater Project by the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, the Hon David Littleproud MP;
- Mineral and Energy Resources (Financial Provisioning) Bill 2018 passed in the Queensland state Parliament in November 2018; and
- release of the final report from the Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in Western Australia.

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

### **2.1 Surat North CSG Project, QGC**

The Surat North project proposes to infill an existing approved coal seam gas (CSG) development in the Surat Cumulative Management Area in Queensland. The project involves up to 740 wells in addition to the previously approved 400 wells. CSG is targeted in the Walloon Coal Measures. CSG will be extracted and handled through existing infrastructure and in accordance with the processes currently approved.

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

- declines in shallow groundwater level due to depressurisation of underlying aquifers and Walloon Coal Measures; and
- reductions in water availability to springs, riparian ecosystems, fringing vegetation of a wetlands of High Ecological Significance (HES), several Regional Ecosystems listed as “Of Concern” (Queensland) and other groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs) as a result of groundwater depressurisation and drawdown.

Consistent with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation 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 Refinement and Reprioritisation of the IESC Research Priorities**

The Committee discussed the refinement and reprioritisation of the 2017 research priorities to bridge knowledge gaps and emerging knowledge needs. The Committee agreed on ten draft research questions and draft survey questions for industry, research and regulator stakeholders.

### **3.2 Environmental Risk Document**

The Committee discussed environmental risk and guidance around risk materiality.

### **3.3 Faults Explanatory Note Pre-Workshop Discussion**

The Committee discussed and agreed on the agenda items and themes for the faults in groundwater modelling explanatory note stakeholder workshop. IESC presenters and presentation topics were confirmed.

### **3.4 GovTEAMS Presentation**

The Committee discussed the usability and content of the new GovTEAMS platform. The Committee requested the development of a protocol for the next meeting.

### **3.5 Site Visit Discussion**

The Committee discussed and agreed on areas of interest for the April site visit.

## **Close of Meeting**

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.15pm on Thursday 31 January 2019.

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 6 – 7 March 2019.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Chris Pigram  
IESC Chair  
08 February 2019