



Independent Expert Scientific Committee
on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)
Meeting 60, 9-10 April 2019**

**MINUTES
Wandoan, Queensland**

Attendance and Apologies

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Jenny Stauber
Dr Andrew Boulton
Professor Jenny Davis
Associate Professor Rory Nathan
Professor Craig Simmons (via teleconference)

APOLOGIES

Dr Chris Pigram (Chair)
Professor Wendy Timms
Professor Joan Esterle

SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Jason Smith
Kelly Strike
Sarah Taylor
Carol Nelson

STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Joanne Brennan, Office of Water Science (via teleconference) Item 2.1

The meeting commenced at 2.30pm on Tuesday 9 April 2019.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dr Jenny Stauber presided over the meeting in the Chair's absence. Dr Stauber 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

Dr Stauber 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 a Declaration of Interests for the meeting and a project advice specific declaration for Narrabri Underground Mine Stage 3 Extension Project.

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

1.3 Confirmation of agenda

The Committee endorsed the agenda for Meeting 60.

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 Committee noted that:

- advice on the Tahmoor South Extension coal mining project was finalised consistent with the Committee's deliberations. The advice was provided to the decision makers and published within statutory timelines;
- minutes of the Committee's fifty-ninth meeting on 6-7 March 2019 were agreed out of session and published; and
- *Information Guidelines explanatory note - Assessing groundwater-dependent ecosystems* was endorsed by the Chair and published on the Committee's website on 8 March 2019.

1.6 Correspondence

The Committee noted the status of correspondence to 23 March 2019.

1.7 Forward planning agenda

The Committee noted the forward planning agenda. It was agreed the next meeting be scheduled for 22-23 May in Canberra.

1.8 Environmental scan

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

- Chair Dr Pigram's meetings in Sydney with the New South Wales Interagency Senior Officers Resource Assessment Committee (SORAC), Lock the Gate Alliance and Caroon Coal Action Group;
- meeting with the underground coal mining industry in Wollongong on fault data, information and monitoring led by committee member Professor Esterle; and
- draft code of practice for onshore gas industry in the Northern Territory.

2. Advice on projects referred by governments

2.1 Narrabri Underground Mine Stage 3 Extension

The proposed project is a longwall mining extension to the existing underground Narrabri Coal Mine, located in the Gunnedah Coalfields of New South Wales. The project will increase production from 11 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) to up to 13 Mtpa of run-of-mine coal (a combination of thermal and pulverised coal injectate), and extend the mine life from July 2031 to 2045. The proposal also includes expansion and upgrades of existing surface infrastructure.

The project is located within the Namoi Water Management Area. The region has one of the highest levels of groundwater extraction in the Murray-Darling Basin (Department of Primary Industries, 2017). Surface water resources in the area include the Namoi River that is located approximately 6 km from the proposed extension, and the ephemeral Kurrajong Creek located within the proposed development area. Known groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs) adjacent to or within the project area include Mayfield, Hardys and Eather Springs. There are also approximately 40 farm dams located within the vicinity of the project.

The limited level of detail required for project documentation at the Gateway Application stage (New South Wales Government, 2013) accordingly limits the scope of the Committee's advice on the extent and likelihood of the proposed project's potential impacts to water resources. Consequently, this advice is only able to provide general guidance on the potential impacts, together with suggestions for additional information required if the proposal proceeds to the Environmental Impact Statement stage.

Key potential impacts from this project are:

- groundwater drawdown that will potentially reduce availability of water for GDEs, such as springs, the Upper Namoi Alluvium and other water resources;
- surface water losses and altered stream-flow regimes (e.g. Kurrajong Creek) through surface fracturing, cracking and ponding along drainage lines above the proposed longwalls; and
- cumulative impacts created by the multiple competing demands for water in an already heavily used system.

2.2 Discussion on Lessons Learnt from Tahmoor Project Advice

This agenda item was deferred to a later meeting.

Close of Meeting

Dr Stauber thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.00pm on Wednesday 10 April 2019.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 22-23 May 2019.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Jenny Stauber

IESC Member

18 April 2019