

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)
Meeting 61, 22-23 May 2019**

**MINUTES
Canberra, ACT**

Attendance and Apologies

IN ATTENDANCE

Professor Craig Simmons
Professor Wendy Timms
Professor Joan Esterle
Dr Andrew Boulton
Professor Jenny Davis
Associate Professor Rory Nathan

APOLOGIES

Dr Chris Pigram (Chair)
Dr Jenny Stauber

SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Jason Smith
Peter Baker
Benjamin Klug
Elesha Curran
Carol Nelson

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Tia Stevens (Items 1.5-1.8, 2, 3)
Les Betland (Item 2.1)
Mio Kuhnen (Item 2.1)
Kelly Strike (Items 2.2, 3)
Sarah Taylor (Items 2.2, 3)
Mia Sandgren

The meeting commenced at 9.00am on Wednesday 22 May 2019.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Professor Simmons presided over the meeting in the Chair's absence and 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

Professor Simmons 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 Jellinbah Coal Mine – Central North Extension Project.

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

1.3 Confirmation of agenda

The Committee endorsed the agenda for Meeting 61.

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 Narrabri Underground Mine Stage 3 mining project was finalised consistent with the Committee's deliberations. The advice was provided to the decision makers and published within statutory timelines; and
- minutes of the Committee's sixtieth meeting on 9-10 April 2019 were agreed out of session and published.

1.6 Correspondence

The Committee noted the status of correspondence to 7 May 2019.

1.7 Forward planning agenda

The Committee noted the forward planning agenda. It was agreed the next meeting be scheduled for 18-20 June in Sydney. The meeting will be held in conjunction with an Industry Workshop with coal and coal seam gas representatives on 19 June 2019.

1.8 Environmental scan

Committee members and secretariat reported back on developments in recent months, including:

- Sydney meetings between Chair Dr Pigram and the New South Wales interagency Senior Officers Resource Assessment Committee (SORAC), Lock the Gate Alliance and Caroon Coal Action Group;
- Wollongong meeting with the underground coal mining industry on fault data, information and monitoring led by Committee member Professor Esterle; and
- Queensland site visit to a coal seam gas site at Woleebee Creek and an open-cut coal mine at Jeebropilly.

2. Advice on projects referred by governments

2.1 Jellinbah Central North Extension

The Jellinbah Central North Extension is a proposed expansion of the existing Jellinbah Central North open-cut coal mine. Three additional leases will be opened for operations. Two of these in the west will hold supporting infrastructure and spoil facilities while one in the east will be mined for pulverised coal injection (PCI) coal and minor amounts of thermal coal. The proposal will extend the operational life of the mine by 20 years and increase production by one million tonnes per annum (1 Mtpa) run-of-mine coal. There will be no change to current approved operating protocols.

The project is within the Bowen Basin and the greater Fitzroy Catchment. The project and surrounding area are significantly impacted by existing agricultural and mining development and are extensively cleared. Drawdown of regional groundwater has already occurred from previous mining. The Mackenzie River to the north, Blackwater Creek to the west and Twelve Mile Creek to the east will potentially be impacted by the project. Two areas of *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)-listed Brigalow Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) were identified at the project site. The proponent proposes to clear these areas for the project and provide a financial offset. The remaining area that will be cleared for the project consists of 788 ha of non-remnant pasture. Other EPBC Act-listed species potentially exist within the project area; however, the single field survey undertaken in February 2015 found no evidence of their presence.

Key potential impacts from this project are:

- the risks associated with increasingly saline water contained in the final void in the floodplain (noting there are six other voids approved for existing Jellinbah operations), and the potential for extreme events and changing climatic conditions to cause changes to the predicted void behavior;
- removal of two areas of Brigalow TEC, including one in the western tenement (ML 700012) which might be retained with project redesign;
- contributions to declines in water quality in the receiving environments of Blackwater Creek and the Mackenzie River; and
- cumulative impacts on groundwater, surface water as well as terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems from open-cut mining, releases of mine-affected water, and final voids (that are predicted to become hypersaline) in the region.

Consistent with the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000*, advice will be published on the IESC's website within 10 business days of being provided to the regulators.

2.2 Reflections on Recent Project Advice

The Committee reflected on recent project advice and discussed factors to be considered in the review of future advices.

3. Other Business

3.1 IESC Industry Workshop

The Committee was updated on the scope and expectations of the IESC Industry Workshop in June 2019. Workshop facilitator, Fiona Chandler (Alluvium), discussed the expectations of the workshop via video conference with the Committee.

The Committee noted the proposed agenda, scope and expectations of the workshop.

3.2 Engagement Activities

The Committee was provided an update on the status of a number of engagement activities; refinement and prioritisation of research priorities, stakeholder engagement strategy and action plan,

and IESC 2018-19 Annual Review of Activities. The Committee noted the proposed forward plans for the activities.

Close of Meeting

Professor Simmons thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

The Committee also wished to thank Joanne Brennan from Department of the Environment and Energy for her work and support of the Committee up to April 2019 prior to her move into a new role.

The meeting closed at 12:15pm on Thursday 23 May 2019.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 18-20 June 2019.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Professor Craig Simmons

IESC member

3 June 2019