

**MINUTES – Meeting 2**  
**Wednesday, 22 February 2012**

Waratah Room, Mecure Sydney Airport

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**Attendance and Apologies**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Professor Craig Simmons (Chair)  
Ms Jane Coram  
Emeritus Professor Peter Flood  
Professor Chris Moran  
Professor John Langford

**APOLOGIES**

Associate Professor David Laurence

**OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE STAFF**

Alex Rankin  
Malcolm Forbes  
Bernadette O'Neil  
Fiona Beynon  
Sue Stefanoski  
Caryn Scott

**TELECONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS**

Adrienne Lea (DSEWPac)  
David Calvert (DSEWPac)  
Mark Hall (DSEWPac)  
Kim Edwards (DSEWPac)  
Pamela Finger (DSEWPac)  
Helen Vooren (DSEWPac)

The Meeting commenced at 8.50am.

**Welcome & Introductions**

The Chair welcomed the members of the Interim Committee, the Secretariat (provided by the Office of Water Science) and departmental staff and noted the apology from Associate Professor Laurence who was overseas on university-related business.

**1. Standing Items**

- 1.1. Acceptance of minutes from previous meeting

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- 1.1.1 Committee members provided feedback and suggested some minor changes to the minutes to clarify a number of the recorded action items. The Interim Committee endorsed the structure and content of the minutes.

***Action Arising***

**220212-1** Secretariat to make suggested changes to the minutes. Updated minutes to be sent to Chair for approval out of session.

1.2. Action items report

1.2.1 The Interim Committee noted Prof Moran had provided the Chair with the scope for the literature review on strategic assessments. The Chair requested the Secretariat circulate this to the rest of the Interim Committee following the meeting.

1.2.2 The Interim Committee recommended that in relation to the operating protocol for attendance at Committee meetings and workshops by agreed observers and managing meeting papers:

- A list of agreed observers is provided to the Interim Committee prior to each meeting.
- Observers are to complete a conflict of interest form prior to attending the meeting.
- Meeting papers to be organised by the Secretariat to indicate status of papers and actions.

1.2.3 The Interim Committee noted that action item 170112-22 on rapid risk assessment will be progressed through the March workshop.

1.2.4 The Interim Committee noted that Action items 170112-24 and 25 should be finalised noting that they had been overtaken by work commissioned from Geoscience Australia in relation to the regional prioritisation project and work to be undertaken as part of the bioregional assessment workshop in March.

1.2.5 The Interim Committee noted that in relation to Action item 170112-26 that the information requirements being developed by the Office of Water Science should include the development of a quantitative risk assessment approach and a sequential flowchart. These items will be progressed through the outcomes of the March workshop.

***Action Arising***

**220212-2** Secretariat to provide Committee with a copy of Prof Moran's proposed desktop review of bioregional assessments.

**220212-3** For all future meetings, the agenda is to include a list of any observers agreed under the Interim Committee's operating protocol, including the items that would be attended and reasons for observer's participation.

**220212-4** The Interim Committee's operating protocol to be updated to note that observers will be required to complete a conflict of interest form prior to attending the meeting.

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**220212-5** *The Office of Water Science to introduce a system of categorising meeting papers to clearly identify the status of specific agenda papers (e.g. initiation, development, finalisation, and approval).*

**220212-6** *Action item 170112-22 to be progressed through the March workshop.*

**220212-7** *Information requirements being developed should include a quantitative risk assessment approach and a sequential flowchart, to be progressed through the March workshop (refer to 170112-26).*

**1.3. Out-of-Session decisions**

There were no out of session decisions to record.

**1.4. Conflicts of Interest**

1.4.1 Committee members completed the Conflict of Interest Register at Attachment A.

1.4.2 The Interim Committee noted that at Meeting 1, Professor Chris Moran had provided a detailed overview of potential conflicts of interest. To ensure transparency, the Interim Committee agreed that it would be beneficial for all members to provide a detailed summary of all potential conflicts of interest.

***Action Arising***

**220212-8** *All Committee members to provide to the Secretariat before end March 2012, a detailed summary of all potential conflicts of interest.*

**1.5. Correspondence**

1.5.1 The Interim Committee discussed procedures regarding the clearances and publication of all correspondence.

1.5.2 All correspondence items provided to the Interim Committee were noted.

1.5.3 The Interim Committee noted an invitation from Santos for a joint industry tour of operations. The Interim Committee agreed that there would be value in all Committee members having the opportunity to see practical operating examples of coal seam gas and different forms of coal mining operations. The Interim Committee agreed, however, that any field trips organised to look at coal seam gas and coal mining operations should cover the operations of a range of different companies and geographic locations. The Interim Committee asked that the Office of Water Science investigate opportunities for appropriately organising field trips that would examine as a priority, coal seam gas and longwall coal mining operations.

***Action Arising***

**220212-9** *The Office of Water Science to investigate opportunities for appropriately organising field trips that would allow Committee members to examine as a priority, different examples of coal seam gas and longwall coal mining operations.*



## 2. Assessment and approvals process

### 2.1. Terms of Reference

2.1.1 The Interim Committee noted the paper regarding the terms of reference for environmental impact assessments and standard approval conditions for Coal Seam Gas and coal mining projects. While the Interim Committee generally supported the form of the terms of reference provided as examples of previous documentation, they suggested there was a requirement for Environmental Impact Statement documents to give more specific attention to issues such as:

- Quantifying water balance and the anticipated perturbations to the water balance as a result of a proposed development
- Aquifer locations and their proximity to coal seam gas locations and/or coal mining operations
- Impact of proposed developments on consumptive water
- Data quality to provide additional confidence and transparency
- Guidelines for modelling standards, for example a requirement that proponents follow the National Water Commission's National Groundwater Modelling Guidelines
- Development of conceptual models, for example to include water and salt balances.
- Identifying local and regional impacts, including cumulative impacts.

2.1.3 The Interim Committee suggested that where relevant, there would be value in future terms of reference reflecting the views of the Interim Committee regarding water balances (Section 3.4, Water Resources Section of the example provided). This should be addressed in the proposed 'model' terms of reference to be prepared for the Interim Committee's consideration by the Office of Water Science.

2.1.5 The Interim Committee advised that due to the diversity of operations, it would be difficult to draft generic conditions and the content of the conditions will need to be flexible.

#### **Action Arising**

**220212-10** The Office of Water Science to bring back for the Interim Committee's consideration at their April 2012 meeting, proposed 'model' terms of reference relating to how EIS documents for coal seam gas and coal mining operations should address water balance issues and that reflect the Interim Committee's suggestions of 22 February 2012.

**220212-11** The Office of Water Science to ensure that future requests for advice going to the Interim Committee include maps, and where possible water balance information, a more specific description of the location of the proposed action in relation to water resources and water requirements associated with any offsets and/or post mining remediation work.

### **3. Process for obtaining Committee's advice**

3.1 The Interim Committee noted the approach and clarified its role in the provision of advice within the assessment process noting that the Interim Committee has an advisory role only (not decision making). The Interim Committee provided suggestions on improving this process at agenda item 4.

#### ***Action Arising***

**220212-12** *The Office of Water Science to amend the advice template to reflect the Interim Committee's discussions.*

### **4. Advice on specific development proposals**

4.1.1. The Interim Committee discussed two requests for advice on specific development proposals referred by the Environmental Assessment and Compliance Division of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water Population and Communities.

- Mt Pleasant project – the Interim Committee agreed to the proposed advice with some minor amendments.
- Centennial coal projects – the Interim Committee agreed to the proposed advice with amendments.

4.1.2. The Interim Committee agreed that the Office of Water Science would amend the draft advice as discussed and recirculate for approval out-of-session and noted that given the impending statutory timeframe for a decision on these projects, the advice would need to be finalised by Friday 24 February. The Interim Committee requested a forward work plan on EPBC projects that are likely to be referred to them for advice, including an indication of the nature of the project, advice likely to be sought and the timeframe for that request.

In the related discussion on information requirements addressed in item 2.2 (Terms of Reference), the Interim Committee suggested that to assist in their assessment of specific coal seam gas and coal mining development projects, that where possible, future requests for advice be supported by:

- a map reflecting project locations, hydrology, aquifer locations
- a description of the local or regional water balance and anticipated changes to the water balance as a result of the proposed action
- a description of mitigation measures (risk mitigation)
- water requirement for offsets and/or re-establishment of land after mining has ceased
- figures relating to size of open cuts, depths of proposed mining etc.

4.1.3. In discussing providing advice on proposals, the Interim Committee noted that they would like to be provided with as much time as possible to consider applications to ensure they can be properly considered and the Interim Committee clarified that their advice will not be absorbed within the Department's advice to decision makers.



**Action Arising**

**220212-13** *The Office of Water Science to amend the draft advice for the Mt Pleasant and Centennial Coal projects to reflect the changes agreed by the Interim Committee and recirculate the advice for approval out-of-session by Friday 24 February.*

**220212-14** *The Office of Water Science to provide the Interim Committee with a forward work plan outlining anticipated EPBC projects that are likely to be referred to the Interim Committee for advice, including the anticipated timeframes for each project to come to the Interim Committee. This forward work plan will need to be updated and provided at each meeting.*

**220212-15** *The Office of Water Science to ensure that future requests for advice from the Interim Committee include maps and where possible, water balance information, a more specific description of the location of the proposed action in relation to water resources and water requirements associated with any offsets and/or post mining remediation work.*

**5. Matters arising from previous meeting**

5.1 The Interim Committee noted that the rapid regional prioritisation project was on track and that results would be available in time for consideration at the Interim Committee's bioregional assessment workshop on 19-20 March.

5.2. The Interim Committee agreed to consider out of session, the agenda items relating to:

- Draft probity plan;
- Draft communications plan; and
- Updated operating procedures.

5.4.1 The Interim Committee endorsed the proposed approach to undertaking a literature and science review of coal seam gas and coal mining research but noted that the scope of these projects should be clearly limited to water-related issues and that each of the proposed deliverables would be best delivered as a separate project.

5.4.1b The Interim Committee noted the Interim Key Knowledge Needs Framework and advised they would hold an additional meeting on 1 March 2012 to further discuss, enabling the identification of knowledge gaps and drafting of a strategic framework which could be fed into their forthcoming workshop on bioregional assessments.

**Action Arising**

**220212-16** *The Interim Committee to discuss out of session the draft probity plan, communications plan and operating procedures.*

**220212-17** *The Office of Water Science to organise a meeting on 1 March 2012 for the Interim Committee to further discuss the knowledge management framework and potential priority research projects.*

**220212-18** *The Office of Water Science to proceed with necessary arrangements to commission the proposed literature and science review work.*

**6. Progress with developing the National Partnership Agreement**

6.1 The Interim Committee noted that Queensland has signed the National Partnership Agreement and that discussions were continuing with other potential signatory states and territories.

**7. Commissioning of research/projects**

7.1 The Interim Committee discussed the process of regional assessments, with an aim to start commissioning the first three assessments by April 2012. The Interim Committee discussed developing and applying their risk framework at a further discussion to be held on 1 March.

The Interim Committee asked the Office of Water Science to commission projects to provide regions with funding to analyse impacts of potential coal seam gas and coal mining operations would impact on environmental and water assets in their regions with an estimate that this would cost up to \$600k per region.

**Action Arising**

**220212-19** *The Office of Water Science to commission projects to fund natural resource management regions to document ecological, water resource, economic and social assets in potential coal seam gas and coal mining areas.*

**8. Other business**

8.1 The Interim Committee suggested a different agenda structure for future meetings with the agenda clearly being split into two parts, with one part focussing on the Interim Committee's consideration of any requests for advice on specific development proposals; and the other part focussing on strategy and research/science issues. The Interim Committee also agreed that the Secretariat should explore the option of scheduling future meetings over two days.

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**Action Arising**

**220212-20** Secretariat to examine and report on the option of scheduling future committee meetings over 2 days.

**220212-21** Secretariat to revise the Interim Committee meeting agenda to separate consideration of requests for advice from discussion of strategic issues.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 26 March 2012 in Canberra (venue to be confirmed).

The meeting closed at 5.00pm

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Professor Craig Simmons  
Committee Chair

March 2012



### ATTACHMENT A: Meeting 2 disclosure of interests

Item	Committee Member	Disclosure	Determination
4.1	Professor Chris Moran	Advice on specific development proposals. The Sustainable Minerals Institute does significant work with proponent companies (Mount Pleasant and Centennial Coal). Professor Moran has no association/involvement in the project proposal.	Participation in discussion only.
5.1	Ms Jane Coram	Rapid Regional Prioritisation Project by Geoscience Australia: Geoscience Australia is the service provider for this project.	Participation in discussion as provided the committee with an update on the project. No decision required

