

**Interim Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining  
Minutes – Meeting 4, 18-19 April 2012**

**MINUTES – Meeting 4  
18-19 April 2012**

**Day 1 – National Library of Australia  
Day 2 – DSEWPac Offices, CANBERRA**

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**Attendance and Apologies**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Professor Craig Simmons (Chair)  
Emeritus Professor Peter Flood  
Professor Chris Moran  
Associate Professor David Laurence

**APOLOGIES**

Ms Jane Coram  
Professor John Langford

**SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT STAFF**

Alex Rankin  
Malcolm Forbes  
Bernadette O'Neil  
Angus Cole  
Pamela Finger  
Caryn Scott

**GUESTS AND OTHER DEPARTMENTAL STAFF**

Fiona Beynon (Office of Water Science) – Day 1	Helen Vooren (Office of Water Science)
Julia Donohue (Hoffmann Donohue)	Mark Hall (EACD)
Rob McGregor (Hoffman Donohue)	David Way (EACD)

As there was a quorum the meeting commenced at 9:20 am.

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**Day 1**

**Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed committee members, the Secretariat (provided by the Office of Water Science) and departmental staff, and noted the apologies received from Ms Coram and Professor Langford.

**1. Standing items**

**1.1. Conflicts of Interest**

Committee members completed the Conflict of Interest Register at Attachment A. The committee had a general discussion on conflict of interest. The Chair reiterated to members the importance of providing to the Secretariat a detailed summary of all potential conflicts of interests.

**1.2. Acceptance of minutes from previous meeting**

1.2.1. The committee endorsed the content of the minutes and the Chair signed off the minutes as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

**1.3. Action items report**

1.3.1. The Action Arising report was noted.

The committee suggested that action items 220212-7, 220212-10 and 260312-18 relating to environmental impact statement and information standards be combined into one project to be completed in parallel with development of the Strategic Framework.

**1.4. Out-of-Session decisions**

1.4.1. Draft Probity Plan – A verbal update from Ms Finger was received for this item. The change requested at the March meeting will be finalised and circulated out of session.

1.4.2. Meeting Paper classification system – It was noted that the proposed meeting paper classification system would be introduced for meeting five.

1.4.3. Future 2 day meeting schedule – The future two day meeting schedule was agreed and the meeting locations were confirmed.

1.4.4. The proposed project outline to develop an information platform to support bioregional assessments of Australia's major coal basin proposals was discussed. The committee agreed to invest a small amount of funds (\$250,000) in a scoping project for this activity. Professor Moran and Professor Simmons to work with Office of Water Science, CSIRO, Bureau of Meteorology and Geoscience Australia to complete this scoping project by end of June 2012.

1.4.5. Advice on Sonoma and Codrilla – noted the requests for additional information.

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**Action Arising**

**180412-1** Action items 220212-7, 220212-10 and 260312-18 which relate to environmental impact statement and information standards be combined into one project to be implemented in parallel with the development of the Strategic Framework.

**180412-2** Secretariat to have the meeting paper classification system in place for the May meeting.

**180412-3** The Committee to work with the Office of Water Science, CSIRO, Bureau of Meteorology and Geoscience Australia to scope by the end of June 2012 a project to provide an Information Platform to support the work of the Committee including outputs from the bioregional assessments of Australia's major coal basins.

**1.5. Correspondence**

1.5.1 The committee noted the correspondence and any action taken.

**Action Arising**

**180412-4** The Secretariat to recirculate both correspondence from Minister Burke to the Chair regarding the initial priority regions for undertaking bioregional assessments and funding of bioregional assessments and approval of research on longwall coal mining on peat swamps.

**1.6. Communications**

**1.6.1. Knowledge Adoption**

The media analysis provided for the period March to April 2012 was noted.

The branding and committee website was noted.

The list of factsheets for development by the Office of Water Science Communications team was noted.

**1.6.2. Interactive display**

The committee agreed to explore potential technologies and tools for presenting scientific and technical information in a way that will help better communicate to a wider audience.

The committee noted a presentation from Associate Professor Laurence on new techniques being developed at University of NSW.

**1.7. Reflection and stocktake**

This item was not discussed due to time constraints.

**2. Strategic framework**

**2.1. Strategic Framework**

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The committee agreed that there is a requirement for them to produce a five page strategic document that is focused on the Committee's approach to its investment recommendations and advisory role. This summary will form the foundations for other Committee communication tools such as the website and fact sheets.

The committee described this framework in full. This will be translated into a document for consideration at the May 2012 meeting.

***Action Arising***

***180412 –5 A five page strategic framework to be considered at the May meeting.***

**Report on trip to USA by Professor Simmons**

The Chair reported on his recent trip to the United States of America to review what is happening in the coal seam gas and coal mining sectors and the increasing shale gas exploration.

Professor Simmons met with various agencies including the US Environment Protection Agency, the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Economic Geology.

Dr William Fisher (Chair, Committee on Management and Effects of Coalbed Methane Development and Produced Water in the Western United States) from the University of Texas will be visiting Australia July 2012 and it was agreed that he be invited to speak to the committee about his experiences and synergies with the development of the coal seam gas industry in Australia.

***Action Arising***

***180412 –6 The Chair in conjunction with the Office of Water Science to develop a program for Dr Fisher's Australian visit to ensure good information sharing.***

***180412 –7 The Office of Water Science to provide the committee with advice on a proposed approach to 'sabbaticals' and visiting scholars (4 weeks to 12 months) to assist with Australian based studies on coal seam gas, methane and coal mining practices.***

**2. Strategic framework continued**

**2.2. Progress of the request for tender**

A verbal update from Ms Finger was received for this item. The report is expected to be finalised shortly and outcomes will be available for the May 2012 meeting.

***Action Arising***

***180412 –8 The Office of Water Science to provide the list of companies selected following assessment of the request for tender to create a panel of coal seam gas and coal mining experts at the May 2012 meeting.***



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**2.3. Environmental Impact Statement guidelines**

This item was covered in the discussion on agenda item 2.1 – strategic framework

**3. Bioregional assessments**

**3.1. Methodology paper**

The Committee agreed to the Vulnerability Framework developed by Professor Simmons and Ms Coram.

The committee discussed the approach to defining a detailed methodology for undertaking bioregional assessments, in particular the components dealing with the revised risk assessment and predictive scenarios.

The committee discussed the proposed sub-areas for initial work within the first five priority regions for assessment. It was noted that the strategic framework document will form a critical part of the methodology for the bioregional assessment.

**3.2. Geoscience Addendum report**

The Addendum to the Rapid Regional Prioritisation Project (discussed earlier at Item 1.4) was noted.

It was agreed that the committee would utilise the Geoscience Australia report to inform its recommendations to the Minister on the next priority regions for bioregional assessments. This would occur after the work on the initial five priority regions has been contracted and commenced.

**3.3. Implementation and Governance**

The progress on determining a governance model for the bioregional assessment and research work was noted and potential models were discussed.

**4. Advice on projects referred by Governments**

**4.1. Projects referred by DSEWPaC**

4.1.1. Advice was sought from the committee on one project – Dart Energy Coal Seam Gas Exploration, NSW. The committee was particularly requested to consider whether the avoidance, management and mitigation measures proposed by the proponent will prevent significant impacts on:

- The nearby Hunter Estuary Ramsar Wetlands
- *Litoria aurea* (Green and Golden Bell Frog) threatened species
- Migratory species.

The Committee discussed and agreed advice on the Dart Energy Coal Seam Gas Exploration project in NSW.

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4.1.2. The Arrow Surat project which will require the committee's advice at a future date was noted.

The committee noted that the draft environmental impact statement for the project has been released for public comment. The committee noted that it would expect the environmental impact statement would include information on the water balance of the region and potential impact of the proposed action on the water balance. It also advised that the information provided (e.g. water quality management plan) should reflect the higher standards required as part of the post approval considerations for the three Queensland coal seam gas projects approved by the commonwealth in 2011.

The committee was requested to provide comment on the terms of reference for an independent expert study to determine impacts of the Arrow Surat project on the connectivity of groundwater systems, surface and groundwater flows and water quality. This study will be commissioned by the department and is triggered by Section 255AA of the *Water Act 2007*.

The Committee requested that the terms of reference for that study be expanded to capture the information the committee would require to provide robust advice on the project. Proposed changes to the terms of reference were agreed.

The committee agreed that it would seek to provide advice on the Arrow Surat Gas Project following completion of the S255AA report.

***Action Arising***

***180412 -09*** Agreed advice on Dart Energy Coal Seam Gas Exploration Project in NSW be provided to requesting agency.

***180412 -10*** The proposed changes agreed to be incorporated into the terms of reference for S255AA report.

***180412 -11*** Arrow Surat Gas project will be considered further and the committee is to provide advice following completion of the S255AA report.

**Day 1 of the meeting closed at 6:10 pm**

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**Day 2**

As there was a quorum the meeting commenced at 9.05 am.

**5. Research projects**

**5.1. Status of projects previously recommended by the committee**

The committee noted the verbal update on the status research of projects previously recommended.

**5.2. New projects – Potential knowledge projects**

A list of potential additional knowledge projects was considered.

The committee agreed that of the list of potential knowledge projects provided, the highest priority was considered to be *Cumulative impacts of coal seam gas and coal mining development on catchment hydrology and water quality*, and notes that the primary emphasis of the project should be on coal mining activities.

The committee also considered there would value in scoping projects dealing with the reinjection and brine disposal issue but this should be done in consultation with states and following workshops to identify what work is already happening in the space.

There was agreement that there is value in consulting with industry about preferred opportunities for adding instrumentation to current monitoring/production bores.

**5.3. Budgetary implications of project commitments**

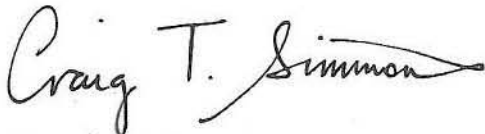
This item was not discussed due to time constraints.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 16 May 2012 in Canberra (venue to be confirmed).

The meeting closed at 12:10pm

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:



Professor Craig Simmons  
Committee Chair

May 2012





### ATTACHMENT A: Meeting 4 disclosure of interests

Item	Committee Member	Disclosure	Determination
1.6.2	Associate Professor David Laurence	Interactive Technology agenda paper. University of NSW (UNSW) is developing new techniques in this field and could be a potential provider.	Associate Professor Laurence delivered a presentation on new techniques being developed at UNSW and participated in discussion only.
4.1.2	Professor Chris Moran	Previously provided advice to Minister on similar projects in his role as member of the Expert Panel for Major Coal Seam Gas Projects.	Participation in discussion only.
5	Professor Craig Simmons	Potential research projects: National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training is a potential research and development provider.	Participation in discussion only.
5	Professor Chris Moran	Potential research projects: Potential research and development provider.	Participation in discussion only.

