

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development
Minutes – Meeting 1, 17-20 December 2012**

**MINUTES – Meeting 1
17-20 December 2012**

Private Dining Room, Old Parliament House, Canberra

Attendance and Apologies

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Lisa Corbyn (Chair)

Professor Craig Simmons (17-19 December)

Ms Jane Coram

Emeritus Professor Peter Flood

Mr Jim McDonald

Professor Dayanthi Nugegoda

Dr Andrew Johnson (by teleconference for items 1.5, 2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 3, 5, 6)

APOLOGIES

Emeritus Professor Angela Arthington

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Suzy Nethercott-Watson

Peter Baker

Lyn Chapman

Robert Gehrig

Jason Smith

Milica Milanja

Crystal Bradley

Bernadette O'Neil

**OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENT, WATER,
POPULATION AND COMMUNITIES (DSEWPac)**

Bernadette O'Neil (Days 1 & 4: Items 1.1-1.5, 4) Office of Water Science	Brendan Edgar (Days 1 & 4: Items 1.4, 1.5, 2, 2.1, 3) Office of Water Science
James Tregurtha (Days 1 & 2: Items 1.5, 2, 2.1, 2.5) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division	Kate Bayliss (Days 1-4: Items 2, 2.1-2.12) Office of Water Science
Susan Ferguson (Days 1-2: Items 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12) Office of Water Science	Rachel Ross (Days 1-4: Items 2, 2.1-2.12) Office of Water Science
Mark Hall (Days 1 & 3: Items 2.1, 2.4) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division	Mahani Taylor (Days 1 & 2: Items 2.2, 2.10) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division
Melissa Masters (Day 1: Item 2.2) Environment Assessment and Compliance	Kelly Strike (Day 1: Item 2.3) Office of Water Science

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Division	
Dean Knudson (Day 2: Item 2.5) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division	Chris Murphy (Days 2 & 3: Item 2.6, 2.9) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division
Lynda Collins (Day 2: Item 2.9) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division	Nathan Harris (Day 2: Items 2.9, 2.10) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division
Ross McKinney (Day 2: Item 2.10) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division	David Parker (Day 3: Item 2) Water Group
Casa Dalton (Day 3: Items 2.4, 2.6) Office of Water Science	Craig Watson (Day 3: Items 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12) Office of Water Science
Paul Salmond (Day 4: Items 5, 6, 7, 8) Office of Water Science	

The meeting commenced at 9.00am.

Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed committee members, the Secretariat provided by the Office of Water Science (the Office), and departmental staff to the first meeting of the IESC. The Chair noted that:

- Dr Andrew Johnson would only be available to participate in some parts of the meeting by teleconference (items listed under 'attendance and apologies' above).
- Apologies were received from Emeritus Professor Angela Arthington, however input to agenda items 2.1 and 2.9 was provided to the Chair prior to the meeting.

1. Standing items

1.1. Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair acknowledged the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, past and present, on whose land this committee meeting was held.

1.2. Conflict of Interest

Before the meeting commenced, committee members completed the Meeting Specific Disclosure of Interests. The determinations recorded at the meeting are at *Attachment A*.

1.3. Confirmation of Agenda

The agenda for Meeting 1 was discussed and endorsed, with some changes to scheduling.

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1.4. Environmental Scan

Ms Nethercott-Watson presented this item and explained that the purpose of this agenda item was to provide an overview of recent Commonwealth and industry reports and events that may be of relevance to the committee. Three reports were highlighted:

- State of the Water Sector report – an analysis of 2000 water professionals about the state of the industry and current issues it faces.
- National Harmonised Regulatory Framework for Coal Seam Gas – a presentation on this framework released 14 December 2012 will be provided at the committee meeting in February.
- Research into Water Requirements for Trees/Groundwater Depths – a report by the National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training (NCGRT).
- Ms Nethercott-Watson provided a short overview on the Prime Minister's Science and Engineering Council (PMSEC) Shale Gas Workshop she had recently attended.

1.5. Information Guidelines

Ms O'Neil presented the *Draft Information Guidelines for Proposals Relating to the Development of Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mines where there is a Significant Impact on Water Resources* (the draft Information Guidelines). These guidelines are intended to meet the requirement in the National Partnership Agreement, which requires the committee to 'make public guidelines addressing the information requirements considered necessary by the committee to allow it to undertake its activities in a timely fashion'. The draft Information Guidelines were developed with guidance by the Interim Independent Expert Scientific Committee and in consultation with the states that are signatories to the National Partnership Agreement. Representatives from Queensland and NSW have provided feedback on the document.

The committee discussed the draft Information Guidelines and highlighted areas that require further development. The consensus was that the committee agreed with the guidelines, with some modifications.

A revised version of the draft Information Guidelines incorporating feedback from members will be circulated for endorsement out of session.

Action Arising

M1-01 Action: Secretariat to circulate revised draft Information Guidelines to committee

M1-02 Action: Committee to provide feedback and endorse final version for publication

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2. Advice on Projects referred by Governments

The committee, in considering the projects referred for their advice, discussed the type of information that, in future, should be provided to the committee. The publication of the Information Guidelines will be important guidance to proponents and regulators for the inclusion of information which will enable the IESC to provide scientific advice.

The following information was highlighted as being necessary and should be provided as a standard practice:

- Water balance – regional context in addition to site-specific.
- Cumulative impacts – this should include data on regular monitoring both upstream and downstream.
- Risk assessments – the proponent should include detail on how the risk assessment was carried out.
- Water quality information.

DSEWPac Water Group Deputy Secretary David Parker attended the meeting on the morning of Wednesday 19 December. Matters discussed included:

- The challenges in formulating advice where there is limited information, particularly on regional and cumulative contexts, water balances, water quality, species and risk assessment.
- Mechanisms for managing the heavy committee workload, given the number of project referrals plus the large research agenda and bioregional assessments program.

Following agenda items 2.1 & 2.2 (below), the committee also identified information that would be useful to introduce committee consideration of projects. This included:

- An overview presentation and explanation of maps of the region and project site.
- The regional and cumulative context.
- The rationale for the Request for Advice and the timing of the request.
- Clarification of the source of each point of information (e.g. proponent or regulator).
- Explanation of the reasoning behind the points/questions raised by EACD.
- An outline of the expected relationship of Matters of National Environmental Significance species to water.
- The level of significance of the values to be protected.

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Action Arising

M1-03 Action: OWS to arrange for these matters to be incorporated into project overviews at committee meetings.

2.1 Gloucester Coal Seam Gas Project NSW

The Gloucester Coal Seam Gas Project was discussed and advice was finalised.

The advice will be published separately on the committee's website in the context of the regulator's decision.

2.2 Moolarben Coal Mines Pty Ltd/Ulan Open Cut Mine and Two Underground Mines (Moolarben Stage 2) NSW

The committee rescheduled consideration of Moolarben Stage 2 to IESC Meeting 2 in January 2013, due to insufficient time for the committee to consider the Environment Assessment report, as it was not available before the meeting.

2.3 Newlands Coal Extension Project, Bowen Basin QLD

The Newlands Coal Extension Project was discussed and advice was finalised.

The advice will be published separately on the committee's website in the context of the regulator's decision.

2.4 Sonoma Coal Mine Expansion, Coral Creek Diversion QLD

The Sonoma Coal Mine Expansion was discussed and advice was finalised.

The advice will be published separately on the committee's website in the context of the regulator's decision.

2.5 The Role of the EACD

First Assistant Secretary Mr Knudson and Assistant Secretary Mr Tregurtha from the Environment Assessment and Compliance Division (EACD) of DSEWPaC provided an overview of the role of EACD, with particular focus on Chapter 4 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* which relates to environmental impact assessments and approvals. The committee highlighted several areas of importance for the committee in determining advice and sought feedback from Mr Knudson, on what EACD and the proponents could do to assist.

Suggestions included:

- With projects being referred at different stages (i.e. referral stage, assessment stage), EACD to clarify the stage of the project, the rationale for seeking IESC advice at that point (and more generally, information about what is expected and required at each stage).

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- EACD, in collaboration with OWS, to provide timely and complete information, in as consistent a format as possible, to allow sufficient time to read and comment on the material, so that IESC advice could be provided within the statutory timeframes.
- The committee reinforced the need for water balances in a regional as well as site-specific context, while understanding that IESC advice may need to be provided without full information being available.
- Where applicable, EACD to outline the risk assessment approach / framework used to provide guidance to proponents (rather than a specific format).
- EACD to provide an accurate map of Matters of National Environmental Significance around the project site.

Other issues discussed included:

- The timing of the publication of the committee's advice and its relationship to the timing of publication of the Minister's and/or regulator's decision.
- Consideration of the need for IESC advice to be clearly understood by the proponent as well as the community.
- Consideration of cumulative impacts. EACD was encouraged by the committee to provide advice on potential impacts where possible, and provide scientific advice on potential avoidance, mitigation or offset measures that were expected to be put in place, noting that the regulator would make any final assessment / decisions about how these measures would impact overall on the acceptability of the residual impacts of an individual project.

2.6 Drake Coal Pty Ltd Open Cut Coal Mine

The Drake Coal Pty Ltd Open Cut Coal Mine was discussed and advice was finalised.

The advice will be published separately on the committee's website in the context of the regulator's decision.

2.7 Joint Discussion of Sonoma and Drake - cumulative

The cumulative context of the Sonoma Coal Mine Expansion and the Drake Coal Pty Ltd Open Cut Coal Mine was discussed and advice was finalised.

The advice will be published separately on the committee's website in the context of the regulator's decision.

2.8 Not applicable.

2.9 Boggabri Coal Mine Extension, NSW

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Mr Peter Baker gave a presentation on the Namoi Water Study to provide a regional and cumulative context for Items 2.9, 2.10 & 2.11.

The Boggabri Coal Mine Extension was discussed and advice was finalised.

The advice will be published separately on the committee's website in the context of the regulator's decision.

2.10 Maules Creek Coal Project, NSW

The Maules Creek Coal Project was discussed and advice was finalised.

The advice will be published separately on the committee's website in the context of the regulator's decision.

2.11 Tarrawonga Coal Pty Ltd, open cut mine extension, NSW

The Tarrawonga Coal Pty Ltd open cut mine extension was discussed and advice was finalised.

The advice will be published separately on the committee's website in the context of the regulator's decision.

2.12 Joint discussion of Boggabri, Maules Creek and Tarrawonga - cumulative

The cumulative context of the Boggabri Coal Mine Extension, the Maules Creek Coal Project and the Tarrawonga Coal Pty Ltd open cut mine extension was discussed and advice was finalised and included the individual project advices.

3. Reflection on Process

The committee reviewed the processes applied at this first meeting and discussed alternative approaches to managing the committee's time to maximise their efficiency. For example, consideration was given to the amount of time the committee members have available to peruse papers prior to each meeting, concentrating on areas of expertise and utilising existing information that provides regional and cumulative contexts to referrals for advice.

There will be further discussion about process at IESC Meeting 2 in January 2013.

Action Arising

M1-04 Action: Secretariat to re-format the way that meeting information is made available on govdex and group the documents by project

M1-05 Action: Secretariat to provide hard copies of agenda papers to the committee at least one week before each meeting.

M1-06 Action: Secretariat to include this item on the IESC Meeting 2 agenda.

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4. Strategic Framework

The committee discussed the draft Strategic Framework, a document that describes how the committee intends to address its terms of reference. It has been developed to provide greater transparency to communities, government and industry on the committee's functioning.

The committee discussed the document and provided feedback. The strategic framework will be complemented by other information on the IESC website, including factsheets, Information Guidelines, Research projects, etc.

The Strategic Framework will be revised based on the committee's input and circulated for approval out of session.

Action Arising

M1-07 Action: *Suggested changes to be incorporated into the strategic framework document and revised document circulated to the committee out of session for approval.*

5. Forward Planning Agenda (including calendar and field trips)

The committee discussed the usefulness of the Forward Planning Agenda in tracking progress of research projects and bioregional assessments. Options for workshops were also discussed, including the first workshop to be held on 1 February 2013 and ways to accommodate the members who were unavailable to attend. The first workshop is expected to be an overview of those research projects already commissioned by the interim IESC and a draft research strategy.

The committee will continue discussion of this item at IESC Meeting 2 in January 2013.

Action Arising

M1-08 Action: *Secretariat to include this item on the agenda for Meeting 2.*

6. Public Information on Research

A draft overview document entitled '*Research and Knowledge Projects, Commissioned January – July 2012*' was presented and discussed with the purpose of seeking agreement for publication of the document on the website. Discussion centred mainly on the importance of providing public information on the research projects underway, as well as presentational changes to the thematic groupings of projects. Additional text will also be developed to clarify how projects are informing the bioregional assessments

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process, and how they interact with other scoping work being undertaken. The committee provided advice for the Office of Water Science to finalise the document and publish on the IESC website.

Action Arising

171212-09 *Action: The Office of Water Science to work on the Research and Knowledge Projects document out of session then publish on the website.*

6.1 Draft Research and Information Strategy

Initial information to assist in preparing a draft Research and Information Strategy was provided to the committee with the intent that it informs discussion on this matter for the IESC Meeting 2 in January 2013.

7. Introduction to Bioregional Assessment Methodology

Members were provided with a copy of the draft Bioregional Assessment Framework. This item is scheduled for discussion at IESC Meeting 2 in January 2013.

8. Meeting Procedures

This item is scheduled for discussion at IESC Meeting 2 in January 2013.

Agenda Items without an identification number

Meeting with the Minister The Hon. Tony Burke MP

Members met the Minister The Hon Tony Burke MP on Tuesday 18 December 2012 who welcomed the members of the statutory committee to their inaugural meeting.

Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their efforts and noted that the multidisciplinary approach is beneficial and assisted in the committee dealing effectively with a significant workload, covering a wide range of issues. This included progress on the strategic framework and information guidelines in addition to the project advices. To enable balanced effort on both strategic matters and project advices, in future, the agenda may need to be re-ordered to place several strategic items first, with project advices grouped with time allowed for review of final project advices.

Action Arising

171212-10 *Action: Secretariat to modify the agenda for future meetings to address*

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strategic items at the beginning of meetings and to allow additional time for review of project advice.

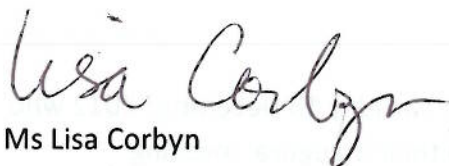
171212-11 Action: Secretariat to upload project information for Kevin's Corner and Moolarben onto govdex by COB 21 December 2012.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 30-31 January 2013 in Canberra (venue to be confirmed). In addition, a workshop will be held on 1 February 2013 which will focus on the IESC research agenda.

The meeting closed at 2.45pm.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:



Ms Lisa Corbyn
Committee Chair

30 January 2013

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Attachment A

Item	committee Member	Disclosure	Determination
7	Ms Jane Coram	Geoscience Australia's involvement in the development of the proposed Bioregional Assessment Methodology	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists and Ms Coram participated fully in the meeting. The reason for this was that no decisions were being made at this meeting on Bioregional Assessment Methodology.
2.4 2.5 2.6 2.7	Mr Jim McDonald	Mr McDonald's spouse is employed by a group of interested parties to write a proposal request for advertising and a scope/tender request to undertake a Health Impact Assessment for the Namoi Valley based on the scenarios found within the Namoi Water Study.	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists and Mr McDonald participated fully in the meeting. The reason for this decision is because the committee does not provide health advice, and the involvement in preparing a proposal for scoping advertising for a Health Impact Assessment is not a financial interest in advice being prepared by the committee and the IESC members are not providing the contract services.

