

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Unconventional Gas Development and  
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)  
Meeting 117, 21 & 23 July 2025**

**MINUTES  
Northern Territory**

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**ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Dr Chris Pigram (Chair)  
Dr Andrew Boulton  
Professor Jenny Davis  
Dr Jenny Stauber [absent 21 July 12.00 - 3.00pm]  
Dr Juliette Woods  
Associate Professor Phil Hayes  
Professor Wendy Timms

**APOLOGIES**

Professor Rory Nathan

**INVITED GUESTS**

*Item 3.1*

**NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF LANDS, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT**

Nerida Beard, Office of Water Security  
Sheree Scott, Petroleum Regulation  
Carissa Liddle, Petroleum Regulation

**NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT MINING AND ENERGY**

James Pratt, Energy Development

**OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE (OWS)**

*Note: OWS attendees include those with full or partial attendance.*

Dr Des Owen, Director  
Ben Klug  
David Cameron  
Isabelle Francis

Dr Laura Richardson  
Mersey Houston  
Mick Hannan

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair acknowledged the traditional owners, past and present, on whose lands this meeting was held, and welcomed members of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Unconventional Gas Development and Large Coal Mining Development (IESC) to the meeting.

### 1.1 Attendance and Apologies

IESC members in attendance and apologies are recorded above.

### 1.2 Disclosure of Interests

Committee members were invited to make disclosures. Committee members also completed a Meeting Declaration of Interests before the meeting commenced. No actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest were recorded for this meeting.

### 1.3 Confirmation of Agenda

The Committee endorsed the agenda for Meeting 117.

### 1.4 Confirmation of Out-of-Session Decisions

The Committee noted that:

- minutes of the Committee's 116<sup>th</sup> meeting on 18 – 19 June 2025 were agreed out-of-session and published on the IESC website on 8 July 2025; and
- advice on the Bloomfield Colliery Continuation Project Modification 5 was provided to the regulator on 24 June 2025 and published on 8 July 2025.

### 1.5 Correspondence

The Committee noted the status of correspondence to 11 July 2025.

### 1.6 Action Items

Ongoing items were noted, and updates were provided on the timing of completion.

### 1.7 Forward Planning Agenda

The Committee noted the forward planning agenda.

It was agreed that the next meeting be scheduled as a videoconference on 27 – 28 August 2025.

### 1.8 Environmental Scan

The OWS reported on recent events.

## **2. Advice on Projects referred by governments**

### 2.1 Boggabri Coal Mine Modification 10

The Boggabri Coal Mine Modification 10 Project (the 'project') is a proposed extension to the existing Boggabri Coal Mine (BCM) open-cut pit, located 15 kilometres northeast of Boggabri, New South Wales. The project will disturb 85 hectares (ha) of land while continuing to mine northwest. It will extract an additional 30 million tonnes (Mt) of Run-of-Mine (ROM) thermal, semi-soft coking and pulverised coal injection (PCI) coal and extend the life of the mine from 2036 to 2040.

The project will continue to utilise the current infrastructure which includes a coal handling and processing plant (CHPP), ancillary infrastructure, power and communications infrastructure, and a water management system. The water management system will continue to use existing sediment and mine-affected water dams (noting Mine Water Dam 5 will be mined out under Modification 8), with the Block Dam potentially being decommissioned in 2028 to allow for mining northwards, and potential establishment of a new sediment dam in 2031.

The project is in the Namoi River catchment in the Murray-Darling Basin. The headwaters of Nagero and Back creeks are within the proposed project area, with the downstream creek line already captured into BCM as part of current operations. The upstream creek lines of Nagero and Back creeks will be mined out under Modification 10, with any rainfall-runoff being captured into the water management system.

The proponent has identified a Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) south of BCM, which has the potential to rely on groundwater in the alluvium along Nagero Creek. The proponent has also identified groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs) regionally with one known and one high-potential aquatic GDE, and 10 high-potential terrestrial GDEs. Species listed under the *Environment Protection and*

*Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and their habitats occur within the project area, including koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) and *Vincetoxicum forsteri* (presented in the documentation as *Tylophora linearis*).

Key potential impacts from this project are:

- clearing of 85 ha of native vegetation, some of which is used by EPBC Act-listed species such as koala;
- permanent removal of the upper reaches of Back and Nagero creeks and their riparian zones;
- reduction of groundwater access by terrestrial vegetation within the Nagero Creek Study Area from additional cumulative drawdown; and
- cumulative impacts from the proposed project and current operations, as well as regional impacts from the BCM and surrounding mines, in particular due to increased groundwater drawdown in the coal seams.

The IESC has identified areas in which additional work is required to address the key potential impacts, as detailed in this advice. These are summarised below.

- The results of the groundwater model scenarios should be presented more clearly. A comparison between scenario 8 (cumulative proposed – excluding BCM) and scenario 6 (cumulative proposed) should be done to assess the specific impact from Modification 10 should all other proposed mining be approved. The potentiometric heads for each key aquifer should be presented separately as the combined water table maps are misleading.
- Climate-change scenarios should be incorporated into the water balance modelling to account for any potential changes in future rainfall when estimating the inflows, on-site storage and discharge volumes.
- Monitoring and management plans should be updated to place a greater emphasis on assessing 'leading indicators' to trigger actions to prevent or minimise impacts.

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.

### **3. Other business**

#### **3.1 Northern Territory Regulator Roundtable**

An informal roundtable discussion was held with invitees from the Northern Territory Government. The discussion covered various topics of mutual interest.

### **4. Close of Meeting**

The meeting closed at 7:00pm on Wednesday, 23 July 2025.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled as a videoconference on 27 – 28 August 2025.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Chris Pigram AM, FTSE

IESC Chair

04 August 2025