

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and  
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)  
Meeting 44, 15 June 2017**

**MINUTES  
Canberra**

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**Attendance and Apologies**

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Chris Pigram (Chair)  
Professor Craig Simmons  
Dr Jenny Stauber  
Dr Andrew Boulton  
Dr Wendy Timms  
Professor Joan Esterle  
Dr Ian Prosser  
Dr Glen Walker

APOLOGIES

Nil

SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Matthew Dadswell  
Emily Grant  
Ann Hartley

STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Anthony Swirepik Office of Water Science	John Higgins (Items 3 and 5.3) Office of Water Science
Rod Dann Office of Water Science	Natasha Amerasinghe Office of Water Science
Carl Zimmerman (Item 5.5) Office of Water Science	Peter Baker Office of Water Science
Mitchell Bouma (Item 5.5) Office of Water Science	Kim Bennett (Item 5.5) Office of Water Science
Jo Brennan (Item 5.2 and 5.4) Office of Water Science	Taysha Le Compte (Item 5.5) Office of Water Science
Andrew Stacey (Item 3.1) Office of Water Science	Miriam McMillan (Item 5.2 and 5.4) Office of Water Science
David Thomas (Item 3.1) Office of Water Science	John Higgins (Item 3.1 and 5.3) Office of Water Science
Erin Higuchi (Item 5.7) General Counsel Branch	Alan Hilvert-Bruce (Item 5.7) General Counsel Branch
Silvie Eckhardt (Item 5.7) General Counsel Branch	

The meeting commenced at 8.50 am on 15 June 2017.

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair, Dr Chris Pigram, welcomed members of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development (IESC) to the meeting.

The Chair updated the IESC on his recent stakeholder meetings in Brisbane Queensland. The purpose of the meetings was to introduce himself and to receive feedback on the work of the IESC. The Chair will be meeting with stakeholders in New South Wales over the coming months.

### **1.1 Acknowledgement of country**

The Chair acknowledged the traditional owners, past and present, on whose land this meeting was held.

### **1.2 Declaration of interest**

Before the meeting commenced, IESC members completed the Meeting Specific Declaration of Interest. The meeting specific determinations recorded at this meeting are available at *Attachment A*.

### **1.3 Confirmation of agenda**

The IESC endorsed the agenda for Meeting 44.

### **1.4 Action items**

Completed items were noted. A number of follow-up items were listed on the forward agenda for later meetings.

### **1.5 Confirmation of out-of-session decisions**

The Chair noted the following items have been agreed out of session:

- minutes of the IESC's forty third meeting on 3-4 May were confirmed and agreed for publication; and
- advice on the Hume Coal Project was finalised and provided to the decision maker.

### **1.6 Correspondence**

The IESC noted the status of correspondence to 2 June 2017.

### **1.7 Environmental scan**

The Office of Water Science provided an update on policy and other developments since the June 2017 IESC meeting, including:

- the Australian Government Budget 2017 Gas Supply Measure – several measures to improve the supply of the domestic gas including \$28.7 million to develop an east coast gas development program and \$30.4 million for combined geological and bioregional assessments in selected regions;
- the presentation of the Blueprint for the Future: Independent Review into the Future Security of the National Electricity Market Report to COAG leaders.
- the Northern Territory hydraulic fracking inquiry's final report is expected to be published towards the end of the year; and

- the Queensland Government has released 395 square kilometres of land in the Surat Basin for gas development.

## **1.8 Forward Planning Agenda**

The IESC noted the forward planning agenda and items due for consideration through to December 2017. It was agreed the next meeting would be scheduled for 26-27 July in Canberra.

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

### **2.1 Project advice forecast and planning**

The IESC was provided an update on advice requests from regulators in the coming months.

## **3. Bioregional Assessment Programme**

### **3.1 Bioregional assessment update**

A presentation was provided to the IESC on the recently announced program of new bioregional assessments targeting unconventional gas resources. This program will be assessing three onshore areas that are prospective for unconventional gas but under-explored; assessments will include a stronger focus on water quality than the current program.

The IESC noted the update.

## **4. Research**

There were no research items for IESC consideration at this meeting.

## **5. Other Business**

### **5.1 Office of Water Science restructure**

The IESC was updated on the restructure of the Office of Water Science and the reporting lines of the office.

### **5.2 IESC Strategic Directions**

A paper was presented for the IESC's consideration which provided a high level overview of how the IESC could increase engagement with key stakeholders to create stronger links with the community, industry and regulators.

The IESC noted the paper and requested it be circulated out of session once amendments had been made.

### **5.3 Proposed Symposium and Research update**

The IESC considered a proposal to host a Research Symposium proposed for early 2018. This would assist to build awareness among key stakeholders including regulators, researchers, industry and environmental NGOs in understanding the impacts of coal seam gas extraction and coal mining on water resources.

The IESC agreed to the proposed IESC-led research symposium.

#### 5.4 Communicating uncertainty project update

The IESC was updated on progress to date.

The IESC was asked whether they would be interested in OWS preparing a similar type of product tailored to the IESC's needs. The IESC said that they would welcome a presentation by the OWS about suggestions for best practice science communication at one of their next meetings.

#### 5.5 Reflections on Regulator workshop

The IESC discussed the workshop held with the Commonwealth Regulator to discuss IESC advice on development proposals.

The IESC agreed that similar workshops will be held with state regulators.

#### 5.6 IESC Information Guidelines

The IESC discussed the current Information Guidelines and if the guidelines were meeting the current requirements to enable the delivery of robust scientific advice to government regulators on the water related impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining developments. The Guidelines were last revised in October 2015.

The IESC noted that a revision is required and will work with the Office of Water Science over the coming months.

#### 5.7 Freedom of Information Act presentation

The General Counsel Branch of the department briefed the IESC on their obligations under the Freedom of Information Act. This included the definition of a document under the Act and the appropriate storage of documents.

The Chair thanked the General Counsel for the briefing.

#### **Close of Meeting**

The IESC congratulated Professor Craig Simmons on his recent national award of 2017 Australian Water Professional of the Year by the Australian Water Association.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 26-27 July 2017 in Canberra.

The meeting closed at 3.30 pm on Thursday 16 June 2017.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Chris Pigram  
IESC Chair

30 June 2017

Attachment A

Item	IESC member	Disclosure	Determination