

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)
Meeting 43, 2-4 May 2017**

**MINUTES
Queensland**

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

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Barbara Musso
Emily Grant
Jo Brennan
Brad Desmond

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Anthony Swirepik (Item 1, 2 & 5) Office of Water Science	Sam Pettett (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Rod Dann (Item 2) Office of Water Science	

INVITED GUESTS

David Kitto (Item 2.1) NSW Department of Planning and Environment	Mike Young (Item 2.1) NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Stephen O'Donoghue (Item 2.1) NSW Department of Planning and Environment	Kim Farrant (Item 2.1) Department of the Environment and Energy
Dane Roberts (Item 2.1) Department of the Environment and Energy	Scott Stevens (Item 5.2) QLD Department of Natural Resources and Mines
Chris Loveday (Item 5.3) QLD Department of Environment and Heritage Protection	Steven Flook (Item 5.3) Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment

The meeting commenced at 5:30pm on Tuesday 2 May 2017. The meeting was split into sessions of a few hours held in different locations: Brisbane on 2 May; Emerald on 3 and 4 May; and, Roma on 4 May.

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 and members thanked Professor Craig Simmons for chairing the IESC during the recent period without a formal Chair.

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 43.

1.4 Action items

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

The IESC members were advised that QGC has not agreed to release to the IESC the Joint Industry Work Program Ecotoxicology Report, as it contains commercially sensitive information and is confidential. Instead, QGC has offered a presentation to the IESC on the finding from the report. The Committee accepted the offer of a presentation but noted their disappointment, particularly given their IESC confidentiality declarations prevented them from disclosing the details of the report to any party.

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 second meeting on 22-23 March 2017 were confirmed and agreed for publication; and
- advices on the Grosvenor Coal Mine G200s Expansion Project and Isaac Plains Mine Extension Development were finalised consistent with the Committee's deliberations and provided to the decision maker.

1.6 Correspondence

The IESC noted the status of correspondence to 30 April 2017.

1.7 Environmental scan

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

- the introduction of the Australian Government's Australian Domestic Gas Supply Mechanism which gives the government the power to impose export controls on companies when there is a shortfall of gas in the domestic market;
- the passing of amendments to the South Australian *Emergency Management (Electricity Supply Emergencies) Amendment Bill 2017*;
- the Northern Territory Government's Hydraulic Fracking Inquiry announced the release of tenders for the economic impact assessment and planned release of a second tender for a social impact assessment of hypothetical hydraulic fracturing of onshore unconventional shale gas reservoirs in the Beetaloo Sub-basin.

1.8 Forward Planning Agenda

The IESC noted the forward planning agenda and items due for consideration through to December 2017.

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

2.1 Advice on Hume Coal Project

The IESC received a request from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy and the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment to provide advice on Hume Coal's Hume Coal project in NSW.

The Hume Coal Project is a proposed new underground coal mine, located in the Southern Highlands area of the Sydney Basin, which is within the Sydney drinking water catchment, approximately 100 km south west of Sydney. The proposed project will target the Wongawilli Seam of the Illawarra Coal measures and extract 3.5 million tonnes per annum of run of mine coal, over the 23-year life of the project. The surface area infrastructure and underground footprint of the proposed project will cover approximately 50 km². Infrastructure associated with the proposed project includes: coal preparation plant, overland conveyors, personnel and material drift access, ventilation shafts, water management system, offices, workshop and wash-down facilities, and rail load-out facilities.

The proposed project is located in a semi-rural area with a relatively high number of individual landholders who access and use local and regional aquifers. The project area is predominately cleared for grazing and other agricultural purposes; however, there are also significant areas of native vegetation within and adjacent to the lease boundary. This includes a number of Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 and Threatened Species Conservation (TSC) Act 1995 listed species habitat and listed flora.

The IESC reviewed and discussed the information provided and considered the potential key issues as follows:

- Drawdown in landholders' bores, largely within the Hawkesbury Sandstone.
- Drawdown of the water table resulting in loss of baseflow and subsequent changes to the flow regime and water quality in waterways.
- Drawdown of the water table impacting groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDEs), including riverine GDEs, terrestrial vegetation and subsurface ecosystems.

- Water quality impacts to Oldbury Creek, Medway Rivulet and the Wingecarribee River, and riparian vegetation in these waterways as a result of discharge from site stormwater basins.
- Water quality impacts to aquifers and groundwater-fed surface waters as a result of storing rejects in underground voids.

Consistent with the EPBC Regulations, the advice will be published on the IESC's website within 10 business days of being provided to the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy.

5. Other Business

5.1 Narrabri Project

The IESC was given an introductory presentation by NSW Department and Planning and Environment and Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy officers on the Narrabri CSG project and the regulatory approach being undertaken under the bilateral agreement for assessments.

5.2 Department of Natural Resources and Mines Presentation

Mr Scott Stevens, Senior Project Officer, Central West Region, presented to the IESC on water management issues including watercourse diversions, subsidence of watercourses and floodplains within mines.

5.3 QLD Department of Environment and Heritage Protection Presentation

Mr Chris Loveday, Director, Impact Assessment and Operational Support, presented to the IESC on a range of water issues including regulating mining in relation to impacts to water resources as a result of mining activities and associated mine water releases.

Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7:45pm on Thursday 4 May 2017.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 14-15 June 2017.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Chris Pigram

IESC Chair

23 May 2017

Item(s)	IESC member	Disclosure	Determination
2.2	Dr Ian Prosser	I consider that there may be a possible conflict of interest in relation to agenda item 2.2 arising from my use of the project area for recreation one to two times a year for the last 30 years.	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists. Member can participated fully in the meeting.