

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and  
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)  
Minutes – Meeting 23, 12 November 2014**

**MINUTES – Meeting 23  
Old Parliament House, Canberra ACT**

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**Attendance and Apologies**

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Lisa Corbyn (Chair)  
Professor Craig Simmons (Deputy Chair)  
Emeritus Professor Angela Arthington  
Ms Jane Coram  
Emeritus Professor Peter Flood  
Mr Jim McDonald

APOLOGIES

Professor Dayanthi Nugegoda  
Dr Andrew Johnson

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE (OWS) - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Gayle Milnes  
Sean Lane  
Jason Smith  
Kimberley Hammond  
Helen Vooren

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Sophie Alexander (Item 1) Office of Water Science	Craig Moore (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Scott Lawson (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Rod Dann (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Kim Bennett (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Emily Turner (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Edwina Johnson (Item 3) Office of Water Science	Peter Baker (Item 3) Office of Water Science
Anthony Swirepik (Item 4) Office of Water Science	Moya Tomlinson (Item 4) Office of Water Science
Bruce Gray (Item 4) Office of Water Science	Steven Kennedy Deputy Secretary Department of the Environment

OBSERVERS

Anna Newton-Walters (Item 4) Office of Water Science	Rachael England (Item 4) Office of Water Science
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The meeting commenced at 9.15 am on 12 November 2014.

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**1. Welcome and Introductions**

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

Apologies were received from Professor Dayanthi Nugegoda and Dr Andrew Johnson.

**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 determinations recorded at this meeting are available at *Attachment A*.

**1.3 Confirmation of agenda**

The IESC endorsed the agenda for Meeting 23.

**1.4 Action items**

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

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

The Chair noted the following out-of-session item:

- Minutes of the IESC's twenty-second meeting (11 October 2014) were agreed out-of-session and posted on the IESC's website.

**1.6 Correspondence**

The IESC noted the action taken and the status of correspondence to 31 October 2014.

**1.7 Environmental scan**

The Office of Water Science (OWS) provided an update on developments since the October IESC meeting including the continuing publication of interim IESC and IESC advice on development proposals, the One Stop Shop reforms and a series of meetings that have been undertaken by the OWS (in some cases involving IESC members) in the past month.

The Chair sought and received feedback from the IESC on issues of interest that she may wish to raise during meetings with Commonwealth and state regulators scheduled for November. Discussions are expected to centre on the role of the IESC and the advice provided to regulators on development proposals.

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**1.8 Forward Planning Agenda**

The IESC noted the forward planning agenda and items due for consideration through to June 2015. Noting the number and type of projects scheduled for consideration, it was agreed to hold a two day meeting in December (10 -11 December). It was also noted that because of availability a presentation from the Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance would be rescheduled for early in the New Year.

**2. Advice on Projects referred by Governments**

**2.1 Airly Mine Extension Project, NSW**

The Australian Government Department of the Environment and the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment sought the IESC's advice on the Airly Mine Extension Project which is at the assessment stage.

The proposed project is an extension to an existing underground coal mining operation. It is located five kilometres north east of Capertee and 40 kilometres north-north east of Lithgow on the northern fringe of the Western Coalfields. The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA) borders the project to the south.

It is expected that the mine output will be up to 1.8 million tonnes per annum of run-of-mine coal over a 25 year period.

Matters of interest to the IESC included:

- possible impacts of drawdown and subsidence resulting in reduced flows in Gap & Genowlan Creeks;
- changes to inflow into Airly Creek upstream of the GBMWA (Gardens of Stone National Park );
- the identification of local groundwater dependent ecosystems and species including the groundwater dependent Mount Vincent Mint Bush; and
- the limited distribution of the critically endangered Genowlan Point Pultenaea on Mount Genowlan.

Consistent with the Regulations of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*, the advice on this project will be published on the IESC's website within 10 business days of being provided to the Department of the Environment and the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment.

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### **3. Bioregional Assessments**

#### **3.1 Bioregional Assessments progress**

The IESC noted the release of six Coal and CSG Resource Assessments and an associated submethodology.

The changes to the scopes and the delivery dates for the product delivery were discussed. Positive feedback was provided regarding the fast tracking of the development of submethodologies to internal review stage. Noting that the changes to scope will increase effort in some areas and reduce in others, the IESC agreed that the work completed to date has provided a solid basis for these decisions and that this reflected a maturing of the programme.

The IESC appreciated the narrative describing the bioregional assessments which had been updated following feedback from the August meeting. The changes articulate aspects out of scope for bioregional assessments and reflect the consideration of subsidence and chemicals within the assessments and how bioregional assessment outcomes can assist regulators 'post approval'.

IESC members discussed ways they could ensure quality of Bioregional Assessment products and undertook to continue to:

- respond to presentations of proposed approaches within submethodologies;
- review and provide feedback on first examples of each product type;
- provide comment within timelines for external review; and
- participate where possible in technical workshops and when appropriate in meetings with regulators.

#### **3.2 Bioregional Assessment matrix discussion**

Discussion on the development of a matrix of Bioregional Assessment activities and how and where IESC members could participate in or contribute to these was deferred to post the December meeting.

### **4. Research**

#### **4.1 Update on Research**

Key developments on research were reported to and discussed by the IESC, including the recent publication of the *Monitoring and management of subsidence induced by coal seam gas extraction* report; the *Reference list for water related coal seam gas and coal mining research* and the forecast publication by Geoscience Australia of the *Groundwater Hydrochemical Characterisation of the Surat Region and Laura Basin – Queensland*.

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Following feedback provided at the October meeting, the draft human health and environmental risk assessment reports from NICNAS will undergo further independent and external peer review process. The IESC endorsed the strong and logical review process and expressed confidence in the international peer reviewers. Geoscience Australia has requested that the National Chemicals Assessment conceptualisation and hazard modelling reports be resubmitted to them for reconsideration and further comment.

**4.2 Modelling water-related ecological responses to coal seam gas and coal mining.**

A draft final report for the project *Modelling water-related ecological responses to coal seam gas and coal mining*, was provided for comment and endorsement. This report was prepared following the ecology workshop held in July 2014 with input from authors and as technical panel [Dr Martin Andersen (UNSW), Dr Bruce Chessman (ecological consultant), Professor Ray Froend (ECU) and Dr Alexander Herr (CSIRO)].

It has been peer reviewed by members of the technical panel, IESC member Emeritus Professor Angela Arthington, Dr Anthony O’Grady (Ecology Lead, Bioregional Assessments), Dr Jennifer Firn (QUT) and Dr Keith Walker.

The IESC endorsed the report with minor amendments noting that it has also been circulated to relevant state and Commonwealth agencies for comment.

**Close of Meeting**

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting and, as their terms of appointment draw to an end, Emeritus Professor Angela Arthington, Dr Andrew Johnson, Professor Dayanthi Nugegoda and Mr Jim McDonald more specifically recognising their contributions to the business of the IESC over the past two years.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 10-11 December 2014 in Canberra.

The meeting closed at 5.15pm 12 November 2014.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Ms Lisa Corbyn  
IESC Chair

19 November 2014

Item(s)	IESC member	Disclosure	Determination
4	<b>Professor Craig Simmons</b>	I consider that there may be a possible conflict of interest in relation to agenda item 4 (Research) arising from <i>National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training (NCGRT) being a potential provider of R&amp;D to the IESC/OWS.</i>	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists and Professor Simmons participated fully in the IESC meeting. The reason for the decision is that the IESC is not making decisions on research funding therefore there is no conflict in relation to the meeting.