

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Sea, Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)
Meeting 28, 14 May 2015**

**MINUTES
Dialogue Business Centre, Canberra ACT**

Attendance and Apologies

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Andrew Johnson (Chair)
Dr Andrew Boulton
Ms Jane Coram
Emeritus Professor Peter Flood
Dr Tom Hatton

APOLOGIES

Professor Craig Simmons (Deputy Chair)
Dr Jenny Stauber

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE (OWS) - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Gayle Milnes
Sean Lane
Ann Hartley
Helen Vooren
Veronica Grobбен

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Dr Diana Wright First Assistant Secretary Science Division	Geraldine Cusack (Item 3) Office of Water Science
Sophie Alexander (Item 1) Office of Water Science	Scott Lawson (Item 4) Office of Water Science
Anthony Swirepik (Item 3) Office of Water Science	Moya Tomlinson (Item 4) Office of Water Science
Peter Baker (Item 3) Office of Water Science	Bruce Gray (Item 4) Office of Water Science
James Hill (Item 3) Office of Water Science	Alistair Usher (Item 4) Office of Water Science
Penney Wood (Item 3) Office of Water Science	Glenn Johnstone (Item 3) Environmental Resources Information Network
Megan Stanford (Item 3) Office of Water Science	

INVITED GUESTS

Dr Nick Marsh Griffith University	
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The meeting commenced at 9.00 am on 14 May 2015.

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, Dr Andrew Johnson, 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 Craig Simmons and Dr Jenny Stauber.

The Chair expressed his gratitude to Ms Lisa Corbyn for her work and service as previous chair of the IESC.

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 28.

Item 5.1 IESC Operating Protocols was removed from the agenda, with the documents to be considered out of session.

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

Since the last meeting there were three items agreed out of session:

- minutes of the IESC's twenty-seventh meeting (9-10 April 2015) were confirmed and agreed for publication;
- advice on the coal mining project Watermark Coal Project (EPBC 2011/6201) – New Development was finalised and provided to the decision maker; and
- endorsement of the final report – *Monitoring and management of subsidence induced by longwall coal mining activity*.

1.6 Correspondence

The IESC noted the action taken and status of correspondence to 30 April 2015. There is currently one item outstanding and a draft response is in preparation.

1.7 Environmental scan

The Office of Water Science (OWS) provided an update on developments since the April IESC meeting including:

- the publication of the IESC's advice on the Watermark Coal Project;
- the reconvened Additional Estimates hearing of the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee on 11 May;
- progress with the independent review of the National Partnerships Agreement on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development; and
- the Domestic Gas Strategy released by the Minister for Industry and Science, the Hon Ian Macfarlane MP, in April.

1.8 Forward Planning Agenda

The IESC noted the forward planning agenda and items due for consideration through to November 2015.

The June meeting would be limited to one day, noting that one request for advice was expected from the Commonwealth regulator.

The Secretariat was requested to examine the current forward meeting schedule and provide options for consideration on meeting venue and timing. As a number of members will be attending the National Groundwater Conference, alternate dates for the November meeting will be investigated.

A review of the research priorities scheduled for July will include a revision of the function and membership of the Research Sub-committee.

3. **Bioregional Assessments**

3.1 Update on Bioregional Assessments

An update was provided to the IESC on:

- the ecological receptor impact modelling workshop held on 13 May;
- recent communication and stakeholder engagement activities across the programme;
- data registers for the Galilee, Gwydir and Central West subregions and for the Clarence-Moreton bioregion were published on 29 April 2015, along with the context statement for the Hunter subregion; and
- anticipation that data registers for Maranoa-Balonne-Condamine, Hunter and Gloucester regions, the asset register for the Namoi region and context statements for Arckaringa and Pedirka will be published in the coming month.

The IESC provided feedback on an exposure draft for the submethodology: *Systematic analysis of water-related hazards associated with coal seam gas and open-cut mining*. Specific written comments were provided to the authors for consideration and incorporation in the final report.

3.2 EIS Database Mapping Resource Project

The IESC received a presentation on a data mapping tool that has been developed within the OWS. The tool facilitates access to and comparison of data from publicly available Environmental Impact Statement documentation provided by project proponents.

4. Research

4.1 Update on Research

A status update was provided on key activities in the research programme including:

- ongoing work on the research to improve representation of faults and aquitards in Australian regional groundwater models to improve assessment of impacts of CSG extraction. It is expected that the project's first report including conceptual representations will be provided to the IESC in August; and
- progress on the National Assessment of Chemicals associated with Coal Seam Gas Extraction in Australia reports.

The IESC provided feedback and endorsed the Reference list for water related Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining Research Report (Part 4) which will undergo a final edit prior to publication.

4.2 Reports by Geoscience Australia

Four reports developed from projects commissioned under the National Collaboration Framework Project Agreement between the OWS and Geoscience Australia was provided to the IESC for comment.

The IESC noted that the reports would undergo a further edit prior to publication on the Geoscience Australia website and a summary (synthesis) document and links to the final reports would be provided on the IESC website.

4.3 Assessment of ecohydrogeological responses to CSG extraction and coal mining (Stage One report) and presentation

Dr Nick Marsh from Griffith University and project manager for this project provided an overall summary of the project and discussed the project stages and proposed workplan.

The report describes the proposed research including hypotheses and supporting rationale, study design, outline of field sampling and experiments and draft conceptual models.

IESC members provided feedback on the workplan including scope transfer the results from sites chosen to the broader landscape.

IESC members agreed to work with OWS to consider how this issue might be addressed.

The Chair thanked Dr Marsh for his presentation to the IESC.

5. Other Business

5.2 Meeting with the Minister

The meeting recessed so that IESC members could meet with the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, at Parliament House.

5.3 Field Trip Planning

The IESC requested the Secretariat prepare a revised proposal for a single day field trip to coincide with the August meeting.

It was agreed that invitations to IESC members would be extended to any field trips or other activities of interest, where appropriate, that may be organised by the OWS.

Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 17 June 2015 in Canberra.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Andrew Johnson
IESC Chair

05 June 2015

Item(s)	IESC member	Disclosure	Determination
4.2	Jane Coram	I consider that there may be a possible conflict of interest in relation to Agenda Item 4.2 (Research) arising from Geoscience Australia's authorship of the reports in question.	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists and Ms Coram participated fully in the IESC meeting.