

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam, Gas and  
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)  
Meeting 29, 22-23 July 2015**

**MINUTES  
Dialogue Business Centre, Canberra ACT**

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**Attendance and Apologies**

IN ATTENDANCE

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

APOLOGIES

Dr Jenny Stauber

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE (OWS) - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Gayle Milnes  
Sean Lane  
Ann Hartley

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Craig Moore (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Carl Zimmerman (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Rod Dann (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Scott Lawson (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Susanne Busch (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Ben Roundnew (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Philippa Higgins (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Melissa Liu (Item 2) 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	John Higgins (Item 4) Office of Water Science
Geraldine Cusack (Item 3) Office of Water Science	

INVITED GUESTS

Brent Henderson (Item 3) CSIRO	Bronwyn Ray (Item 3) Bureau of Meteorology
Simon Barry (Item 3) CSIRO	David Post (Item 3) CSIRO
Becky Schmidt (Item 3) CSIRO	Steven Lewis (Item 3) Geoscience Australia

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am on 22 July 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 Dr Jenny Stauber.

### **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*.

Members also provided Private Circumstances Declarations, which is required biannually.

### **1.3 Confirmation of agenda**

The IESC endorsed the agenda for Meeting 29.

### **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 items have been agreed out of session:

- Minutes of the IESC's twenty-eighth meeting (14 May 2015) were confirmed and agreed for publication;
- Recommendations for the assessment of ecohydrogeological responses to coal seam gas extraction and coal mining (Stage One Report); and
- Information Guidelines (agreeing to them being made available for consultation).

### **1.6 Correspondence**

The IESC noted the action taken and status of correspondence to 30 June 2015.

### **1.7 Environmental scan**

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

- Release of the Australian Government's *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia and Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper*;
- Attendance of the Chair before the Australian Government Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee Inquiry into the Landholders' Right to Refuse (Gas and Coal) Bill 2013 to be held in Brisbane 27 July 2015; and
- progress with the Independent Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development.

## 1.8 Forward Planning Agenda

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

The Secretariat was requested to revisit the dates for the November meeting as a number of members will be attending the National Groundwater Conference.

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

### 2.1 Further advice on impacts to swamps

The IESC received a request for advice from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment to provide further advice on swamps in the context of underground mining in the Western and Southern Coalfields of New South Wales.

The IESC has previously given advice on a number of coal mining projects where longwall mining has been proposed in areas where listed swamps occur, specifically in relation to the Russell Vale (IESC 2014-057, 2014-058, 2015-065), Springvale (IESC 2015-054) and Angus Place (IESC 2015-053) mines.

The IESC reviewed and discussed the information provided. Matters of interest to the IESC included impact monitoring; baseline data; and swamp remediation.

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 the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment.

### 2.2 Drayton South Coal Project – Expansion

The IESC received a request for advice from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment to provide advice on the Drayton South Coal Project in New South Wales, which is at the assessment stage.

The IESC has twice previously provided advice on the Drayton South Coal Project; on the initial project proposal prior to the introduction of the 'water trigger' (IESC 2012-010, 1 February 2013), and on the current (retracted) project proposal at the Gateway stage on 23 February 2015 (IESC 2015-064).

The proposed project is an extension to the existing Drayton Coal Mine and is located approximately 13 kilometres south of Muswellbrook in the Hunter Valley. The proposed project will produce up to seven million tonnes per annum of thermal coal for a further 15 years, mining a resource of approximately 75 million tonnes.

The IESC reviewed and discussed the information provided. Matters of interest to the IESC included:

- cumulative impacts on groundwater and surface water systems from the proposed project and adjacent mining operations;
- numerical groundwater modelling;
- reduction in flows to Saddlers Creek and the associated influence on water quality and quantity affecting riparian ecosystems; and
- water quality issues associated with seepage from the final void lake.

Consistent with the EPBC Regulations the advice on this project will be published on the IESC's website within 10 business days of being provided to the Australian Government Department of the Environment and the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment.

### 2.3 Theme Sheets

The IESC noted and agreed the proposed changes to the development of theme sheets.

## 3. **Bioregional Assessments**

### 3.1 Update on Bioregional Assessments

Dr Brent Henderson from CSIRO presented to the IESC an example of how the assessment methodologies have been applied to deliver a full end-to-end bioregional assessment in the Gloucester region. IESC members provided feedback to the project team, including their interest in providing early feedback on communication products and processes.

The Chair thanked Dr Henderson and the other attendees for their presentation

## 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 inform the assessment of ecohydrological responses to coal seam gas extraction and coal mining; and
- progress on the National Assessment of Chemicals associated with Coal Seam Gas Extraction in Australia reports.

The IESC noted the developments on the research projects and stressed to OWS staff the importance of effective communications of the outputs of the research programme to the community and industry.

### 4.2 Review of IESC's advice on Research Priorities

An update was provided on the current research programme, the progress made over the past two years and priorities for future investment.

The IESC agreed to review its 2013 advice on research priorities, the terms of reference and timeline for the review.

## 5. **Other Business**

### 5.2 Field Trip

The IESC agreed that due to the number of IESC members that may be unavailable for a field trip in August that the field trip should be deferred.

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.

### 5.3 Proposed 2016 Meeting Dates

The IESC agreed to the proposed schedule of meetings for 2016, subject to confirmation of proposed dates.

#### 5.4 IESC operations

The IESC agreed to dedicate time in its future meeting to ensuring continuous improvement in the Committee's operations. The Chair invited contributions from members on the IESC's role in disseminating information to the community, reviewing and evaluating its performance, and mechanism to provide feedback to regulators and proponents on development proposal documentation.

#### **Close of Meeting**

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 30 September – 1 October 2015 in Canberra.

The meeting closed at 1.10 pm 23 July 2015.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Andrew Johnson  
IESC Chair

14 August 2015

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 NCGRT as a potential/current provider of research.	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists and Professor Simmons participated fully in the IESC meeting.