

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development
Minutes – Meeting 3, 19-20 February 2013**

**MINUTES – Meeting 3
19-20 February 2013**

Centenary Room 2, Hyatt Hotel Canberra

Attendance and Apologies

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Lisa Corbyn (Chair)
Professor Craig Simmons
Emeritus Professor Angela Arthington
Mr Jim McDonald
Ms Jane Coram
Emeritus Professor Peter Flood
Dr Andrew Johnson (by telephone)

APOLOGIES

Professor Dayanthi Nugegoda

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Suzy Nethercott-Watson
Peter Baker
Robert Gehrig
Jason Smith
Milica Milanja

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENT, WATER,
POPULATION AND COMMUNITIES (DSEWPaC)

Sue Stefanoski (Day 1: Item 1) Office of Water Science	Gayle Milnes (Day 2: Items 1, 2.1, 4.1, 5.1) Office of Water Science
Crystal Bradley (Day 1: Item 2.1) Office of Water Science	Fiona Beynon (Days 1-2: Items 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1) Office of Water Science
Kelly Strike (Days 1-2: Items 3.1, 3.3, 3.4) Office of Water Science	Ben Maly (Days 1-2: Items 3.1, 3.3, 3.4) Office of Water Science
Kate Bayliss (Days 1-2: Items 3.2-3.4, 5.2, 5.3) Office of Water Science	Emily Turner (Days 1-2: Items 3.2-3.4) Office of Water Science
Emma Cully (Day 1: Item 3.1) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division	Nathan Harris (Day 1: Item 3.1) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division
Mahani Taylor (Day 1: Item 3.2) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division	Ross McKinney (Day 1: Item 3.2) Environment Assessment and Compliance Division
Sheryl Hedges (Day 1: Item 4.2) Aquatic Systems Policy Branch	Brian Bycroft (Day 1: Item 4.2) Aquatic Systems Policy Branch
Gautam Mathur (Day 1: Item 4.2) Aquatic Systems Policy Branch	Bernadette O'Neil (Day 2: Item 4.3) Office of Water Science
Carla Morgan (Day 2: Items 5.1, 5.2) Office of Water Science	Brendan Edgar (Day 2: Items 5.1) Office of Water Science

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development
Minutes – Meeting 3, 19-20 February 2013**

Geraldine Cusack (Day 2: Items 5.2, 5.3) Office of Water Science	Casa Dalton (Day 2: Item 5.2) Office of Water Science
Rachel Ross (Day 2: Item 5.2) Office of Water Science	

The meeting commenced at 9.00am.

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed Committee members noting:

- Dr Andrew Johnston would participate in the meeting by teleconference
- Apologies from Professor Dayanthi Nugegoda.

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair acknowledged the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, past and present, on whose land this meeting was held.

1.2 Conflict of Interest

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

1.3 Confirmation of Agenda

The agenda for Meeting 2 was endorsed without change.

1.4 Acceptance of Minutes

The Committee discussed the minutes of Meeting 2 (30-31 January and 1 February 2013). The minutes were accepted with minor revisions.

1.5 Action Items

Completed items were noted and other items were referred to agenda items for discussion later in the meeting.

1.6 Confirmation of Out-of-Session Decisions

Members noted that the IESC Information Guidelines were finalised out of session and have been published on the Committee's website.

1.7 Environmental Scan

Office of Water Science (OWS) reported the following developments:

- Reports of the NSW government's recent announcements about changes to regulatory arrangements in NSW which included a 2km exclusion zone around residential areas and critical industry clusters; scope for the Environment Protection Authority to revoke licences if companies break the new rules; and a review of CSG activities by the NSW Chief Scientist.

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development
Minutes – Meeting 3, 19-20 February 2013**

- The tabling of a private members bill calling for a moratorium on coal seam gas drilling by The Hon Bob Katter MP.
- A recent announcement by the Queensland government to allow the development of a commercial oil shale.

2. Communications

2.1 Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

The Committee considered its role in regards to communication and stakeholder engagement. Members noted they will consider a draft Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Communication Protocols for the Committee at the next Committee meeting.

***M3-01 Action:** a draft Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Communication Protocols are to be prepared for endorsement at the March Committee meeting.*

3. Advice on Projects Referred by Governments

3.1 Surat (Arrow) Coal Seam Gas Expansion, QLD

The Committee was referred the Surat Gas Project, Queensland, for advice to the Commonwealth regulator, at the draft Environmental Impact Statement stage.

The project is located approximately 160km west of Brisbane and extends from Wondoan in the north to Dalby in the east and Goondiwindi in the south. The project straddles the Murray-Darling and Northeast coast drainage divisions and occurs across four drainage basins: Condamine-Culgoa, Border Rivers, Fitzroy and Moonie. Arrow Energy is proposing up to an additional 7,500 CSG production wells drilled at a rate of approximately 400 wells per year, over an area of 8,600 square kilometres.

The draft Environmental Impact Statement for this project was available for public comment between 16 March and 14 June 2012.

Matters of interest to the Committee included cumulative impacts, water balance, water quality and turbidity, drawdown predictions, impacts on matters of national environmental significance and impacts on springs.

The Committee's advice will be published separately on the Committee's website in the context of the regulator's decision.

3.2 Stratford Coal Mine Extension NSW

The Committee was requested to provide advice to the Commonwealth regulator on the Stratford Extension Project at the draft Environmental Impact Statement stage.

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development
Minutes – Meeting 3, 19-20 February 2013**

The project is located approximately 100km north of Newcastle and 15km south of the town of Gloucester, NSW, in an upper catchment of the Manning River system and the Avon River sub-catchment. The proposal is for the extension of two existing open cut coal mines; Stratford Mine and Bowens Road North Open Cut.

Matters of Interest to the Committee included drawdown predictions, Red Gum and Whitebox, surface water and cumulative impacts.

The Committee's advice will be published separately on the Committee's website in the context of the regulator's decision.

4. Strategic Items

4.1 National Harmonised Regulatory Framework

Members noted OWS's proposed approach to providing comments on the National Harmonised Regulatory Framework.

4.2 National Water Quality Management Strategy guidelines for groundwater protection in Australia

DSEWPaC officers briefed the Committee on the National Water Quality Management Strategy (Strategy). Key points included that the Strategy:

- is a non-mandatory framework which was launched in 1992 to encourage national consistency in managing water quality
- has been endorsed by the Australian Government and state and territory governments
- comprises a number of policy documents and 21 guideline documents.

4.3 Strategic Framework

The Committee agreed a number of revisions and to provide final comments by 25 February, with a view to finalising the document out of session to allow publication.

M3-02 Action: A document that explains how the Committee will deliver against its Terms of Reference is to be published on the Committee's website.

4.4 Review of Meeting and Forward Planning Agenda

The Committee agreed revisions to the Forward Planning Agenda including:

- A one day workshop on research priorities to be held on 19 March 2013 prior to the Committee meeting to be held on 20-21 March 2013
- Inviting a guest to speak at the March Committee meeting on the draft Surat underground impact report and research priorities in Queensland
- Scheduling agenda items on water balance and risk for later in the year.

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development
Minutes – Meeting 3, 19-20 February 2013**

Also identified for the March Committee meeting was the finalisation of a Bioregional Assessment Methodology and consideration of a new document called the Bioregional Assessment Framework. The methodology would be taken forward by a sub-Committee chaired by Mr McDonald and including Emeritus Professor Flood. Committee members are to provide written comments by 25 February 2013 to assist the sub-Committee to finalise the methodology and to develop the framework.

M3-03 Action: *OWS to organise a workshop on research priorities for 19 March 2013.*

M3-04 Action: *OWS to invite a guest to speak to the Committee at their March meeting on the draft Surat underground impact report and research priorities in Queensland.*

M3-05 Action: *OWS to work with sub-Committees to develop Bioregional Assessment methodology and a framework for consideration at Meeting 4 in March 2013.*

5. Research

5.1 Research Priorities

The Committee discussed draft research priorities. They agreed to expedite work on the research priorities by holding a workshop on 19 March and forming a sub-Committee comprising Professor Simmons (Chair); Emeritus Professor Arthington; and Ms Jane Coram.

The Committee requested OWS prepare Terms of Reference for the two new Sub-Committees convened in the course of this meeting for consideration at the March Committee meeting.

M3-06 Action: *OWS to develop a Terms of Reference for Sub-Committees for consideration at the March Committee meeting.*

M3-07 Action: *Research sub-Committee to develop a Research Project Investment Strategy for consideration at the research workshop in March 2013.*

5.2 Critical Science Reviews

A number of Critical Science Reviews (reviews) were commissioned in mid-2012 by the Office of Water Science on the advice of the interim Committee on the state of the science underpinning coal seam gas and coal mining impact management in key areas. Four near-complete Critical Science Reviews were presented to the Committee for discussion and advice.

Discussion commenced by noting that it was important that the Critical Science Reviews be fit for purpose.

Four draft reviews were discussed as follows:

- *Aquifer connectivity within the Great Artesian, Surat, Bowen and Galilee Basins*
- *Cumulative Impacts and Strategic Assessments*

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development
Minutes – Meeting 3, 19-20 February 2013**

- *Bore Construction, Integrity, Monitoring And Reporting and Decommissioning Techniques*
- *Co-produced water – issues associated with quantity, quality, timing and potential risks to aquatic ecosystems and their environmental values.*

The Committee was appreciative of the opportunity to provide scientific advice to guide the finalisation of these reviews. Discussion concluded with the Committee requesting that Critical Science Reviews and other research papers be presented with peer review and the Office of Water Science agreed to prepare a paper outlining an appropriate process for seeking advice from the Committee on research documents.

M3-08 Action: *The Office of Water Science to prepare a paper outlining a process for seeking advice from the Committee on research documents.*

5.3 Comparison of Modelling Approaches Project

The Committee was of the view that this project required substantive reworking to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose in order to assist the Committee in providing advice on proposed developments.

M3-09 Action: *The OWS to work with the Committee to review and finalise this project.*

Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 20-21 March 2013 in Canberra, preceded by a research workshop on 19 March 2013.

The meeting closed at 4.30pm.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Ms Lisa Corbyn
Committee Chair
March 2013

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development
Minutes – Meeting 3, 19-20 February 2013**

Attachment A

Item(s)	Committee member	Disclosure	Determination
2	Ms Jane Coram	I consider that there may be a possible conflict of interest in relation to agenda item 2 arising from my agency Geoscience Australia's involvement in drafting the Bioregional Assessment methodology.	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists and Ms Coram participated fully in the meeting. The reason for this decision is that no decisions on projects associated with the Bioregional Assessments are being made at this meeting.
3.1, 5, 5.2	Prof Craig Simmons	I consider that there may be a possible conflict of interest in relation to: Agenda item 3.1 arising from NCGRT being contracted for independent study on the Arrow Energy and Santos Coal Seam Gas proposals to fulfil the requirement of Section 25AA of the Water Act (2007) project. Agenda item 5 arising from the possibility that NCGRT may be involved with future research projects for the Committee. Agenda item 5.2 arising from the NCGRT co-developed Aquifer Connectivity within the Great Artesian, Surat, Bowen, Galilee Basins report – Critical Science Reviews.	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists and Professor Simmons participated fully in the meeting. The reason for this decision is that Professor Simmons appropriately identified areas where the Centre he directs has been involved in work as input to advice but was not directly involved in its preparation and the Committee noted possible NCGRT involvement in future research projects but decisions on this were not made at this meeting by the IESC.