

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and  
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)  
Meeting 30, 7-8 October 2015**

**MINUTES  
Dialogue Business Centre, Canberra ACT**

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**Attendance and Apologies**

IN ATTENDANCE

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

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Matthew Whitfort  
Sean Lane  
Jason Smith  
Lily Knife

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Craig Moore (Items 2 & 5) Office of Water Science	Ben Roudnew (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Peter Baker (Items 2 & 3) Office of Water Science	Emma Wiadrowski (Item 2 ) Office of Water Science
Susanne Busch (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Scott Lawson (Items 2 & 3) Office of Water Science
Emily Turner (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Moya Tomlinson (Items 2 & 3) Office of Water Science
Melissa Liu (Item 2) Office of Water Science	John Higgins (Item 3) Office of Water Science
Rod Dann (Item 5) Office of Water Science	James Hill (Item 3) Office of Water Science
Craig Watson (Item 3) Office of Water Science	Megan Stanford (Item 3) Office of Water Science

INVITED GUESTS

Alex Gardner (Item 5) The University of Western Australia	Steve Lewis (Item 3) Geoscience Australia
Bronwyn Ray (Item 3) Bureau of Meteorology	Sarah Van Rooyen (Item 3) Bureau of Meteorology
Brent Henderson (Item 3) CSIRO	Becky Schmidt (Item 3) CSIRO

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am on 7 October 2015.

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

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

The Chair congratulated Craig Simmons on being named South Australian Scientist of the Year.

The Chair farewelled Gayle Milnes, former Assistant Secretary of the Office of Water Science (absent). The Chair farewelled Tom Hatton and wished him the best in his new role. The Chair thanked both Ms Milnes and Dr Hatton for their outstanding service to 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 30.

### 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-ninth meeting (22-23 July 2015) were confirmed.

### 1.6 Correspondence

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

### 1.7 Environmental scan

The Office of Water Science provided an update on developments since the July IESC meeting, including:

- The independent review of the National Partnership Agreement on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development (the NPA review), undertaken by Mr Steven Hunter, was published on the Department's website in September 2015.

## 1.8 Forward Planning Agenda

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

The November meeting was confirmed for 12-13 November 2015.

IESC members agreed to advise the Secretariat regarding their availability for 2016 meeting dates.

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

### 2.1 Advice on China Stone Coal Project – New Development

The IESC received a request for advice from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and the Queensland Office of the Coordinator-General to provide advice on the MacMines Austasia's China Stone Coal Project in Queensland.

The China Stone Coal Project is a new open cut and underground coal mine, located in Central Queensland, approximately 300 km west of Mackay, at the northern end of the Galilee Basin. The proposed project will cover an area of approximately 20,000 ha and extract up to 38 million tonnes per year of product (thermal) coal, over the 50 year life of the project.

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

- The lack of baseline data available and subsequent uncertainty in the hydrogeological conceptualisation and numerical groundwater model predictions;
- The potential for impacts to Lake Buchanan, Caukingburra Swamp, and the Doongambulla Springs Complex; and
- Potential cumulative impacts on the Belyando River catchment and on the Great Artesian Basin.

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 Queensland Office of the Coordinator-General.

### 2.2 Endorsement of the revised IESC Information Guidelines

The IESC endorsed the revised Information Guidelines for Independent Expert Scientific Committee advice on coal seam gas and large coal mining development proposals.

### **3. Bioregional Assessments**

#### **3.1 Bioregional Assessments – Status and Strategic direction**

The IESC noted the recommendations including:

- The consideration being given to refocus assessments based on the findings from current bioregional assessment products;
- Programme re-prioritisation that will be discussed at the next Bioregional Assessment Programme Implementation Board meeting;
- Upcoming discussion of modelling and analysis results in November; and
- Outcomes of recent communications and engagement activities.

#### **3.2 Bioregional Assessments – Submethodologies**

The IESC discussed the submethodologies and whilst deemed suitable for internal Departmental use, advised that the following additions would add value:

- A clear and consistent description of the decision making process;
- Greater consistency in the level of detail in each submethodology; and
- A worked example to be provided for each submethodology.

### **4. Research**

#### **4.1 Research Programme Update**

A status update was provided on key activities in the research programme including ongoing work as contracted on:

- Bore and well induced inter-aquifer groundwater connectivity: Consequence modelling and experimental design project
- Research to better include faults and aquitards in Australian regional groundwater models to improve assessment of impacts of coal seam gas extraction and coal mining; and
- Research to inform the assessment of ecohydrological responses to coal seam gas extraction and coal mining.

The IESC noted the developments on the research projects since the IESC meeting in July 2015.

#### **4.2 Communication Strategy for the National Assessment of Chemicals Used in Coal Seam Gas Extraction**

An update was provided on the National Assessment of Chemicals Used in Coal Seam Gas Extraction, including development of the communications strategy.

The IESC noted the developments since the IESC meeting in July 2015 and provided advice on communicating the outcomes of the project.

#### **4.3 Review of Research Priorities**

An update was provided that summarised findings of the review of IESC research priorities, including knowledge gaps and issues. The IESC agreed to prioritise knowledge gaps for further refining as draft research priorities.

## **5. Other Business**

### **5.1 Adaptive Management and Groundwater Impacts of Major Projects Presentation**

Professor Alex Gardner from the Law School at the University of Western Australia gave the IESC a presentation regarding:

- Mining access to water resources;
- Adaptive management; and
- Doing adaptive management and future research.

### **5.2 IESC Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Strategy**

The IESC was presented with the IESC Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Strategy Annual Operational Plan for 2015-16, which was prepared to guide and prioritise stakeholder engagement activities for the IESC.

The IESC requested additional engagement activities be included and that the plan be recirculated for approval out of session.

#### **Close of Meeting**

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 12-13 November 2015 in Canberra.

The meeting closed at 12.45pm.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Andrew Johnson  
IESC Chair

October 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.