

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)
Meeting 35, 18-19 May 2016**

**MINUTES
Canberra**

Attendance and Apologies

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Andrew Johnson (Chair)
Dr Andrew Boulton
Emeritus Professor Peter Flood
Dr Ian Prosser
Dr Glen Walker
Professor Craig Simmons
Ms Jane Coram

APOLOGIES

Dr Jenny Stauber

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Matthew Whitfort
Sean Lane
Jason Smith
Ann Hartley
Lily Knife

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Dr Diana Wright (Item 3 and 4) First Assistant Secretary	Keith Tayler (Item 2) Supervising Scientist Branch
Kim Bennett (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Emma Wiadrowski (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Mitchell Bouma (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Rod Dann (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Moya Tomlinson (Item 4) Office of Water Science	Bruce Gray (Item 4) Office of Water Science
Sally Butz (Item 4) Office of Water Science	John Higgins (Item 4) Office of Water Science
Prue Pickering (Item 3) Office of Water Science	Emily Turner (Item 3) Office of Water Science
Anthony Swirepik (Item 3) Office of Water Science	

INVITED GUESTS

Julie Burke (Item 3) Bureau of Meteorology	
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The meeting commenced at 9.05 am on 18 May 2016.

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. 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*.

1.3 Confirmation of agenda

The IESC endorsed the agenda for Meeting 35.

1.4 Action items

Completed items were noted. A number of follow-up items were listed on the agenda for 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 thirty third meeting on the 9-10 March 2016 and thirty fourth meeting on the 14 April 2016 were confirmed and agreed for publication; and
- advice on the Wilpinjong Extension Project was finalised and provided to the decision maker.

1.6 Correspondence

The IESC noted the action taken and status of correspondence to 30 April 2016.

1.7 Environmental scan

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

- the ACCC Inquiry into the competitiveness of wholesale gas prices in eastern and southern Australia;
- development proposals on which the IESC has provided advice;
- the Inquiry by the Senate's Select Committee on Unconventional Gas Mining;
- the recent Department of the Environment Budget Estimates hearings; and
- the OGIA release of a draft Surat Underground Water impact Report.

Upcoming conferences:

- APPEA Conference and Exhibition, Brisbane June 2016, includes sessions on the interface between coal seam gas and water; the physics of geology – geophysics and petro physics; and decommissioning well completion.

1.8 Forward Planning Agenda

The IESC noted the forward planning agenda and items due for consideration through to December 2016. It was agreed the next meeting would be scheduled for 23 June 2016. The Secretariat is to investigate alternate dates for the July 2016 meeting.

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

2.1 Advice on Hillalong Coal Project

The IESC received a joint request for advice from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection to provide advice on the Hillalong Coal Project in Queensland.

The Hillalong Coal Project is located 15 kilometres east of Glenden in the northern Bowen Basin of central east Queensland. The project is located within the Suttor River catchment which forms part of the larger Burdekin River catchment.

The project includes two open cut pits and 14 underground longwall panels, with a proposed operation life of 17 years and production of 4.2 Mtpa of Run of Mine coal from the Rangal Coal Measures. The project includes associated mine infrastructure including a 20 kilometre long transport corridor containing an access road and haul road, train load-out facility, rail balloon loop, coal handling and processing plant, sewage and waste management facilities and worker accommodation camp.

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

- Impacts to Suttor Creek from mine water discharge and potential increased erosion and sedimentation
- Conceptualisation and hydrological and ecological significance of local springs
- Lack of baseline data for robust understanding of surface water, groundwater and ecological systems in the area

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 Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

3. **Bioregional Assessments**

3.1 Bioregional Assessments update

The IESC received an update on the Group 2 products for Gloucester and Maranoa-Balonne-Condamine and relevant submethodologies. An update was also provided on the Outcome Synthesis, and the IESC requested to provide further advice on this at the next IESC meeting.

The IESC Receptor Impact Modelling Workshop is scheduled for the June meeting. The agenda will include discussion on the impact analysis for economic and ecological assets, the impact database and information model, and draft submethodologies M08 and M10.

Andrew Boulton updated the IESC on his participation at the Hunter Qualitative Modelling Workshop in Sydney.

The IESC noted the update.

4. Research

4.1 Research Programme Update

An 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 inform the assessment of eco-hydrological responses to coal seam gas extraction and coal mining; and
- 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.

An update was provided on the National Assessment of Chemicals Used in Coal Seam Gas Extraction, including development of products to ensure the assessment's findings are accessible to a broad audience, including the community. IESC members were advised that they will have an opportunity to provide comments on key draft documents out of session.

The IESC noted the update.

5. Other Business

5.2 Revised Operating Protocols for the IESC

The Operating Protocols is a *modus operandi* that is prepared by and has the authority of the IESC. The Operating Protocol ensures that the IESC functions within its legislative remit and in accordance with best practice administrative requirements, for example, in relation to protocols for the Chair and members, meeting procedures, media handling and stakeholder engagement.

The IESC agreed to adopt the revised Operating Protocols.

5.3 Stakeholder Meetings

The Chair updated the IESC on recent meetings he has held with stakeholder groups in Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra. The Chair advised that the meetings were overwhelmingly positive with a lot of interest in the Bioregional Assessments Programme, and has requested the Office of Water Science to follow up with these groups as appropriate.

Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 23 June 2016 in Canberra.

The meeting closed at 2.45pm on Thursday 19 May 2016.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Andrew Johnson

IESC Chair

26 May 2016

Item(s)	IESC member	Disclosure	Determination
4	Professor Craig Simmons	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 meeting.