

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)
Meeting 37, 1-2 August 2016**

**MINUTES
Canberra**

Attendance and Apologies

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Andrew Johnson (Chair)
Emeritus Professor Peter Flood
Dr Glen Walker
Professor Craig Simmons (by phone)
Ms Jane Coram
Dr Jenny Stauber
Dr Andrew Boulton (Day 1)

APOLOGIES

Dr Ian Prosser
Dr Andrew Boulton (Day 2)

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Sean Lane
Mark Say
Ann Hartley
Berlinda Bowler
Lily Knife

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Matthew Whitfort (Item 1 and 2) Acting First Assistant Secretary, Science	Dr John Higgins (Item 4 and 5) Office of Water Science
Anthony Swirepik (Item 3 and 4) Office of Water Science	Emily Turner (Item 3 and 4) Office of Water Science
Craig Moore (Item 2, 3 and 4) Office of Water Science	Natasha Amerasinghe (Item2) Office of Water Science
Tashya Le Compte (Item2) Office of Water Science	Sam Pettett (Item2) Office of Water Science
Rod Dann (Item2) Office of Water Science	Sarah Taylor (Item2) Office of Water Science
Jeff Fung (Item 1) Office of Water Science	Moya Tomlinson (Item 4) Office of Water Science

INVITED GUESTS

Julie Burke (Item 3) Bureau of Meteorology	Simon Gossmann (Item 5) Arrow Energy Pty Limited
Dr Mark Kennard (Item 4) Australian Rivers Institute, Griffith University	

The meeting commenced at 1.15 pm on 1 August 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. An apology was received from Dr Ian Prosser.

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 37.

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 minutes for the IESC's thirty sixth meeting on 23 June were endorsed and published out of session.

1.6 Correspondence

The IESC noted the status of correspondence to 31 July 2016. The Chair updated the IESC on his recent meetings with environmental non-government organisations, and noted the letters sent thanking them for their time.

1.7 Environmental scan

The Office of Water Science provided an update on policy and other developments since the June 2016 IESC meeting, including:

- the Australian Government Administrative Arrangements Order to incorporate energy policy, the national energy market (including electricity and gas), and energy efficiency responsibilities into the new Department of the Environment and Energy, and the appointment of the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP as Minister for the Environment and Energy;
- the release of the Queensland Government's first exploration forward plan for the resources sector; and
- the establishment of New South Wales Community Benefits Fund.

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 31 August – 1 September 2016.

2. Advice on projects referred by governments

2.1 Advice on South Wambo Underground Mine Extension

The IESC received a joint request for advice from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy and the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment to provide advice on the Wambo Coal Mine Modification Project in New South Wales. The proposal is located in the Upper Hunter Valley region. Wollemi National Park lies to the west and south of the project.

The proposal is a modification to the existing South Wambo Underground Mine layout, approved in 2003 prior to the introduction of the EPBC Act's "Water Trigger". The proposal will include: the realignment and extension of longwall panels within the Woodlands Hill and Arrowfield Seams; an increase to the surface development area compared to the approved mine layout; extension of the approved open cut operations by three years; and extension of the approved underground mine life by seven years.

The IESC reviewed and discussed the information provided and considered the key potential impacts arising from the proposal as follows:

- Altered hydrology within surface water features due to subsidence, cracking and ponding, groundwater drawdown and potential leakage from South Wambo Dam.
- Impacts to vegetation, especially groundwater-dependent ecosystems, overlying longwalls due to subsidence, ponding and potential lowering of the shallow groundwater table.
- Impacts to surface water quality due to the discharge of mine water and increased sedimentation and erosion.
- Impacts to aquatic biota and subsurface fauna (e.g. stygofauna) due to altered groundwater tables, creek hydrology (especially low flows) and impaired water quality (e.g. fine sediments, contaminants).

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 Energy and the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment.

3. Bioregional Assessment Programme

3.1 Bioregional assessment update

An update was provided to the IESC on the delivery of bioregional assessments, forthcoming stakeholder workshops, and communications and adoption strategies. This included specific products for the Gloucester, Hunter, Namoi, Galilee, Maranoa-Balonne-Condamine, Clarence-Moreton and Gippsland assessments.

The IESC noted the update, and further invited the Office of Water Science to seek IESC support if required.

4. Research

4.1 Research program update

An update was provided on key activities in the Research Program including the National Assessment of Chemicals Associated with Coal Seam Gas Extraction in Australia.

The IESC noted the updated.

4.2 Ecohydrological Research - presentation

Dr Mark Kennard, Griffith University presented an update to the IESC on the Ecohydrological Research project.

The IESC discussed the four research components of the project and how the work will assist the IESC. This project will be presented at a special session of the Ecological Society of Australia conference in Fremantle Western Australia from the 28 November to 3 December 2016.

The Chair thanked Dr Kennard for the presentation.

5. Other Business

5.2 Evaluating the potential coal seam gas impacts to the Condamine Alluvium: an example of successful community involvement

Mr Simon Gossmann, Manager Strategic Water Management and Planning, Arrow Energy Pty Ltd presented to the IESC.

Mr Gossmann gave a presentation on a research project, led by the Queensland Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment and supported by Arrow Energy Pty Ltd, focusing on the potential impacts to groundwater resources in the Condamine River Alluvial Aquifer as a result of coal seam gas production.

The Chair thanked Mr Gossmann for the presentation.

Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 31 August – 1 September 2016 in Canberra.

The meeting closed at 11.00 am on Tuesday 2 August June 2016.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Andrew Johnson

IESC Chair

8 August 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.