

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)
Meeting 38, 31 August – 1 September 2016**

**MINUTES
Canberra**

Attendance and Apologies

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Andrew Johnson (Chair)
Emeritus Professor Peter Flood
Dr Glen Walker
Dr Jenny Stauber
Dr Andrew Boulton
Dr Ian Prosser

APOLOGIES

Professor Craig Simmons
Ms Jane Coram

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Sean Lane
Ann Hartley
Lily Knife

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Matthew Whitfort (Item 1, 3, 4 and 5) Acting First Assistant Secretary, Science	Dr John Higgins (Item 4) Office of Water Science
Anthony Swirepik (Item 1, 3 and 5) Office of Water Science	Emily Turner (Item 3) Office of Water Science
Craig Moore (Item 2 and 5) 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
Kim Bennett (Item2) Office of Water Science	Sarah Taylor (Item2) Office of Water Science
Jeff Fung (Item 1 and 5) Office of Water Science	Moya Tomlinson (Item 4) Office of Water Science
Tristan Lee (All Items) Office of Water Science	Andrew Stacey (Item 3) Office of Water Science

INVITED GUESTS

Chris McCombe (Item 5) Minerals Council of Australia	Julie Burke (Item 3) Bureau of Meteorology
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The meeting commenced at 1.15 pm on 31 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. Apologies were received from Ms Jane Coram and Professor Craig Simmons.

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 38.

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 seventh meeting on 1-2 August were endorsed and published out of session.

1.6 Correspondence

The IESC noted the status of correspondence to 21 August 2016.

1.7 Environmental scan

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

- the Australian Government COAG Energy Council met on 19 August 2016, to discuss challenges and opportunities arising from the transformation of gas and electricity markets;
- the New South Wales Government has secured a buy-back of the Caroonna mining exploration license; and
- the Victorian Government announced a permanent ban on the exploration and development of all onshore unconventional gas, including hydraulic fracking and coal seam gas.

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 12 – 13 October 2016.

IESC members agreed to advise the Secretariat regarding availability for 2017.

The Chair updated the IESC on his recent meeting with the Basin Sustainability Alliance.

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

2.1 Advice on Wilpinjong Extension Project

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 Wilpinjong Extension Project. The proposal is located 40 kilometres north-east of Mudgee in central New South Wales.

The proposed project is located within an area of extensive existing mining, with the currently approved mine operating since 2006. An approved discharge point is located on Wilpinjong Creek.

The IESC provided advice on this project on 14 March 2016. The proponent has since provided documents that respond to that advice and the regulators have requested further IESC advice relating to that response.

The IESC reviewed and discussed the information provided and considered the key issues as follows:

- baseline data and information on management measures should have been provided within the EIS document;
- potential downstream impacts to surface water quality (particularly from metals) and flows (volume, timing, frequency and duration) ; and
- the potential for contaminants leaching from tailings dams located adjacent to Wilpinjong Creek.

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 and a summary of the recent Product Use and Design Workshops held in Canberra and Brisbane with regulators and proponents.

The IESC noted the update.

4. Research

4.1 Research program update

An update was provided on key activities in the Research Program including the eco-hydrological responses to coal seam gas extraction and coal mining project which is due for completion in December 2016.

An update was provided on the review of the IESC Research Priorities. A consultation paper on the revised priorities will be released shortly for public comment.

The IESC noted the update.

5. Other Business

5.2 Minerals Council of Australia

Mr Chris McCombe, Assistant Director – Environmental Policy presented to the IESC.

Mr McCombe gave a presentation to the IESC on the work of the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA), research commissioned by the industry and possible future research, likely trends of coal resource development over the next five years, and the intersection of the MCA's work with the IESC.

The Chair thanked Mr McCombe for the presentation.

Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 12 – 13 October 2016 in Canberra.

The meeting closed at 11.30 am on Thursday 1 September 2016.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Andrew Johnson

IESC Chair

7 September 2016

Item(s)	IESC member	Disclosure	Determination
4	Dr Ian Prosser	I consider that there may be a possible conflict of interest in relation to Agenda Item 3 (Bioregional Assessments) arising from my employment with the Bureau of Meteorology (Bureau) who is one of the providers of the Bioregional Assessments. I am currently on Long Service Leave from the Bureau until I retire in October 2016.	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists and Dr Prosser participated fully in the meeting.