

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)
Meeting 40, 9 November 2016**

**MINUTES
Canberra**

Attendance and Apologies

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Andrew Johnson (Chair)
Professor Craig Simmons
Dr Glen Walker
Dr Andrew Boulton
Dr Ian Prosser
Dr Wendy Timms
Professor Joan Esterle

APOLOGIES

Dr Jenny Stauber

OFFICE OF WATER SCIENCE - SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Sean Lane
Emily Grant
Jason Smith
Ann Hartley
Lily Knife

OTHER STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Matthew Whitfort (Item 3 and 5) Acting First Assistant Secretary, Science	Dr John Higgins (Item 3 and 4) Office of Water Science
Rod Dann (Item 2 and 5.2) Office of Water Science	Natasha Amerasinghe (Item 2 and 5.2) Office of Water Science
Carl Zimmerman (Item 2) Office of Water Science	Sam Pettett (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Mitchell Bouma (Item 2 and 5.2) Office of Water Science	Sarah Taylor (Item 2) Office of Water Science
Peter Baker (Item 5.2) Office of Water Science	Anthony Swirepik (Item 3 and 5.2) Office of Water Science
Emily Turner (Item 3.1) Office of Water Science	Jo Brennan (Item 3) Office of Water Science
Milica Milanja (Item 3) Office of Water Science	Lea Locke (Item 3) Office of Water Science
Jeffery Fung (Item 3) Office of Water Science	Tristan Lee (Item 3) Office of Water Science

INVITED GUESTS

Julie Burke (Item 3) Bureau of Meteorology	
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The meeting commenced at 9.00 am on 9 November 2016.

1. Welcome and Introductions

An apology was 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 40.

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 that the minutes for the IESC's thirty ninth meeting on 12 and 13 October 2016 were endorsed and published out of session.

1.6 Correspondence

The IESC noted the status of correspondence to 31 October 2016.

1.7 Environmental scan

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

- the Department of the Environment and Energy's recent appearance at the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing;
- the September judgement made by the NSW Land and Environment Court to uphold the Springvale Mine Extension Project approval;
- the South Australian Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy announced applications for \$24 million in grants are available for gas exploration.

1.8 Forward Planning Agenda

The IESC noted the forward planning agenda and items due for consideration through to February 2017.

It was agreed the next meeting would be scheduled for 12-13 December 2016.

2. Advice on projects referred by governments

2.1 Advice on Lake Vermont Coal Mine

The IESC received a request from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy to provide advice on the Lake Vermont Coal Mine Northern Extension in Queensland. The proposed project is located in the Bowen Basin.

The proposed project is an open cut extension, to the north of the existing approved Lake Vermont Coal Mine, located approximately 165 kilometres south-west of Mackay. The existing Lake Vermont mine has been in operation since 2008. The proposed project is predicted to extract 64 million tonnes of coal with mining expected to cease in 32 years. The proposed project will utilise the existing coal handling preparation plant and train loading facilities associated with the currently operating Lake Vermont Mine.

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

- changes to surface water quality due to increased downstream sediment loads as a result of potential erosion and/or failure of the proposed diversion and controlled and uncontrolled mine water discharges;
- altered surface water/groundwater regime at Lake Vermont Wetland as a result of catchment reduction and groundwater drawdown;
- changes to the quantity of water available to groundwater-dependent ecosystems and riparian vegetation along Phillips Creek due to altered hydrological regimes within Phillips Creek and groundwater drawdown; and
- interaction of the final three voids with surface water and groundwater water resources.

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.

2.2 New Acland Coal Mine Stage 3

The IESC received a request from the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy to provide advice on the New Acland Coal Mine Stage 3 in Queensland. The proposed project is located in the catchment of Lagoon Creek. Lagoon Creek is an ephemeral creek that flows into Oakey Creek, which is part of the larger Condamine River Catchment of the Murray-Darling Basin.

The IESC discussed the information provided and considered the key issues. This request will be addressed at the next scheduled meeting 12-13 December 2016.

3. Bioregional Assessment Programme

3.1 Bioregional assessment update

An update was provided to the IESC on the delivery of bioregional assessments. This included timetables for external review of products and impact and risk workshops.

The IESC noted the update.

3.2 Bioregional assessment release strategy

An update was provided to the IESC on the communications plan for the release of the full results of the Bioregional Assessment Programme.

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 National Assessment of Chemicals Associated with Coal Seam Gas Extraction in Australia and the Eco-hydrological responses to coal seam gas extraction and coal mining project.

The IESC noted the update.

5. Other Business

5.2 Groundwater modelling uncertainty discussion

Dr Glen Walker led a discussion on uncertainty in groundwater flow modelling predictions within Environment Impact Statements. Members agreed that IESC expectations, as outlined in the IESC Information Guidelines, may benefit from improved clarity and better communication. The IESC agreed to a subcommittee, working with the Office of Water Science, to scope possible work on these matters ahead of a further discussion to be scheduled in early 2017.

Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 12-13 December 2016 in Canberra.

The meeting closed at 4.15 pm on Wednesday 9 November 2016.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Andrew Johnson

IESC Chair

23 November 2016

Item(s)	IESC member	Disclosure	Determination
3	Dr Andrew Johnson	I consider that there may be a possible conflict of interest in relation to Agenda Item 3 Bioregional Assessments arising from Bureau of Meteorology's involvement in the Bioregional Assessment Programme.	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists and Dr Johnson participated fully in the meeting.
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/ Flinders as a current/potential provider of research and development.	No actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists and Professor Simmons participated fully in the meeting.