

**Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and  
Large Coal Mining Development (IESC)  
Meeting 54, 25-26 July 2018**

**MINUTES  
Canberra**

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**Attendance and Apologies**

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Chris Pigram (Chair)  
Dr Andrew Boulton  
Dr Wendy Timms  
Associate Professor Rory Nathan  
Professor Jennifer Davis  
Professor Craig Simmons  
Dr Jenny Stauber  
Professor Joan Esterle (Day 1)

APOLOGY

Professor Joan Esterle (Day 2)

SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT

Emily Grant  
Peter Baker  
Benjamin Klug  
Regan Hart

STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

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| Natasha Amerasinghe (Items 3.5 & 3.6)<br>Office of Water Science       | Jo Brennan (Items 2.1, 3.1, 3.5 & 3.6)<br>Office of Water Science      |
| Sarah Taylor (Items 1 & 2.1)<br>Office of Water Science                | Carl Zimmermann (Items 2.1, 3.1, 3.2 & 3.3)<br>Office of Water Science |
| Ann Hartley (Items 3.1)<br>Office of Water Science                     | Mitchell Bouma (Items 2.1 & 3.4)<br>Office of Water Science            |
| Matthew Whitfort (Item 3.5 & 3.6)<br>Knowledge and Technology Division |  |

INVITED GUESTS

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| Hayley Richards (Item 3.5 & 3.6)<br>Department of the Chief Minister<br>Northern Territory Government              | Damien Barrett (Item 3.5 & 3.6)<br>CSIRO Gas Industry Social and Environmental<br>Research Alliance (GISERA) |
| Chris Shaw (Item 3.5 & 3.6)<br>Department of Environment and Natural<br>Resources<br>Northern Territory Government |  |

The meeting commenced at 9.15am on Wednesday 25 July 2018.

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

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

The Chair introduced and welcomed new committee members Associate Professor Rory Nathan and Professor Jennifer Davis and noted the reappointment of Dr Andrew Boulton.

### **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, Committee members completed the Meeting Specific Declaration of Interest and an Advice Specific Declaration of Interest for Central Queensland Coal Project.

No actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest were recorded for this meeting.

### **1.3 Confirmation of agenda**

The Committee endorsed the agenda for Meeting 54.

### **1.4 Action items**

Ongoing items were noted and an update was provided on the timing of completion.

### **1.5 Confirmation of out-of-session decisions**

The Committee noted the minutes of the IESC's fifty-third meeting on 20 June were agreed out of session and published.

### **1.6 Correspondence**

The Committee noted the status of correspondence to 6 July 2018.

### **1.7 Forward planning agenda**

The Committee noted the forward planning agenda and the 2019 meeting dates. It was agreed the next meeting would be scheduled for 30 – 31 August 2018, including an environment non-government organisation roundtable on 30 August. A field trip to the Latrobe Valley is scheduled for 29 August 2018 to observe mine rehabilitation.

### **1.8 Environmental scan**

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

- approval of Lake Vermont Coal Mine Northern Extension Project; and
- the Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in Western Australia 2017.

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

### **2.1 Advice on Central Queensland Coal Project**

The Committee was requested by the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy and the Queensland Department of Environment and Science to provide advice on the Central Queensland Coal Pty Ltd and Fairway Coal Pty Ltd's Central Queensland Coal Project in Queensland. The proposed project is an open-cut coal mine to be located 130 kilometres northwest of Rockhampton within the Styx Basin.

The proposed mine presents significant risks to areas of high ecological value, including the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and Marine Park, the Broad Sound Fish Habitat Area, the Styx River Estuary, two state-listed wetlands and the riparian habitat of Tooloombah Creek and Deep Creek.

The Committee previously reviewed this project in December 2017.

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

- Controlled and uncontrolled discharges could affect water quality, with the potential to impact aquatic environments within, adjacent and downstream of the project site.
- Mining operations will disturb sodic soils, which are prone to erosion, potentially increasing sediment loads in local waterways and contributing sediment to the Great Barrier Reef.
- Groundwater interaction with the backfilled voids could mobilise contaminants from the waste rock and tailings within the voids and discharge these to surface waterways posing a legacy water quality issue.
- Groundwater drawdown may adversely impact riparian groundwater-dependent ecosystems. This could result in increased erosion and increased sediment loads if riparian vegetation is lost.

Consistent with the EPBC Regulations, advice will be published on the IESC's website within 10 business days of being provided to the regulators.

### **3. Other Business**

#### **3.1 Review of IESC Engagement Strategy**

The Committee discussed the mid-point review outcomes of the IESC Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. An in-depth analysis of the outcomes from the IESC Research Symposium was presented to the Committee. It was agreed that the 2018-19 action plan would come back to the next meeting.

#### **3.2 Environmental Tracers Fact Sheet**

The Committee discussed and agreed on a draft scope of work for the Environmental Tracers Fact Sheet.

#### **3.3 Report on recent OGIA meetings**

The Committee discussed the recent workshop held with the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment (OGIA).

#### **3.4 The use of faults in groundwater modelling Explanatory Note**

The Committee discussed and agreed to host a workshop with stakeholders to determine the structure and content of "The use of faults in groundwater modelling Explanatory Note".

#### **3.5 Update on NT Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing**

Ms Hayley Richards, Executive Director, Department of the Chief Minister presented on the Northern Territory Government's next steps following the release of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing final report.

The Chair thanked Ms Richards for the presentation.

### 3.6 Update on the work of GISERA

Dr Damian Barrett, Research Director of the Onshore Gas Program in CSIRO Energy and Director of the CSIRO Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (GISERA) presented to the Committee on the recent work of GISERA.

The Chair thanked Dr Barrett for the presentation.

#### **Close of Meeting**

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.15pm on Thursday 26 July 2018.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 30 – 31 August 2018.

Minutes confirmed as true and correct:

Dr Chris Pigram

IESC Chair

14 August 2018