

**Environment and Communications Legislation Committee**

**Landholders' Right to Refuse (Gas and Coal) Bill 2013**

**Monday 27 July 2015**

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**Topic:** Water Management Plans

**Hansard Page:** 32

**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Waters asked:**

I do. Are you aware of whether any of the conditions of an approval have changed or whether an approval has been revoked as a result of advice that the committee has provided on a water management plan that has been requested after the approval has been issued?

**Dr Johnson:** I am not, but I would be happy to take that on notice. With the 86 that we have got, I am not aware of one.

**Senator Waters:** I will look forward to confirmation of that. It would seem to undermine the very nature of even requiring a management plan after you have already issued the approval if you do not then change the approval once you get the water management plan.

**Dr Johnson:** It may be better to direct that question to the environment department—at least the Commonwealth—and I think you are seeing them tomorrow.

**Senator Waters:** Many a time I have asked them that, and I will continue to try to get a response to that tomorrow.

**Dr Johnson:** I am not sure the committee can do that but I am sure that, through the portfolio, they can get you a response.

**Senator Waters:** Thank you. But it is useful to know that you will confirm on notice that, so far, nothing has changed in an approval after what was meant to be a solution to all the problems, a water management plan, has been proposed.

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**Answer:**

Questions concerning how regulators draw upon the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development advice in setting and modifying conditions should be directed to the relevant regulator.

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**Topic:** Shenhua Project

**Hansard Page:** 34

**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Waters asked:**

I was after a summary of what you thought were the key points that you told the decision maker. Again, I am not sure that we are all across them.

**Dr Johnson:** I think we have touched on two of the three. The first one was around the need for more detailed work to be done to understand the local scale impacts. The second one was around the unassessed risks to groundwater dependent ecosystems. The third one was that we consider it unlikely that the groundwater draw-down will extend beyond the area predicted in the environmental impact statement. The proponent in this case—and I assure you this does not happen a lot—has used very conservative assumptions in the modelling that has been undertaken. They are very conservative, in our view. Our view is that, even in a worst-case example, it is unlikely—but not impossible—that the groundwater draw-down will extend beyond the area that they flagged. But, as you have referred to before, we have also recommended more detailed monitoring at a local scale to actually verify that what is expected to happen does happen.

**Senator Waters:** What was the area that they flagged for the groundwater impact?

**Dr Johnson:** Sorry, I do not have that detail in front of me.

**Senator Waters:** But in your advice you have said you basically think they have got that estimation correct?

**Dr Johnson:** Yes. I would draw you to point 1(c) on page 2 of our advice, which touches on that matter.

**Senator Waters:** Could you perhaps take it on notice to get back to us on the extent of the groundwater area to be impacted? It is a point I made before. Often they do in fact say, 'Yes, there are going to be huge impacts.'

**Dr Johnson:** It is a very complex and rich proposal. Sorry, I do not have that figure committed to memory.

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**Answer:**

The Independent Expert Scientific Committee's on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development (IESC) advice on the Watermark Coal Project, dated 27 April 2015 and available at [www.iesc.environment.gov.au](http://www.iesc.environment.gov.au), stated that "It is considered unlikely that groundwater drawdown will extend beyond that predicted in the sensitivity and uncertainty analyses in the Environmental Impact Statement" [point 1(c)]. Maps of the predicted extent of the area of drawdown are provided in the Watermark Coal Project Groundwater Assessment, which forms Appendix T to the Environmental Impact Statement for the project. This document is available from the NSW Department of Planning and Environment website [www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au](http://www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au).

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**Topic:** Bioregional Assessments Namoi

**Hansard Page:** 36

**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Waters asked:**

What were those two products?

**Dr Johnson:** The two products in the Namoi? There is a regional context analysis, which provides a deeper understanding of the ecological assets in the region and so on. That is very important to us. Then there is also a product which, supposedly, deals with the coal development or the coal resource pathway that that region is likely to experience. That is also helpful in terms of our thinking around responding to any questions that we may get from the regulator around cumulative impacts.

**Senator Waters:** Could you, just on notice, provide me with a little bit more information about the second one.

**Dr Johnson:** Sure.

**Senator Waters:** That is the first I have heard of any sort of forecasting role as such by your committee. I am interested in—

**Dr Johnson:** That may be best directed to the environment department, but both of those matters are on the public record, so I am sure that getting it will not be a problem.

**Senator Waters:** Thank you. It has just not got much attention to date.

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**Answer:**

**Coal and coal seam gas resource assessment for the Namoi subregion**

***Product 1.2 for the Namoi subregion from the Northern Inland Catchments Bioregional Assessments***

This product summarises what is known about current and potential coal and coal seam gas resources and development in the Namoi subregion.

The product presents information on:

- where coal resources are and the surrounding geology;
- current coal and coal seam gas extraction information, including location and production type;
- exploration and mining leases and licences, including numbers, locations and current owners; and
- proposed development, including location, timing, methods of extraction and extraction volumes as determined from proposed development plans.

This product is available from [www.bioregionalassessments.gov.au](http://www.bioregionalassessments.gov.au).