

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment portfolio**

**Question No:** 181  
**Hearing:** Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 4  
**Programme:** Science  
**Topic:** IESC timeline for advice  
**Hansard Page:** Page 96  
**Question Date:** 25 May 2015  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Singh asked:**

**Senator Birmingham:** And you asked about the Shenhua Watermark, which we can happily use as an example—I am not entirely sure that is where we are up to in the program. As I understand it, both on 26 February and 23 March the minister sought further advice from the IESC in relation to that project and requested further additional advice from the IESC in relation to specific concerns raised by the community when he met with farmers and Indigenous leaders on 27 February. On 7 May the IESC advice was published. So that advice is publicly available and on the department website. The minister has extended the time frame to make a decision under the EPBC application, and that has been extended to 9 July. The minister's decision will be a public decision as well, with the relevant statements that accompany that. So it is all quite transparent and it will be there for all to see; whether or not the decision accords with the advice provided at the different iterative steps by the IESC.

**Senator URQUHART:** The document you are reading from—are you able to provide that time line to us?

**Senator Birmingham:** These are just briefing notes, but if you want detail on the process—

**Senator URQUHART:** I would love to have the minister's briefing notes.

**Senator Birmingham:** At what stage the IESC can step in and out of a process like that; I am sure there is probably a nice fact sheet ready that the department can provide.

**Dr Wright:** We certainly have the dates we can provide to you.

**Answer:**

The Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development (IESC) provides advice on the potential water-related impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining proposals upon request by Australian government regulators. In accordance with the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), the IESC is required to provide advice to the regulator within two months of receiving a request.

In the case of the proposed Watermark Coal Project, the IESC provided advice to the Australian Government regulator on 27 May 2013 and 27 April 2015. This advice is available from the IESC's website at [www.iesc.environment.gov.au](http://www.iesc.environment.gov.au).