

## MEETING MINUTES

### Narrabri Gas Project (NGP)

### Biodiversity Advisory Group (BAG)

### Meeting # 3

#### DATE / TIME

16 February 2022  
12:00pm

#### LOCATION

Santos Shopfront Conference Room  
125 Maitland Street Narrabri

#### FACILITATOR

Garry West

#### MINUTE TAKER

Lyn Firth

#### ATTENDEES

- ◆ Garry West (Independent Chair)
- ◆ Dan Watts (EcoLogical Australia)
- ◆ Malcolm Talbot (Community Member)
- ◆ Patrick Tapp (Independent Expert)
- ◆ Isaac Mamott (Independent Expert) via Teams

- ◆ Trudy Staines (Community Member)
- ◆ Samantha Wynn (BCD Representative)
- ◆ Cassie Hay (Santos – Senior Environment Advisor)
- ◆ Todd Dunn (Santos – Project Manager)

#### APOLOGIES

Kathryn Hamilton, Ken Flower, Steve Phillips

#### GUESTS

Nil

## Discussions

NO.	DISCUSSIONS
1. Welcome	The Chair welcomed the Advisory Group and acknowledged Gomeroi country on which the meeting and paid my respects to their Elders past, present and future - and all Aboriginal persons present.
Declaration of interest	The Chair asked if there were any new declarations of conflict of interest. Nil.
Recording of minutes	The Chair asked members if there was any objection to the recording of the minutes for secretariat purposes with the audio being deleted once the minutes were final and approved. There was no objection.  Minutes from the previous meeting were accepted with no changes.
2. Actions outstanding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Arrange out of session meetings for Koala research proposal      Occurred December 2021</li> <li>2. Circulate meeting 2 presentation      Completed</li> <li>3. Release Rehabilitation Plan      In Progress</li> <li>4. Feedback Due 17 December 2021      Complete</li> </ol>
3. Correspondence	Nil

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<p><b>4. Project Update</b></p>	<p><b>Cassie Hay (Santos – Senior Environment Advisor)</b></p> <p>Cassie provided BAG members with an update via PowerPoint presentation.</p> <p><b>**Note: Minutes are to be read in conjunction with Santos Presentation.**</b></p> <p>Key topics presented included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Narrabri Gas Project update</li> <li>○ NGP indicative timeline and scope</li> <li>○ Advisory Group consultation process</li> <li>○ Update status of management plans (including consultation process):             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Koala Research Proposal</li> <li>▪ Biodiversity Offset Strategy</li> <li>▪ Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP)</li> <li>▪ Communication</li> <li>▪ Cultural Heritage and Native title comments</li> <li>▪ Impacts – species listed after project approval</li> <li>▪ Impacts – Myriophyllum implicatum</li> <li>▪ Mitigation – preclearing/clearing procedures and species translocation</li> <li>▪ Mitigation – use of nest boxes in State Forest</li> <li>▪ Mitigation – washdown</li> <li>▪ Monitoring – use of PCTs over habitat types</li> <li>▪ Monitoring – hazard reduction burning and timber harvesting on monitoring sites an areas subject of ecological rehabilitation</li> <li>▪ Monitoring Techniques</li> <li>▪ Monitoring – metric bands for rapid vegetation integrity plots</li> <li>▪ Monitoring – soundscape analysis vs traditional techniques</li> <li>▪ Monitoring – acoustic sampling program</li> <li>▪ Trigger Action Response Plan</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Key topics discussed and questions raised</b></p>	<p>Santos plans to submit finalised BMP plans to the Department of Planning &amp; Environment (DPE) by 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022. DPE are currently working on the Field Development Plan (FDP). The next BAG meeting will be prior to release of the draft FDP.</p> <p><b>Koala Research Proposal</b></p> <p>The proposal doesn't put into context the relevant conditions of the consent. Santos will update the management plan to provide the context of the conditions and include the proposals as an attachment in the FDP and explain that it is a staged approach. Phase 1 will go to answering the first question only.</p> <p>A further meeting is required to discuss the Koala Research Proposal.</p> <p>Documents handed out at meeting:        Dr Stephen Phillips <u>Conserving Koalas Across the Pilliga Scrub Research Proposal</u> February 2022        Dr Stephen Phillips <u>Koala Research Proposal Response to Submissions</u> February 2022</p> <p><b>Biodiversity Offset Strategy</b></p> <p>Q. Is Santos open to more discussion about land-based offsets?        A. Yes with PAG because outside the framework.</p> <p>Santos would like to be able to identify &amp; generate the credits required for Stage 1 and if that time isn't reached, funds to BCA. Discussion needs to happen with Planning Assessment Group (PAG).</p> <p>Discussion planned with Steve O'Donoghue, Department of Planning &amp; Environment, to help with the decision-making process.</p>

### **Cultural Heritage and Native Title**

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan is yet to be approved by DPE.

Todd spoke to how the working groups are put together with a view to making sure that Aboriginal consultation is done as completely as possible. It is the working group that verifies who “walks country”.

Q. What is involved in the audit process?

A. This is involved with identifying potential cultural heritage sites and items and is done independently of Santos in accordance with *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act).

Q Do cultural heritage sites count towards offset sites?

A. (Dan) Not as far as he was aware but would check with Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) and report back. He would also clarify who it would be best to speak to regarding any concerns going forward.

Q (from Malcolm Talbot) Will cultural items be removed to a safe place – for example a scarred tree?

A. Santos have made a commitment of avoidance. The process of walking country will identify any potential sites and Santos, as part of its planning process, will add buffer zones and fences and design their routes to avoid the sites.

### **Species listed after project approval**

New listings are expected to be relatively minor.

### **Impacts – *Myriophyllum implicatum***

This is a creeping matted herb. It can be quite dominant when it occurs, but it is quite ephemeral. It was considered to be extinct but was rediscovered in 2008.

This issue has more relevance to Stage 2.

### **Pre-Clearing/cleaning Procedures and Species Translocation**

The species being impacted during Phase 1 are not good candidates for translocation. They are quite ephemeral. Annual species often impact other species. It is more viable for perennial shrubs. More discussion in the BMP.

Q. If we do go forward with translocation, is a translocation permit required?

A. Have to go back and look at the conditions, depends on whether covered in the EIS detail so may need a separate scientific license. This will need to be investigated.

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### **Use of Nest Boxes in State Forest**

More detail and consultation required.

Usage based on two assumptions:

- 1) It will be good for the species – they need to be monitored. Who will do this?  
How long will they be up for?
- 2) You need hollows of about 300mm – a big requirement.

### **Use of Plant Community Types (PCTs) over habitat types**

Dan spoke extensively on this topic.

The justification for the use of Habitat type Vs PCT needs to be included in the response rather than the plan.

Q. Are you going to monitor areas immediately adjacent to the well pads?

A. Yes –Attempting to quantify the utilization of the habitat immediately adjacent to the well pads. Monitor the habitat – within 50m of the well sites. Impact location specific. Choosing the control and reference site via habitat type rather than PCT. Two key habitat types but many PCT.

Q. What is the reference site in a working forest? What is the control site? Discussion about the site - Shrubby woodland little more nuanced.

A. Reference sites will not be selected on PCT but inevitably based on similar PCT. Need to be located within forestry areas outside of project area.

(Pat Tap) Reference and control sites will have disturbances. Chances are that given where the well sites are going, they will be disturbed because it is a working forest. The discussion will have to be had about what happens if there is a fire. May need another meeting about this.

Q. Are you expecting adverse impacts adjoining the well pad or are you expecting impacts from weeds and trampling? Have you had much monitoring data on extended impacts inherent in the enforced areas adjoining existing infrastructure?

A. There has been a lot of monitoring done and EPA have been conducting a similar monitoring program.

There has been monitoring of rehab as well as small impact control using traditional methods. The level of weed spread is quite low.

#### **Monitoring – hazard reduction burning and timber harvesting**

Q. Will the well pads add any additional ambient heat and result in increased fire risk?

A. Temperature is not measured, but there have been no incidence of fires starting as a result of increased heat. Most fires have been as a result of lightning strike. Majority of fires are extinguished before they take hold and spread. Santos' presence has actually helped reduce fire risk through early identification.

Q. Have you noticed any fauna responding to impacts in terms of utilization of habitats adjoining well pads. A reduction in habitat usage?

A. No – monitoring is not showing this.

#### **Monitoring Techniques – The use of hemispherical lenses or smartphone technology.**

Additional justification required. This process is trying to reduce observe variability. Specificity around the methodology and this will be updated in the revised plan.

#### **Monitoring – metric bands for rapid vegetation integrity plots**

More justification required.

Expanded by Dan. Bands are based on benchmarks. They are not subjective in terms of making an estimate, essentially it was found that it was possible to be quite accurate. The plotting is quite time efficient – choose the level of effort that does not compromise the result.

#### **Monitoring – Sound Scope analysis vs more traditional techniques**

It was clarified that sound sampling would run continuously (24/7) during the monitoring period and sub-samples analysed.

#### **Monitoring – acoustic sampling program**

Ultimately there will be a library of sounds so that the recognition of species can be automated with cross referencing and checking. The sounds will be put into a digital form so that one site can be compared with another. All data and all recordings for the life of the project will be kept. This is a big investment up front for what is going to happen for multiple years to come.

Discussion about theft and camouflage of equipment.

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	<p><b>Trigger Action response Plan – 95% confidence interval</b>  Three replicates within each habitat type and will be used. This needs to be further explained. This is due to the limit of landscape ecology. There are not enough sites to do sufficient replicates.</p> <p>Anything abnormal is going to trigger investigation. Initially there will be many triggers. Over time, this will be refined.</p> <p>Q. Are the insects/invertebrates being monitored?  A. No - There is no invertebrates endangered or threatened. Ecosystem health is captured in the sound scape analysis. Invertebrate assemblage will be reflected in the soundscape through audible sounds from invertebrates and the overall ecosystem soundscape will be used as a surrogate for ecosystem health, i.e. is represented under the ecosystem umbrella. Invertebrates are difficult to monitor and very labour intensive.</p> <p>Perhaps this is an area for further research – GISERA or teaching institutions to be approached.</p> <p>Q. Are you proposing to undertake some baseline vegetation sampling so that you have baseline data for the rehabilitation and monitoring program.  A. No. The baseline is the mapped PCTs from the EIS.</p> <p>Q. Are you proposing to do any more monitoring of rehabilitation?  A. Yes. The rehab plan doesn't need to be developed in consultation with this group but will be publicly available.</p>
<p><b>6. General Business</b></p>	<p>Nil</p>

**Actions**

NO.	ACTIONS	ACTION BY	DUE DATE
1	<p>Out of Session Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Santos/BCS/FCNSW/Steve Phillips - Koala Research Proposal</li> <li>• Santos/FCNSW - Hazard reduction burning and timber harvesting within monitoring control/reference and rehab sites</li> <li>• Santos/PAG – condition B44 – staged retirement of offsets</li> </ul>	Cassie	Subject to participant availability.

**Next Meeting**

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May (TBC)