



Professor Mary O'Kane
Chief Scientist and Engineer
GPO Box 5477
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Prof O'Kane

Thank you for your letter seeking Chief Health Officer's Air Pollution Expert Advisory Committee (APEAC)'s consideration of the University of Western Sydney's draft paper '*Approaches to baseline studies of human health in relation to industries with potential environmental impact*', commissioned as part of the independent Review of Coal Seam Gas. Specifically whether the APEAC considered baseline epidemiological studies to be practical and feasible.

The APEAC formally considered the issue on the 10 December 2013. The APEAC did not support the use of epidemiological studies for assessing and monitoring the risks associated with coal seam gas (CSG) activities at the present time. Such studies are unlikely to produce useful results due to:

- The difficulty of measuring individual or community level data on exposure to CSG-related hazardous materials
- The small size of the potentially exposed population, which means there is unlikely to be sufficient statistical power to detect health effects

APEAC agreed that it would be more appropriate to assess the potential health risks by undertaking a health risk assessment, which would involve a process of hazard identification and exposure assessment from CSG activities, and then examining the expected health effects based on known exposure-response relationships.

NSW Health recommends that any health risk assessment should comply with the enHealth guidelines '*Environmental health risk assessment – guidelines for assessing human health risk from environmental hazards*' which can be found at [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/804F8795BABFB1C7CA256F1900045479/\\$File/DoHA-EHRA-120910.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/804F8795BABFB1C7CA256F1900045479/$File/DoHA-EHRA-120910.pdf).

Should your office wish to discuss this further, please contact
Professor Wayne Smith, Director, Environmental Health Branch, Health Protection
NSW, on 9424 5983.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kerry Chant
**Deputy Director – General, Population and Public Health
and Chief Health Officer**

10th February 2014