

Terms of Reference

Review of coal seam gas activities in NSW

At the request of the NSW Government, the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer will conduct a review of coal seam gas (CSG) related activities in NSW, with a focus on the impacts of these activities on human health and the environment.

The Chief Scientist and Engineer is to:

1. undertake a comprehensive study of industry compliance involving site visits and well inspections. The Chief Scientist's work will be informed by compliance audits undertaken by regulatory officers, such as the Environment Protection Authority and other government agencies
2. identify and assess any gaps in the identification and management of risk arising from coal seam gas exploration, assessment and production, particularly as they relate to human health, the environment and water catchments
3. identify best practice in relation to the management of CSG or similar unconventional gas projects in close proximity to residential properties and urban areas and consider appropriate ways to manage the interface between residences and CSG activity
4. explain how the characteristics of the NSW coal seam gas industry compare with the industry nationally and internationally
5. inspect and monitor current drilling activities including water extraction, hydraulic fracturing and aquifer protection techniques
6. produce a series of information papers on specific elements of CSG operation and impact, to inform policy development and to assist with public understanding. Topics should include:
 - operational processes
 - NSW geology
 - water management
 - horizontal drilling
 - hydraulic fracturing (fracking)
 - fugitive emissions
 - health impacts
 - wells and bores
 - subsidence.

The NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer will provide an initial report to the Premier and the Minister for Resources and Energy on her findings and observations by July 2013.