

Coexistence issues on gas challenge Western Downs

The independent statutory body established by the Queensland Government to manage and improve the sustainable coexistence of landholders, regional communities, and the onshore gas industry has reported challenges over the past 18 months around gas development activities on the Western Downs.

GasFields Commission Queensland CEO chief, Warwick Squire, said significant landholder and community concerns resulted in the Commission undertaking a raft of activities aimed at improving coexistence outcomes in the Western Downs, but also throughout the industry as a whole.

“The Commission is now leading the state-wide conversation around the coexistence of gas development and intensive farming activities,” he told Australasian Drilling.

Warwick said recent activities include publicly calling on government and industry to [resolve coexistence issues](#), undertaking reviews of legislation and the [adequacy of existing regulatory frameworks](#), facilitating public clarification regarding responsibilities for [public liability insurance](#) for those landholders who host onshore gas activities, and leading a collaborative research project into the potential impacts of coal seam gas (CSG)-induced subsidence.

“Directional drilling activities in these closely settled, high value agricultural settings have also generated a unique set of coexistence challenges, with the omission working closely with government, industry, and the agricultural sector to address these issues,” Warwick said.

“As a result of collaborative examination of these issues, we have seen significant progress in terms of utilisation of this important drilling technology that provides many benefits in terms of reducing the industry’s physical footprint.”

In August 2020, the Queensland Department of Resources issued public clarification around the



With interactions between gas development activities and landholders on the Western Downs closely settled, highly productive agricultural areas have produced a variety of challenging coexistence issues.

regulatory requirements for resource authority holders to access private land to carry out directional drilling activities on adjacent land, and the landholder rights that would apply in that scenario [see the Department’s [‘Considerations when accessing private land to carry out directional drilling on adjacent land’](#) fact sheet].

“Importantly, we have since seen the gas industry significantly improve transparency around deviated and directional drilling activities, with a strong focus emerging on early engagement with landholders and the open exchange of information,” Warwick said.

Warwick added the Commission’s role was to utilise the learnings from its engagements and share these with a broad section of stakeholders, across a far wider geographical area.

“We want all relevant rural landholders and regional communities in Queensland to be aware of, and actively engage with the Commission so that we remain cognizant of all issues affecting those communities that host gas development, and the many opportunities and benefits that the gas industry brings to these areas,” he said.

“The Commission stands ready and committed to utilise our oversight function to continue to improve sustainable coexistence between landholders, regional communities, and Queensland’s onshore gas industry, ensuring all Queenslanders benefit from a prosperous onshore gas sector.”

The State Government established the Commission in 2013 in direct response to coexistence issues emanating from multiple CSG developments operating in highly productive agricultural areas of Queensland’s South West and Darling Downs regions.

“From inception to present day, the Commission has evolved significantly as a result of independent reviews, amendments to our legislation, adoption of communication best practice, and adapting to ever changing community expectations and the operating environment,” Warwick said.

- Jamie Wade ▲



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