

Media release

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Community wellbeing and attitudes to CSG around Narrabri, NSW

Four hundred residents from Narrabri, Wee Waa and Boggabri were surveyed as part of new CSIRO research released today, into community wellbeing and perceptions of coal seam gas (CSG) development in the Narrabri region, NSW.

The report from CSIRO's Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (GISERA) involved surveying Narrabri Shire residents during March and April this year to establish baseline measures of community wellbeing and expected future wellbeing over the next three years. It also investigated community resilience and adaptation in the context of a proposed CSG development in the shire, as well as measuring local attitudes and perceptions of CSG development and the CSG sector.

Lead Author Dr Andrea Walton says the study found overall community wellbeing was robust in the Narrabri Shire. The highest rated dimensions of community wellbeing were community spirit and personal safety. The research identified four important drivers of community wellbeing - the level of services and facilities, social aspects of community life, levels of local trust, and the presence of good parks and green space.

"When residents felt these aspects of their community were good then they also felt their community was a great place to live," Dr Walton says. "By identifying the underlying drivers of community wellbeing the research provides valuable information on where to focus scarce resources to help strengthen and augment community wellbeing."

The research establishes baseline measures so that any changes in community wellbeing over time can be identified, and strategies and initiatives put in place to address any changes. If CSG development were to occur this would include strategies and social investments to mitigate any potential impacts, and help realise any opportunities. When people feel that there are high levels of community functioning they would be more likely to perceive their community as adapting and coping well with CSG development if it were to occur.

The research found that local attitudes towards CSG development varied within the shire. The diversity of views ranged from those at one end of the spectrum who 'reject' CSG development in the shire (30%) to those at the other end of the spectrum who 'embrace' it (15%). The remaining respondents (55%) indicated they would either tolerate (27%), be ok with (15%), or approve of (13%) CSG development in the shire.

Attitudes towards CSG development also varied based on whether people lived in town or out of town and in subregions within the shire. On average, residents out of town had less positive views of CSG development while residents from Narrabri and surrounds had more positive views than residents from the rest of the shire.

The research can be found at the [GISERA](http://gisera.csiro.au) website.

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