

Local attitudes and perceptions of CSG development: 2014 – 2018

Results of the 2018 CSIRO Community Wellbeing and Responding to Change survey in Queensland, Australia

The 2018 CSIRO Community Wellbeing and Responding to Change survey documents local attitudes and perceptions of coal seam gas (CSG) development over time and across different industry phases. It shows changes between the construction, post-construction and early operations phases of development in 2014, 2016, and 2018.

KEY POINTS

- Over the four year period a range of views continue towards CSG development, and the pattern of views has remained similar.
- Water remains the principal concern about CSG development.
- Local and societal benefits from CSG development were both seen as modest.
- The size of towns matters in the way local benefits and impacts are perceived.
- Previous connection with the industry is linked to lower levels of concern about impacts.
- More positive attitudes and perceptions about CSG development were evident in the eastern Maranoa region than the Western Downs.

In 2018 people did not report strong feelings towards CSG development on average and the strength of their negative feelings had softened over the four year period.

Attitudes towards CSG were not polarised in the Western Downs and eastern Maranoa. Rather the range of attitudes in both regions demonstrated a relatively normal distribution, with most views in the mid-range.

People's views towards CSG continued to differ between towns in the Western Downs region, and between people living in town and out of town.

Chinchilla held the most positive views of CSG development in 2014, 2016 and 2018, while people who live in town showed statistically more positive views over the same period.

Younger people held much more positive views towards CSG development though are still concerned about potential impacts. Younger people perceive more benefits, better distributional fairness, and have much more confidence and trust in governance surrounding the CSG industry.

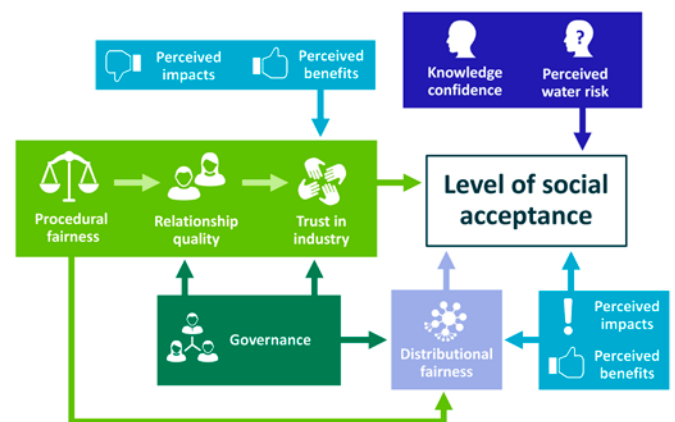
The eastern Maranoa, added as a comparison area in 2016 and 2018, held more favourable views towards CSG than the Western Downs.

The range of views remains similar

In 2018, attitudes towards CSG development within the Western Downs region still ranged across a spectrum of views.

- 9% of people rejected CSG development
- 10% of people embraced CSG development
- 81% of people tolerated, accepted, or approved of CSG development
 - 34% tolerated
 - 31% accepted
 - 16% approved

This pattern has remained similar over time. In 2016 in the post construction phase, there was a shift towards more negative views, but in 2018 this trend reversed and attitudes were slightly more positive.



A statistical model explaining social acceptance, or lack thereof, for CSG development.

Water is the main concern about CSG development

Concerns of local residents about underground water resources and perceived uncertainty about the associated science remain high.

This reflects the level of importance that underground water resources represent to rural communities and the complexity of the underlying science, combined with issues of trust in the CSG industry and state government regulatory bodies.

Underlying drivers of local attitudes

For the first time in 2018, the survey measured perceptions of nine different factors previously identified as important to forming an overall view about CSG development.

These factors relate to perceptions of impacts, benefits, procedural and distributional fairness, governance, quality of relationships with industry, trust in the industry, perceptions of water risk, and knowledge.

The five most important factors driving local attitudes and perceptions of CSG development were:

- Perceived impacts
- Trust in industry
- Perceived benefits
- Governance
- Distributional fairness.

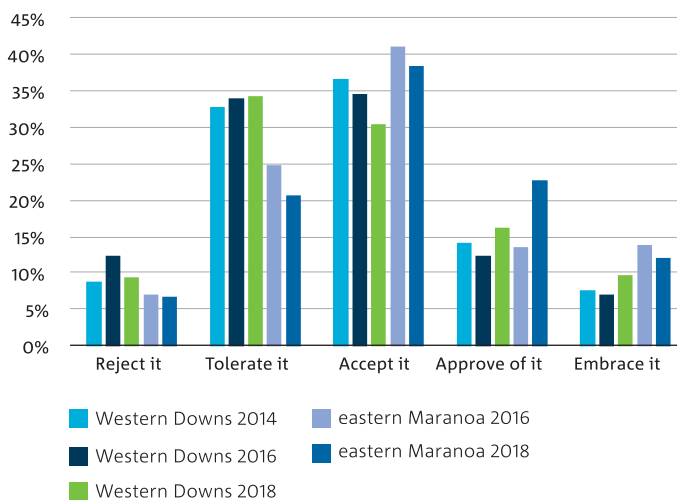
What we found

Concerns about impacts from potential future issues were moderately high and greater than perceptions of current impacts. Perceptions of benefits were marginal across the region, although this varied between sub-regions.

On average, perceptions of procedural fairness, trust in CSG companies, and the relationship quality with the CSG company were generally low, and perceptions of distributional fairness in terms of how costs and benefits were shared was seen as marginal. Perceptions of trust in state governing bodies were also low, though people were more positive about the government's ability to regulate the industry and hold CSG companies to account. These perceptions also varied across the sub-regions with the eastern Maranoa showing the most favourable views.

Perceptions of risk to underground water were moderate, and lower in the eastern Maranoa than in the Western Downs. People's confidence in knowledge about the industry was modest on average, with more than half indicating they needed more information.

PERCEPTION SCORES



Attitudes towards CSG development: Western Downs 2014-2016-2018 and eastern Maranoa 2018.

What we did

In March-April 2018 we surveyed 623 residents from the Western Downs and the eastern half of the Maranoa local government areas. We asked about community wellbeing and resilience, and local attitudes and perceptions of CSG development within these regions. The full report *Trends in community wellbeing and local attitudes to CSG development 2014-2016-2018* compares 2018 results with previous surveys conducted in 2014 and 2016, and identifies how these aspects have changed in the Western Downs over time. The eastern Maranoa region was included for the first time in 2016 as a comparison region. Read the full report [here](#).

USEFUL RESOURCES

- Find out more about the [Community Wellbeing project](#)
- Read about the [2014 survey](#) and the [2016 survey](#)
- Check out these related [fact sheets](#)

ABOUT CSIRO's GISERA

The Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (GISERA) is a collaboration between CSIRO, Commonwealth and state governments and industry established to undertake publicly-reported independent research. The purpose of GISERA is to provide quality assured scientific research and information to communities living in gas development regions focusing on social and environmental topics including: groundwater and surface water, biodiversity, land management, the marine environment, and socio-economic impacts. The governance structure for GISERA is designed to provide for and protect research independence and transparency of research. Visit gisera.csiro.au for more information about GISERA's governance structure, projects and research findings.

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