



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

GISERA | Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance

Monitoring community wellbeing and attitudes to CSG in Narrabri, NSW – 2022

This project monitors changes in community wellbeing and attitudes to coal seam gas (CSG) development in the Narrabri Shire, north-west New South Wales, since 2017.

Key points

- GISERA is conducting a series of surveys over time measuring community wellbeing and attitudes to CSG development in the Narrabri Shire.
- This project will measure changes between the baseline measures taken in 2017 and 2022 (before and after NSW and Federal Government approvals).
- Further surveys may be undertaken during and after the construction phase should development go ahead.
- Survey results provide useful information for the local community, industry and government for planning and enhancing local community wellbeing, as well as improving understanding of perceptions of CSG development in the region.

This current survey is being conducted in the post-approval, pre-construction phase of the Narrabri Gas Project.

The first survey, in 2017, established baseline measures of community wellbeing, community resilience and adaptation, and expected future wellbeing in the context of CSG development in the Shire. It also measured and documented local attitudes and perceptions of CSG development and the CSG sector at the time.

The current survey will measure any changes between the baseline measures taken in 2017 and this post-approval, pre-construction phase. Santos is expected to decide whether to progress to the construction phase by June 2023.

If construction proceeds, another community survey between 2025 and 2026 has been approved to monitor any changes in any construction phase.

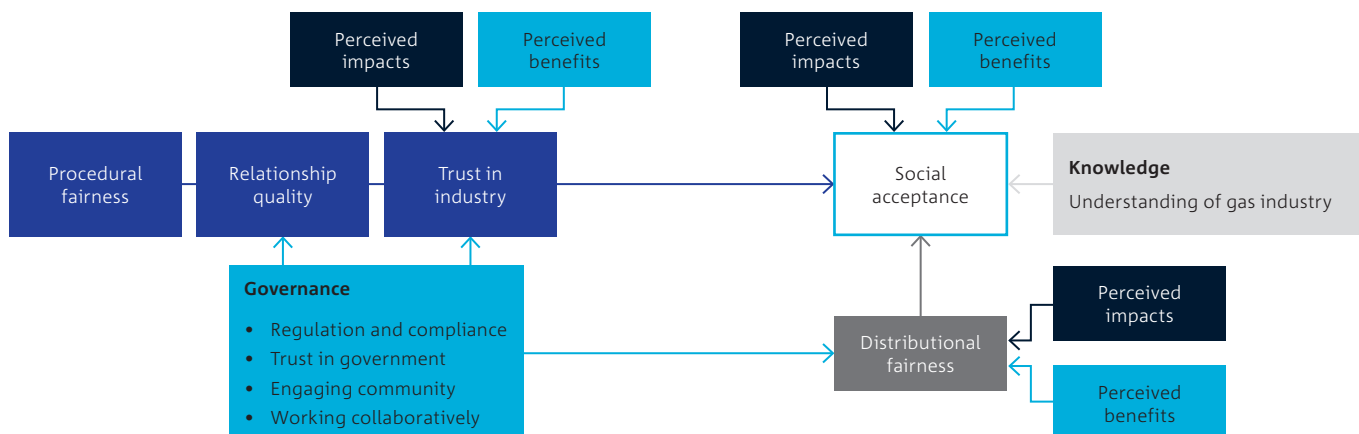
In late 2020, the NSW and Federal Governments approved the Narrabri Gas Project, proposed by Energy company Santos. The project involves progressive development of a coal seam gas field over 20 years with up to 850 gas wells and associated infrastructure, including gas processing and water treatment facilities.

CSIRO's Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (GISERA) is conducting a series of surveys across various phases of CSG development over several years in the Narrabri Shire to monitor community wellbeing and attitudes to gas development.

Narrabri Shire

The Narrabri Shire covers approximately 13,000 square kilometres and is home to around 13,000 people with 6,000 living in the town of Narrabri, the main centre. The proposed gas project is situated approximately 20 kilometres south of the town of Narrabri.

The shire has been primarily a grazing and farming region since settlement. Irrigated cotton has evolved to become the main high value crop in the region. Since 2012, a number of coalmines have been approved and are operating near Narrabri at Boggabri and Baan Baa.



CSIRO researchers have developed a model of social acceptance.

Survey purpose

Survey results provide reliable and useful information and increased awareness for the local community, industry and government for planning and enhancing local community wellbeing. Identifying current perceptions of CSG development in the Shire also provides industry and government useful information for understanding community expectations of the gas sector, including concerns needing to be addressed, and opportunities to be realised.

In the long-term, survey results can assist industry and government in the development of standards, practices, guidelines, policies, programs, planning and other initiatives related to onshore gas that reflect issues of importance to local communities.

Survey process

The notion of community wellbeing means different things to different people. We investigate the concept of community wellbeing across 15 dimensions, grouped into six domains: social, environmental, political, physical infrastructure and services, economic and health.

Approximately 400 residents from the Narrabri Shire selected at random will be surveyed by telephone. Questions seek responses about local quality of life and wellbeing, how people feel their community would adapt or respond to changes from a possible CSG development, and what their expectations are about future community wellbeing. The survey also asks about their attitudes and perceptions of CSG and the CSG sector.

The 2022 and later surveys will replicate the 2017 survey to ensure continuity of measurement. The data will be analysed and feedback sessions arranged to discuss findings with local community, government and industry stakeholders.

Findings in 2017: a benchmark for measuring change

The 2017 study [Social baseline assessment of the Narrabri region of New South Wales in relation to CSG development](#) provided a benchmark important for assessing any impacts on community wellbeing and attitudes to CSG development in later phases.

It concluded that current levels of community wellbeing were robust and comparable to other areas in southern Queensland that have experienced CSG development. Among other findings, the research identified three broad sets of attitudes towards CSG: those opposed (30.5%), those who felt lukewarm (41.7%) and those who were supportive (27.8%).

Almost half the participants indicated the community would adapt to changes (48%), with nearly a quarter feeling the community would only just cope (23%). The remainder felt the community would either resist (16%), not cope (7%), or alternately change into something different but better (6%).

Perceptions of risks to underground water – about contamination and depletion – were the top two concerns about CSG.

Subsequent surveys will measure any changes since 2017 and assist with monitoring progress on recommendations in the [Final Report of the Independent Review of Coal Seam Gas Activities in NSW \(NSW Government, 2014\)](#).

More information

- Read about the project [Monitoring community wellbeing and attitudes to CSG in Narrabri \(pre construction phase\)](#)
- Find out about [other GISERA projects in NSW](#).

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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, greenhouse gas emissions, 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.