



7 June 2017

Committee Secretary
Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
ipnrc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the *Gasfields Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017* (the Bill).

The Queensland Resources Council (QRC) is the peak representative organisation of the Queensland minerals and energy sector. QRC's membership encompasses minerals and energy exploration, production and processing companies and associated service companies. QRC works on behalf of members to ensure Queensland's resources are developed profitably and competitively, in a socially and environmentally sustainable way.

QRC's membership encompasses companies operating in Queensland's onshore gas industry, including all the proponents of the Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) export facilities. While QRC's coal seam gas (CSG) members are also members of the peak *national* body for the oil and gas sector, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA), QRC's membership base is broader than APPEA and encompasses many of the professional and technical service companies who contract to the onshore gas industry in Queensland.

QRC's mineral and energy members take a keen interest in the way CSG operations are regulated – as many of the requirements that are developed specifically for CSG tend to be applied more generically across the broader resource industry. A key example of this is the imminent establishment of the Land Access Ombudsman to address concerns of landholders that have a Conduct and Compensation Agreement in place. This recommendation arose from a review of the Gasfields Commission which considered only disputes between landholders and CSG companies.

The Role of the Gasfields Commission

The Commission has an important purpose; to improve the sustainable coexistence of landholders, regional communities and the onshore gas industry in Queensland.

QRC was an active member of the two GasFields Community Leaders Councils and was heavily involved in the work of the CSG Engagement Committee which preceded the establishment of the GasFields Commission, particularly on land access issues. QRC supports the process of open and transparent engagement, facilitated by a respected and independent chair, which has characterised each of these processes. In QRC's view, all the different incarnations of the Commission have continued to demonstrate value by establishing constructive and effective dialogue between Government, industry and community stakeholders.

The Commission has a strong track record of delivering practical advice on achieving coexistence and works well to defuse potential disputes by providing an independent source of information. QRC is strongly supportive of the Commission continuing to play a constructive role in the future. However, QRC understands that the role of the Land Access Ombudsman is to resolve individual disputes relating to coexistence. Therefore, there is an overlap between the previous role of the Gasfields Commission and the new role of the Land Access Ombudsman. The role of the Commission will need to evolve to enable them to develop a view on the systemic or recurring issues which may generate disputes with landholders.

The QRC sees the Gasfields Commission's role going forward as primarily in working to build coexistence by working closely with regional communities. As per the recommendations of Professor Bob Scott's independent review, this would require more focus on the Commission's strategic role including improved planning, monitoring and evaluation, in addition to improved communication.

In QRC's view, the Commission has worked hard to establish a constructive dialogue between Government, industry and community stakeholders.

The Bill

QRC understands the Bill's objective is to provide improvements to the operational structure of the Gasfields Commission Queensland, which will improve its operation and clearly distinguish between the roles of the commission and the staff of the commission. The amendments included in the Bill implement several recommendations from the most recent Gasfields Commission Review, conducted by Professor Bob Scott. These changes aim to:

- Give effect to a new structure that separates the strategic and operational aspects of the commission
- Allow the chairperson to be part-time
- Redesignate the role of general manager to chief executive officer.

QRC has no issue with the Bill. QRC understands that the role of the Gasfields Commission is changing, and therefore it is appropriate to make some administrative, strategic and operational changes.

QRC would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee and address any questions that the Committee might have about this submission.

Sincerely

Ian Macfarlane
Chief Executive