

Question on Notice
No. 674
Asked on 12 September 2013

MR WELLINGTON asked the Premier (MR NEWMAN)—

With reference to the importance of protecting the Great Artesian Basin water source—
Will the State Government undertake a review of the possible accumulated impact of all current coal seam gas approvals on this valuable water source?

ANSWER:

Under the Queensland regulatory framework, an area where water extraction by multiple coal seam gas operations may have overlapping impacts on groundwater resources can be declared a cumulative management area.

When such a declaration is made, the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment—an independent unit within the Department of Natural Resources and Mines—carries out a cumulative assessment of the future impacts on groundwater resources. The results are set out in an underground water impact report.

The area of concentrated coal seam gas development in Queensland is in the Surat Basin, which is a sub-basin of the Great Artesian Basin. The area has been declared as the Surat Cumulative Management Area. The Surat Underground Water Impact Report was finalised in December 2012, after a period of public consultation.

The report describes the predicted long-term impacts of planned coal seam gas water extraction on the aquifers of the Great Artesian Basin.

The aquifers of the Great Artesian Basin are important water resources. The assessment of the future impact of coal seam gas water extraction on the aquifers will continue to be refined. For this reason, research is currently being carried out to further improve knowledge of the groundwater flow system. In December 2015, the Surat Underground Water Impact Report will be updated to incorporate the new knowledge.

If exploration in other places should lead to plans for the significant development of coal seam gas, additional cumulative management areas could be established.