

The Geological and Bioregional Assessment (GBA) Program (the program) held its sixth and final Cooper GBA region user panel meeting on 22 April 2021. This meeting was held virtually due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. This communique outlines the key topics discussed during the meeting.

The program thanked user panel members in particular: regional Mayors, representatives from the Wongkumara People Native Title Claim Group and the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation, land users including AgForce Queensland, Western Rivers Alliance, natural resource management groups, the gas industry, Queensland and South Australian Government representatives and important members of the local community who have engaged with the program over the last 3 years through the user panel process.

The program team provided an overview and update on progress that has been made since the last meeting on 8 December 2020. The program is currently in the third and final stage of delivery and is due for completion in June 2021.

- An overview of Stage 3 was presented and members were given a demonstration of the online causal network interactive web tool (the tool). The tool has been developed for regulators and proponents. It identifies the pathways that are the highest priority for environmental planning and impact assessment. When completed, the tool will be publicly available through the program's website.
- Two potential impact pathway scenarios were demonstrated. The persistence of the grey grasswren and hydraulic fracturing risks to aquifer condition. Pathways within the causal network are underpinned by data and expert advice collected specifically for the Cooper GBA region.
- The program provided a preview of the Cooper Creek flood inundation model developed by CSIRO. Panellists were interested in the model and were keen to further understand how it could be used to support operations and planning (for example, when a development site may be too wet for heavy machinery). Industry was also keen to hear how government regulators would use the information.
- Panellists noted that the science behind the tool will be valuable to ensuring the ongoing protection of significant environmental and water-related matters within the basin.
- The incorporation of local cultural sites was raised. The program is focused on matters of concern to the environment and water protected under State and Commonwealth legislation. However, the causal network method developed by the program could be applied by those undertaking assessments to consider regionally significant cultural matters.

User panel members are encouraged to visit the GBA Program website at bioregionalassessments.gov.au/gba and contact us with any further questions or feedback.