

The Geological and Bioregional Assessment (GBA) Program held its second User Panel meeting for the Isa GBA Region in Normanton, on 13 August 2019. The GBA Program appreciates the contributions of all panellists during the day in helping refine the Stage 3 work, and through the offer of ongoing assistance to support the GBA Program.

This communique outlines the key topics discussed by the User Panel during the meeting.

- The Queensland government reflected on the benefits the Program is providing around provision of data and a strategic understanding of environmental assets.
- Geoscience Australia presented an overview of the Stage 2 geological and environmental baseline assessment for the Isa GBA region, which is expected to be published in the final quarter of 2019. The work includes a synthesis of existing geological, ecological and water related information and identification of key risks and knowledge gaps that will be the focus in Stage 3, impact analysis and management for the GBA Program.
- A question and answer session focused on risks associated with hydraulic fracturing chemicals and connectivity between source rocks for gas and important aquifers. The impacts associated with moving exploration equipment through shire roads were discussed.
- The User Panel expressed a desire for there also to be analysis of impacts on agricultural productivity, which are not covered by the Federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act and State legislation. It was noted that this falls outside the scope of the GBA Program.
- The User Panel discussed the data-poor and frontier nature of the prospective region. Due to little available data from industry and the lack of infrastructure in the region, the scope of the Isa GBA Region Assessment will not include a development scenario.
- Geoscience Australia presented information on remote sensing methods used for identifying potential groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDEs). This work is valuable as it confirms the presence of known GDEs and helps identify potential springs and other groundwater – surface water interactions that are not yet documented. The program will seek to ground truth these remote observations if land access is granted.
- The User Panel discussed non-listed cultural / food related matters that are of importance to local Traditional Owners. The Program will consider options to include of these matters in Stage 3 works, in a culturally appropriate manner.
- The User Panel agreed the next User Panel meeting will occur in the 2nd quarter of 2020. The GBA Program will continue to work with end users to determine a suitable date and location.