

The Geological and Bioregional Assessment Program held its second User Panel meeting for the Cooper Basin in Thargomindah, on 19 September 2018. The User Panel then undertook a field trip around the Cooper Basin on 20 –21 September.

The 1st day of the field trip included a visit to the Jackson Oil Facility and a tour of the Cooper Creek floodplain; visiting petroleum well sites and staying overnight at Santos’s Ballera processing facility. The 2nd day included a flight to Moomba over the upper Cooper Creek catchment and Coongie Lakes, a tour of the Moomba Oil and Gas Plant and a visit to an operational well drilling site.

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

- The user panel reiterated the importance of Cooper Creek floodplain and groundwater systems within hazard analysis discussions.
- The Cooper Basin Stage 2 assessment work is being drafted and a baseline understanding of the region will be synthesised in the report. Findings will be shared with the user panel at the next User Panel meeting with the expectation that the report would be published by mid-2019.
- Key gaps in scientific knowledge were discussed, including the limited understanding of surface flow characteristics within the Cooper Creek floodplain; and shallow groundwater properties (quantity and quality) within the Cooper Basin.
- The panel discussed the draft Stage 3 assessment scope, designed to address hazards, information gaps, and requirements of a cumulative impact assessment with a focus on listed matters under state and Commonwealth legislation, and how this may inform a strategic assessment.
- There was broad User Panel support for some key aspects of the draft Stage 3 scope including acquisition of LiDAR data, and development of a hydrodynamic flow model for Cooper Creek; and development of an environmental accounting approach to support a consistent and transparent approach to environmental data gathering.
- User Panellists noted the need for the Program to continue to test the hazard analysis and Stage 3 scope with key end-users, including approaches for assessment of chemicals and consideration of existing management controls.
- The User Panel appreciated the contribution of Bulloo Shire Council in organising the panel meeting in Thargomindah and Santos for helping to organise and host the two-day field trip.
- The next User Panel meeting will occur in the 2nd quarter of 2019.