

The Geological and Bioregional Assessment Program held its first User Panel meeting for the Isa Superbasin in Mount Isa, on 9 May 2018.

The User Panel consists of representatives from a number of stakeholders including landholders, local and state governments, industry, community and environmental groups.

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

- The Isa Superbasin is a “frontier” basin for shale and tight gas, which has been shown to be prospective but it is in the early stages of resource exploration.
- Because shale and tight gas exploration is currently in the early stages, there are some broad scope and scale questions to be considered. These can be roughly grouped as follows:
  - Scale and operations (what would this industry look like?)
  - Prospectivity and economic opportunities
  - Social and Cultural opportunities and challenges; and
  - Environmental management.
- If shale and tight gas is to develop into a profitable and sustainable industry in North West Queensland, there is a need to determine what success looks like, for industry, governments and communities.
- An appropriate model for community engagement will be developed.
- There is a strong intent to work toward consistent and coordinated legislative frameworks (state and Commonwealth) across the basin, which will enable consistent management practices, reduce regulatory burden and deliver environmental outcomes.
- User Panel members agreed at the meeting to contribute relevant and timely data to the program as and when required.
- As part of regular and ongoing consultation, and to ensure user needs are considered, there was an agreement to incorporate a field trip for the User Panel during September/October 2018. The aim of the field trip is to more broadly engage with the community and better understand the region’s values and industry operations.
- Challenges to be addressed include the protection of water resources (quantity and quality) and the need to better understand the risks associated with fracking.

- Due to shale and tight gas exploration being in early stages, there is an opportunity to consider infrastructure requirements and this needs to be considered in the broader context of infrastructure requirements for other industries as well such as agriculture, tourism and community needs.