

CSG Best Water Use Policy **DRAFT ONLY**



In developing this policy for use of CSG water, the Basin Sustainability Alliance acknowledges relevant overarching principles as outlined in its document “Not at any cost: A Blueprint for Sustainable CSG operations” (March 2011).*

- *Environmental sustainability of water and land resources is to be of the highest priority.*
- *Scientific studies must precede any development.*

1. Water is NOT a waste product.

All groundwater plays an important role in keeping the aquifers balanced. Great Artesian Basin (GAB) aquifers in general terms are all connected (although transmissivity may be low between certain aquifers). **Any extraction has an impact.** There is no such thing as “new” water only “new uses” for existing water. Water must be recognised for its environmental and social value for future generations – not just its short-term economic value.

2. Water should be viewed as a community asset

Landholders and the many communities that rely on groundwater must not have their access to water compromised. As a long term sustainability principle, no one should have reduced access to quality and quantity of water as a result of CSG activity.

3. Groundwater must be recognised as integral to the total basin water resource

A Surat Basin Groundwater Management Plan is essential for sustainable water use. CSG water, artesian water and surface water are interrelated and must be looked at as a whole. Research work undertaken by the Queensland Water Commission (QWC) and reported in the underground water impact report (UWIR) for the Surat cumulative management area, and other research centres must to be incorporated into the proposed ‘whole of basin’ plan. An assessment process must be developed to clearly identify the priority use of the treated CSG water so that we mitigate impacts and maintain or improve groundwater reserves so to ensure local environmental, agricultural and community sustainability. Different regions will have different priorities depending on hydrology and current water demands. This assessment process must be based on the scientific understanding of groundwater systems and must involve stakeholder agreement on the prioritised sustainable use. Surat basin groundwater management plan must take note of MDB plan in that process.

4. Beneficial use must be proven safe and sustainable

BSA preference for “beneficial use” is reinjection and substitution. Subject to appropriate scientific research, purified CSG water must be re-injected into associated aquifers or substituted for existing groundwater use wherever possible. Managing and maintaining the local water balance is important because current users will rely on this water into the future. Any alternative or “new use” of water must be proven sustainable through the Surat Basin Groundwater Management Plan before approved.

5. Maintain the local water balance

Wherever possible, water must be beneficially used in the area of extraction and not piped kilometres away.

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6. Develop “make-good” in advance

Because of the time lag between extraction and impact, water may not be available to “make good”. BSA supports the principle of “make good in advance” Landholders and other current water users do not want to wait for an aquifer to run out of water before the CSG companies “make good”. Make good in advance” would increase water levels in aquifers likely to be impacted, prior to the impact, guaranteeing existing users access to water.

7. Cumulative impacts on groundwater aquifers must be understood

Cumulative impacts on groundwater aquifers must be understood on a local, regional and catchment basis to minimise the risk of over-exploitation of current water reserves. The activities of all CSG companies and other groundwater users must be assessed as a whole.

8. Continuing research is essential

Baseline monitoring of water quality and quantity is an absolute priority. Further research must quantify transmissivity between aquifers and between aquifers and surface water. Individual aquifer assessments and modelling should be a pre-requisite to any activity which might adversely impact on the aquifer and where risks are apparent these risks should be assessed and appropriately addressed before activity commences. CSG Companies must continue to co-contribute to independent scientific research enabling greater understanding of impacts of CSG activities on the water balance. The community must be kept fully informed of the outcomes of these studies.

9. Public access to detailed water planning

All CSG Companies must enable public access to water plans detailing the quantity and quality of water extracted, how it is to be beneficially treated and how it is to be used and/or stored to prevent environmental harm. This would also form part of a ‘Mass Water Balance’ (where information on all water inflows and outflows, including water extracted from the system and water returned to the system would be recorded and made publically available). The industry should not progress until these plans are shown not to contain unacceptable risks.

10. Gas and water production must be managed together

Gas and water production are managed together to ensure sustainable water use. For example, if a reverse osmosis (RO) plant was out of order, gas production should be reduced or adapted to allow for appropriate and sustainable use of water.

In referring to use of “CSG Water” in this policy statement it is implied that water is treated appropriately and in such a way that other by-products from treatment such as salt is managed in an environmentally responsible manner. Refer to BSA policy statements on **Land and **Salinity** in “Not at any cost: A Blueprint for Sustainable CSG operations” (March 2011).*