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Introduction

This Advance Queensland Industry Research Fellowship project aims to capture the lessons learned from CSG-LNG development to provide a better understanding of pathways and opportunities to create co-benefits for regional communities from new energy projects (including onshore gas, large-scale renewables and hydrogen production). These are matched with an understanding of regional communities' and stakeholders' expectations of benefits, as the basis of support for new energy projects.

What are we delivering?

- Multi-stakeholder perspectives of the key lessons learned from CSG-LNG in relation to community benefits
- Identification of benefit types and pathways for regional communities from new energy projects
- Understand regional communities' expectations of benefits from new energy projects

Why is the project important?

Transitioning to a low carbon economy requires the roll out of large-scale energy projects across Queensland (and Australia). Policy at State and national levels has stipulated that this is will occur in a way that maximises benefits to all Australians, and particularly regional communities. Queensland has already experienced the rollout of a large-scale energy industry and there are key lessons to be learned from this experience. Understanding where these lessons can inform new energy projects is key to securing lasting and meaningful benefits for regional communities and in turn, social acceptance of new energy projects. Understanding what can be done better and how communities can be better prepared for new energy projects will help maximise the creation of co-benefits that aligns with regional sustainable development aspirations.

Method

Stage 1: Lessons learned from CSG projects

- Completed 22 semi-structured interviews with CSG proponents, government representatives and local communities
- Developed a set of lessons learned from CSG in relation to new energy projects
- Presented at International Sustainability Transitions Conference (IST 2022)
- Publish in academic and other arenas (in progress)

Stage 2: Opportunities and challenges for new energy projects

- Completed 18 semi-structured interviews with new energy proponents
- Collected socioeconomic data for 12 communities in the Southern and Central Queensland's Renewable Energy Zones (QREZs)
- Data analysis of knowledge transfer from CSG to new energy projects comparing the data from Stage 1 & 2 (in progress)
- The collection of socioeconomic data in QREZs will continue to provide a baseline for monitoring change in relation to new energy projects (in progress)

Stage 3: Regional communities' expectations of benefits

- Completed 3 focus groups with local community members in Central and Northern QREZs (Gladstone and Mackay)
- Will undertake 3 more focus groups in Southern and Northern QREZs (Dalby, Chinchilla and Mackay) (early 2023)
- Data analysis and final report (Apr 2023)

Acknowledgement

This project is undertaken as a unique partnership between large and small gas operators (Arrow, APLNG, Santos, Comet Ridge), research institutions (UQ and CSIRO), farmer and natural resource management organisations (Queensland Farmers' Federation and Southern Queensland Landscapes), along with the Queensland Government Advance Queensland Industry Research Fellowship funding program. We also thank all our wonderful participants for their time and knowledge.

Stage 1: Lessons learned about creating value from CSG projects (from interviews with stakeholders)

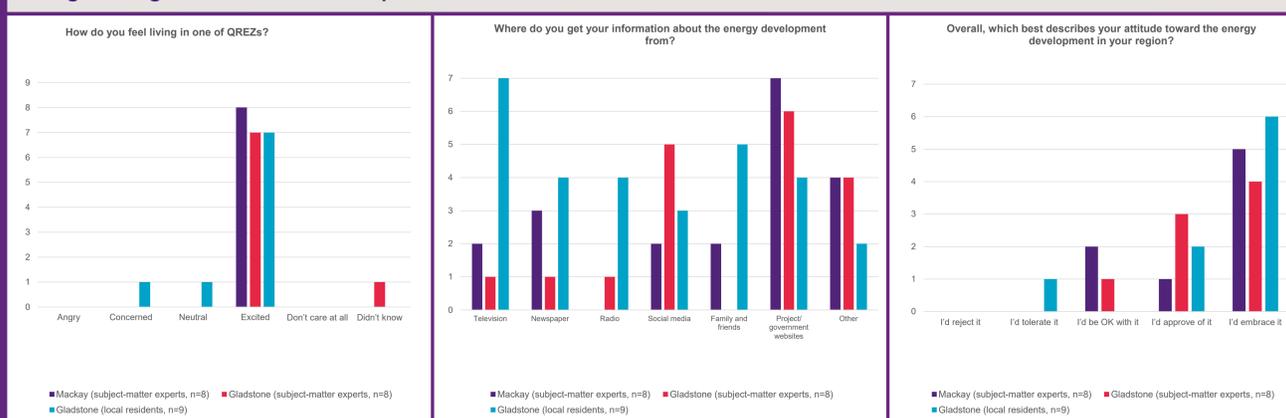
Engagement	Social performance and investment	Local procurement and participation	Coordination and collaboration for regional benefits	Preparedness	Long term vision	Monitoring and reporting	Institutional Learning	Good Governance	Social Licence through relationships and neighbourliness
Provide clear and best available information to local stakeholders early. Make it clear where there are uncertainties	Have a dedicated and skilled person leading social performance	Have a visible, accessible and consistent process for procurement of local suppliers. Buy local wherever possible	Coordination and cooperation between projects and between government and industry to share infrastructure and avoid duplication	Build skills among local government to be able to manage the local impacts of influx, traffic etc.	Think more broadly than economic benefits. Explore opportunities for creating long term environmental and social benefits for the local communities.	Transparency in monitoring and reporting of social as well as production and environmental performance	Create opportunities and mechanisms for projects to learn from each other and share information	Capability - make sure relevant government staff have good knowledge of the technology and infrastructure	Social licence is about having good relationships, not just acceptance or tolerance. Take time and effort to build relationships of trust and cooperation within the community.
Do not only focus on positive messages. Be honest and upfront about project benefits and challenges equally	Develop a community investment plan with the community that aligns with long term aspirations and sustainability	Allow for smaller contracts and work packages. These small contracts have significant flow on benefits in local communities.	Coordination and cooperation between projects and between government and industry to share responsibility for and management of cumulative social and environmental impacts	Create a template that outlines all the issues that local governments are likely to face and need to address	Think about the benefit streams created across the project life cycle. What legacy will be left?		Periodic and independent reviews of the regulatory environment	Leadership – government to show leadership and a clear policy position on the development	Seek to understand the local community – its connections, culture and capacities.
Provide regular updates as the project changes and progresses	Review social performance regularly	Support local businesses to collectively provide goods and services	Projects should combine their social investment strategies/agendas for greater overall benefit for the community	Build local negotiation skills in approvals processes/land access	Design workforce accommodation to align with long term planning goals			Early engagement and education should be facilitated by government	Have staff live in and/or participate in the community wherever practicable.
Engage with a view to create understanding, not acceptance	Decouple social investment from 'corporate branding'- consider multiple projects pooling investments	Provide timely information transparency around all compliancy requirements (health and safety, ticketing and inductions)	Coordinated government oversight so community members know where to go and don't get 'bounced around' with enquiries or complaints	Have a community plan					Understand community concerns and respond to problems promptly
Understand differences within communities and tailor engagement for different need		Cap the FIFO workforce. Invest in training to build local skills	Economic development organisations play an important role						
		Manage wages – avoid 'poaching' labour from local industries							

Stage 2: Opportunities and challenges for new energy projects



How do you see yourself creating value for regional communities?

Stage 3: Regional communities' expectations of benefits



Preliminary survey results showing how the focus group participants in Gladstone and Mackay feel about living in one of QREZ, where they get the information about the energy development in their region, and their attitude toward the energy development in their region



Our research team participated in The 2022 Surat Basin Energy Summit, facilitated by Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise (TSBE), which aimed to help the region maximise the opportunities from the energy sector now and into the future (From left to right: Sergio Zaccaria, Kathy Witt, Tracy Cheung, Andrew Garnett).