“Lessons from the Development of the Queensland Onshore Gas Industry”

What coal seam gas teaches us about engagement, coexistence, and regional governance

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Why This Matters

Context

- Queensland is entering a new wave of energy development (renewables, transmission, critical minerals).
- Many renewable-prioritised regions have already experienced CSG — with mixed outcomes.

Purpose

- Identify what worked, what failed, and what must not be repeated.
- Translate hard-won CSG lessons into actionable guidance for future energy projects.

“Energy projects succeed or fail not just on engineering, but on governance, trust, and coordination.”

- Project Duration: October 2024-April 2025

Methods

Data Sources

- 25 in-depth stakeholder interviews
- Open online discussion board
- Policy, regulatory and industry documents analysis

Who was involved

- Landholders, Traditional Owners, and Local Councils
- Industry, state agencies, community organisations

Approach

- Thematic analysis across 8 coexistence domains: community engagement, land-use balance, environmental management, economic diversification, benefit sharing, workforce development, partnerships, and infrastructure.

Key Findings

Engagement approach sets the trajectory

Early engagement was rushed and proponent-led	Government absence weakened legitimacy	First contact shaped long-term trust

Coexistence needs to be supported with proper regional planning

Property-by-property deals ignored cumulative impacts	Regional land values eroded gradually	Strategic planning arrived late and unevenly

Independent institutions enabled trust

Communities trusted neutral bodies over proponents	Shared data reduced power asymmetries	Opaque information fuelled conflict

Community benefits worked when coordinated with local needs

Early benefits were ad hoc and uneven	Council-led, pooled models delivered legacies	Transparency improved accountability

Environmental confidence relied on baselines and closure planning

Weak baseline data undermined accountability	Regional groundwater oversight worked well	End-of-life risks were under-planned

Key Takeaways for Future Energy Projects

- Engage early through trusted local institutions
- Respect diversity, time, and social capacity
- Plan from the beginning at landscape and regional scale
- Plan early for end-of-life and environmental risk
- Align economic participation with local capability and workforce systems
- Ground benefits and decisions in trusted evidence and community priorities

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Acknowledgments:

This project was commissioned by Coexistence Queensland

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