

Subterranean Gas Recovery Policy

Policy Number:	EHANP2015-02	Responsible Association:	EHA (WA) Inc.
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1. Purpose

Environmental Health Australia (EHA) recognises subterranean gas recovery (SGR) has the potential to have significant environmental impacts and is the subject of considerable community concern.

The purpose of the SGR policy is to assist Environmental Health Professionals (EHPs) engaged in any activity that proposes recovery of subterranean gas recovery from geological structures, most commonly by 'hydraulic fracturing or fracking practices'.

Fracking is recognized as introduction of foreign materials into geological strata under pressure to produce fractures and release the gas. Fracking is identified as having the potential to produce environmental harm and is the subject of considerable community debate.

EHA recognises the challenges of SGR by fracking practices and aims to assist EHPs to manage environmental impacts and community concerns.

2. Aims

The EHA SGR policy provides support to EHPs engaged in any activity within SGR.

Environmental Health Australia advocates a principle type approach to assist/guide EHPs when required to be engaged in the activity.

3. Scope

Environmental Health Australia advocates for the SGR policy to apply to:

- Gas recovery from any form of geological structure, e.g. coal or shale seams
- Gas recovery by any means that employs introduction of materials under pressure, e.g. seam fracking
- Gas recovery from any terrestrial environment
- The SGR applies to terrestrial environments. It is not intended that marine environments are within the scope of the SGR policy.

4. Decision approaches

Environmental Health Australia advocates adoption of the following decision approaches to EHPs:

- **Precaution.**
Precaution. Where there is absence of proof that the proposal will not produce harm, the proposal should be considered potentially harmful.
- **Uncertainty**
Uncertainty. Where it is uncertain that the proposal will produce a net benefit, the proposal should be considered likely to not produce a net benefit.
- **Diagnosis**
Diagnosis suggests determination by elimination of the undesirable. Keep an open mind before deciding.
- **Transparency**
Determination needs to be supported by a clear and documented rationale.
- **Science**
Information supporting decision determination is based on scientifically independent and sound processes.
- **Issue based**
Assessment is progressed with an issue base. Political and emotional factors are not the responsibility of the EHP.
- **Equity**
Ensure equity, consider view of all stakeholders.

5. Responsibilities

Environmental Health Australia advocates the following responsibilities apply:

- **The proponent**
The proponent is responsible for providing evidence to satisfy the policy decision approaches.
- **Environmental Health Professionals**
The SGR policy is advocated to EHPs as a guide to assist decision determination.
- **Environmental Health Australia**
EHA to maintain surveillance of SGR policy and amend the policy as required.

6. Review

Environmental Health Australia will review the SGR policy biennially or as required.

7. Definitions and Abbreviations

EHA: Environmental Health Australia.

EHP. Environmental Health Professional. Includes any professional required to be engaged in SGR advocacy or program management including stakeholder engagement.

SGR. Subterranean Gas Recovery. Includes any form of fracking or gas recovery from any geological strata below the earth's surface.