

26 March 2024

SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE CTSCO CARBON CAPTURE AND STORAGE PROJECT

The Senate Inquiry into the CTSCo carbon capture and storage (CCS) project provides an important opportunity for the Committee to consider a key project that will provide a critical pathway for emission reductions from Australian industries, development of new clean industries and a cleaner energy future.

Low Emission Technology Australia (LETA) CEO, Mark McCallum said: "As a major investor in the project, LETA recognises the significance of the CTSCo project as an important contributor to the Australian and Queensland Government's emission reduction goals.

The CTSCo Project is focused on capturing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from a coal-fired power station in Queensland, purifying the CO₂ and safely and permanently storing the captured CO₂ deep underground in the Surat Basin in Queensland.

The project will store 330,000 tonnes of almost pure food-grade CO₂ – similar to that found in soft drinks, beer or champagne – at depths of more than 2,300 metres, and due to the immense pressure underground will be compressed to within a few hundred metres of the storage well.

The rock into which the food grade CO₂ will be injected contains non-drinkable water with fluoride levels six times above the safe drinking level and is not used by any agricultural producer within a 50-kilometre radius.

The CTSCo project has been subject to extensive and rigorous environmental assessment, through a detailed and public Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

The project has been reviewed by expert third-party institutions, including the Australian Government Independent Expert Scientific Committee (IESC), the Queensland Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment (OGIA) and CSIRO who concluded that any impacts would be local and minor.

"The project represents a critical milestone on the path to the decarbonisation of Australian heavy industry," said Mr McCallum. "As part of a portfolio of action to reduce emissions, CCS can further empower Australia to meet its emission reduction targets while also supporting the continuation of critical industries like cement, steel and chemicals.

"Carbon capture and storage projects like CTSCo are critical to the long-term future of these hard-to-abate sectors – sectors that we rely on every day and that support thousands upon thousands of jobs throughout regional Queensland in places like Gladstone, Toowoomba, Mackay and Townsville. Without a viable carbon storage solution, the options for emission reduction are greatly reduced and the costs of reaching net zero substantially increased.

Without access to carbon storage, these industries in Queensland are also at risk to competition from overseas industries who have an emission reduction solution. We won't stop using critical products like cement, steel and even fertilisers in a net zero economy.

But if our Queensland industries can't access safe, affordable and permanent emission reduction technologies like CCS, they risk needing to close down, and thousands of Australian jobs will be lost to make way for overseas producers who can.

“LETA is committed to supporting the growth of CCS through projects like CTSCo. Around the world, 41 CCS projects are in operation, capturing an impressive 49 million tonnes per year of CO₂, with another 351 projects currently in construction and development.

“The Inquiry represents an important opportunity to put the facts on the table about the project so that concerned communities, businesses and families accessing the Great Artesian Basin can be given confidence by scientific experts like the CSIRO that this project will not adversely affect their ability to access the water that they need.

“This Inquiry will equally highlight the important role of low emission technologies like CCS to supporting Australian industries and jobs as we move to a net zero future.”

ENDS