



5 minutes with Julie Beeby

Julie Beeby became Chief Executive Officer of WestSide Corporation in August 2010, coming from Peabody Energy where she was General Manager – Strategic Planning and Projects. Dr Beeby has a wealth of experience in the industry, notably being appointed as a Queensland Resource Industry Ambassador in 2009. *Gas Today* spoke to Dr Beeby about developments ahead for the coal seam gas industry and advice for current and future participants.

After completing a PhD in Colloid and Surface Chemistry, Dr Beeby was introduced to coal seam gas (CSG) when working as a feasibility study project manager at Moura Mine. CSG was the feed gas to an ammonium nitrate plant at Moura, an operation she went on to manage.

After spending a number of years in the coal industry, Dr Beeby became CEO of WestSide Corporation in mid-2010. Her appointment came a month after WestSide took over operation, in a joint venture with Mitsui E&P Australia, of the CSG operation at Moura Mine, which she had managed a decade earlier. That operation is now known as the Meridian SeamGas fields.



WestSide CEO Julie Beeby.

WestSide

Advice for the gas industry in a carbon constrained economy?

Initially, a carbon constrained economy should be good for the gas industry as coal is replaced with gas for generation. However, the gas industry should not rest on its laurels as the burning of gas also produces carbon dioxide. Gas could one day be replaced with other renewable or zero-emissions generation technologies, so it is important for the industry to progress technologies to reduce emissions from gas-fired generation.

Changes afoot for the CSG industry?

The next five years will be game-changing for the CSG industry. Drilling of sufficient wells to supply export LNG trains will enable the industry to develop the economies of scale enjoyed in the USA and Canada today. Equipment we currently import can just be bought off the shelf in Canada. The same availability of equipment and services in Australia will make a steep change to costs for CSG production and ensure its future.

We will also see a change in emphasis on the skills of gas professionals. CSG experience is still rare in petroleum

engineers, but this is changing as universities start to prepare coursework specifically to address the idiosyncrasies of the CSG industry.

“The next five years will be game-changing for the CSG industry.”

On interaction between industry and government...

The CSG industry is just emerging and any new taxes could threaten development – especially in the case of small CSG companies – so changes should be made in consultation with both the large and small players.

There is also considerable scope for governments to enhance the ability for CSG exploration companies to make new discoveries and certify gas reserves. Incentives to assist in exploration, technology development, community engagement and environmental

management would all reap benefits for the states that implement them.

On using new technologies in an emerging industry...

Most new technologies are in the areas of drilling and stimulation of CSG wells. In-hole sensing tools play a great part in CSG, as production wells are drilled with little or no exact information on the coal seam location and condition.

Implementation of the latest telemetry technology is also key to monitoring an increasing number of wells. CSG wells can produce for many years so the investment in good communications is worth it to monitor hundreds of wells from a central location.

Advice to new entrants to the CSG industry?

CSG is not easy and the potential for new entrants will reduce as consolidation occurs. The key to success in CSG is experience in CSG. It needs a different mindset to traditional oil and gas operations – as failures in the past have shown. In CSG the fields can be very different so it is important not to assume that what works in one CSG field will work in another. ■