

1 Article

2 Experimental and modelled reactions of CO₂ and SO₂ 3 with core from a low salinity aquifer overlying a 4 target CO₂ storage complex

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12 CO₂ induced reactions in low salinity aquifers overlying CO₂ storage sites are of interest to
13 understand potential reactions or impacts in the possible case of a leak. Previous investigations of
14 overlying aquifers in the context of CO₂ storage have focused on pure CO₂ streams, however
15 industrial captured CO₂ streams may contain ancillary gases including SO₂, O₂, NO_x, H₂S, N₂ etc.,
16 some of which may be more reactive than CO₂ when dissolved in formation water. Eight drill cores
17 from two wells in a low salinity sandstone aquifer that overlies a target CO₂ storage complex are
18 characterised for porosity (helium, mercury injection, or micro CT), permeability, and mineral
19 content. The eight Hutton Sandstone cores are variable with porosities of 5.2 – 19.6%, including
20 carbonaceous mudstones, calcite cemented sandstones, and quartz rich sandstones, common
21 lithologies that may be found generally in overlying aquifers of CO₂ storage sites. A chlorite rich
22 sandstone was experimentally reacted with CO₂ and low concentrations of SO₂ to investigate the
23 potential reactions and possible mineral trapping in the unlikely event of a leak. Micro CT
24 characterisation before and after reaction indicated no significant change to porosity, although some
25 fines movement was observed that could affect permeability. Dissolved concentrations of Fe, Ca,
26 Mn, Cr, Mg, Rb, Li, Zn etc. increased during reaction including from dissolution of chlorite and trace
27 amounts of ankerite. After ~ 40 days dissolved concentrations including Fe, Zn, Al, Ba, As and Cr
28 decreased. Chlorite was corroded, and Fe-rich precipitates mainly Fe-Cr oxides were observed to be
29 precipitated on rock surfaces after experimental reaction. Concentrations of Rb and Li increased
30 steadily and deserve further investigation as potential monitoring indicators for a leak. The reaction
31 of chlorite rich sandstone with CO₂ and SO₂ was geochemically modelled over 10 years, with mainly
32 chlorite alteration to siderite mineral trapping 1.55 kg/m³ of CO₂ and removing dissolved Fe from
33 solution. Kaolinite and chalcedony precipitation was also predicted, with minor pyrite precipitation
34 trapping SO₂, however no changes to porosity were predicted.

35 **Keywords:** CO₂ storage; CO₂ impurities; Hutton Sandstone; CO₂-water-rock experiments;
36 geochemical modelling
37

38 1. Introduction

39 Owing to existing and potential CO₂ storage sites in deep saline aquifers internationally, the
40 majority of experimental CO₂-water-rock reactions have been performed in brines and with pure

41 CO₂. There have however been international studies of CO₂-water-rock interactions of core from
42 low salinity or fresh water aquifers overlying CO₂ storage sites to understand any potential changes
43 in the unlikely event of a leak. Examples of field studies relevant to low salinity aquifer conditions
44 are limited in number. A controlled shallow injection of CO₂ into the Zert field site, USA, was
45 performed and resulted in a rapid pH decrease, and increases of Fe, Mn, Mg and Ca concentrations
46 from mineral dissolution, desorption and ion exchange [1]. Associated experiments were used to
47 determine that calcite and dolomite dissolution, with clay or Fe-oxyhydroxide ion exchange and
48 desorption, and Mn oxyhydroxide dissolution and reduction were metal sources; where Mn was
49 correlated with Ca, and Co with Ba and U. Dissolved As and Pb was reported to remain below
50 drinking water guideline concentrations. Experimental studies specifically looking at low salinity
51 conditions for CO₂ leakage studies have included reactions of limestone or dolomite with CO₂ [2, 3].
52 The release of Sr, Co, Mn, Tl, Zn, and Ni were correlated with Ca and mainly attributed to the
53 dissolution of the dolomite rather than pyrite or oxides, with high concentrations of As, Ni and Mn
54 from some rocks. Limestone samples released Ca, Mg, Sr, Ba, Tl, and U, with only dissolved Ni and
55 As at concentrations of concern. The main source of metals was determined to be from calcite
56 dissolution, even though higher concentrations were sometimes present in pyrite or clays. The
57 metals mainly present in carbonates were reported to be Ba, Sr, As, S and Ni, as determined from
58 extraction experiments. The authors predicted that pyrite would be an important source of metals
59 at longer reaction time scales up to 30 years, after carbonates reached saturation. Crushed cores
60 from the Edwards limestone aquifer, USA, containing calcite, quartz and montmorillonite were
61 reacted with pure CO₂ [4]. Mobilisation of Ca, Mg, Mn, Ba, Sr, Si, Mo, and transient increases of As,
62 Pb, Zn, etc. were attributed to calcite dissolution and exchange reactions. The pH was buffered by
63 carbonate dissolution and therefore the reported concentrations of metals were low. Batch
64 experiments and geochemical modelling were performed for the low salinity Albion Aquifer core
65 from the Paris Basin, France, to look for potential geochemical leakage monitoring tools [5, 6]. Those
66 authors reported increases of several dissolved elements during reaction with pure CO₂, however Fe
67 and Ba overall decreased. They also suggested the potential of carbon and strontium isotopes as
68 monitoring tools. Core material from several low salinity aquifers in the USA were batch reacted
69 with CO₂, with dissolved elements including Ba, U, Co, Li, and transition metals such as Mn, Zn, and
70 Fe increasing in concentration [7]. The elements Mo and As however generally decreased during
71 some core reactions. Released concentrations were variable with the aquifer core. The authors also
72 reported that interaquifer mineral heterogeneity influences the chemical impacts of a leak. Five
73 studies performed a series of experiments on core from the Precipice Sandstone, Evergreen
74 Formation, and one sample from the Hutton Sandstone, reacting them with water or 1500 ppm NaCl
75 and pure CO₂ or CO₂ containing 0.16 % SO₂ +/- 2 % O₂ [8, 9, 22, 25, 26]. They observed reaction of
76 both carbonate and silicate minerals and release of metals such as Fe and Mg from siderite and
77 chlorite, and Ca, Mn, Sr from calcite and ankerite, with released concentrations higher when SO₂ was
78 present acidifying solution. With SO₂ and O₂ additionally present, gypsum precipitation generally
79 occurred in calcite cemented core, or Fe-oxide precipitation in Fe-rich and Ca-poor core. In all their
80 experiments with calcite cemented cores the measured porosity increased after experimental reaction
81 through calcite dissolution.

82 Overall the above published studies on low salinity aquifer response to CO₂ storage or potential
83 leakage have generally shown that carbonate minerals calcite, dolomite, ankerite, siderite can
84 dissolve releasing various elements to solution, dependent on the host mineralogy. However, in
85 carbonate cemented or limestone cores for example fast pH buffering can result in subsequent re-
86 precipitation or adsorption of elements back to the rock. In addition clays have been observed to
87 react and provide dissolved cations, and therefore there is the potential for subsequent precipitation
88 or mineral trapping to impact porosity or minimize the impacts of a potential leak, although this has
89 not generally been studied.

90 In Queensland, Australia, the Surat Basin has been reported as one of the most prospective sites
91 for CO₂ storage [10, 11]. The feasibility or potential for storage in the Precipice Sandstone is being
92 appraised, where the Evergreen Formation is an overlying caprock [12]. The Hutton Sandstone is

93 an overlying low salinity aquifer above the Evergreen Formation caprock. Previously the Hutton
94 Sandstone was also suggested as a potential CO₂ storage reservoir [13]. The Hutton Sandstone is
95 also of interest as it is part of the Great Artesian Basin and water is extracted from it in other areas
96 for agriculture and stock use. In addition the Hutton Sandstone underlies the Walloon coal
97 measures, an important coal seam gas production interval [14, 15]. Differences in the groundwater
98 hydrochemistry have been reported, as being fresh in the north and western outcrops with higher
99 salinity to the south and east, especially east of the Burunga Leichhardt fault zone [16, 11].
100 Hydrochemical analyses of groundwater have indicated that a dual permeability is likely in the
101 Hutton Sandstone of the northern Surat Basin near the Mimosa syncline, with groundwater flow
102 limited to ~ 50 m of its total thickness [17, 18]. There is also reported evidence for possible
103 groundwater movement from the Precipice Sandstone to the Hutton Sandstone up the Hutton
104 Wallumbilla fault, and Burunga Leichhardt fault zone [17, 18]. Sequence stratigraphy and also non-
105 quantitative well core scale mineral identification have been performed by Hylogger on several wells
106 including West Wandoan 1, GSQ Chinchilla 4, and Woleebee Creek GW4 [19].

107 Here we quantitatively characterize in detail sandstone, mudstone and calcite cemented cores
108 from two wells in a low salinity aquifer, the Hutton Sandstone, overlying a potential storage reservoir
109 and caprock. One core is characterized before and after experimental reaction with supercritical
110 CO₂, SO₂ and low salinity water by automated mineral quantification (QEMSCAN), scanning electron
111 microscopy (SEM-EDS) and micro Computed Tomography (CT) to determine potential changes to
112 minerals and porosity. Dissolved metals released in the reaction waters were determined, and
113 longer term geochemical modelling performed to predict potential for mineral trapping of CO₂.
114

115 2. Materials and Methods

116 Drill core was sampled from the Hutton Sandstone of the GSQ Chinchilla 4 well (latitude
117 -26.72722, and longitude of 150.2014 decimal degrees, approximately 10 km SSE of Miles), and the
118 West Wandoan 1 (WW1) well (latitude -26.181622, longitude 149.812422, approximately 19 km south
119 west of the town of Wandoan), in Queensland, Australia. The stratigraphic column and a map
120 showing the well locations in given in supplementary material Figure S1. The West Wandoan 1 well
121 was drilled for a CO₂ storage feasibility study of a demo scale injection into the Precipice Sandstone.
122 Core air permeability, mercury intrusion porosimetry (MICP), and Helium porosity of the Chinchilla
123 4 well cores described here were performed at Weatherford. MICP, He pchnometry, permeability,
124 and X-ray diffraction of West Wandoan 1 core was performed at the University of Queensland (UQ)
125 by methods reported previously [20, 21, 22]. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and Energy
126 Dispersive Spectroscopy (EDS) in back scatter detection mode (BSE) with both a low-vacuum
127 JEOL6460LA environmental SEM, and Hitachi TM3030 with a Bruker EDS was performed on
128 polished thin sections and blocks. Core total acid digestions or lithium metaborate fusions and loss
129 on ignition were performed in the UQ Environmental Geochemistry Laboratory.

130 Micro CT was performed on sub-plugs to visualise and calculate pore space. QEMSCAN is an
131 automated mineral quantification based on SEM-EDS that also provides visualisation of mineral
132 associations and grain sizes. These were performed on polished sub-plug sections by FEI Australia
133 (and more recently at the Australian National University) as described in detail previously [23, 24,
134 25]. Briefly, for the WW1 724.1 m sample that was reacted, a 3 mm diameter sub-plug was digitally
135 characterised in 3D by X-ray micro computed tomography (μ CT) with a voxel size of 2.2 μ m. The
136 3D μ CT images were registered into perfect geometric alignment with higher-resolution 2D SEM
137 images and automated quantified SEM-EDS (QEMSCAN®) mineral maps were produced of a
138 polished sub-plug slice from a trimmed end. The sub-plug was reacted, before being imaged again

139 after reaction, and the two sets of before and after reaction images registered to one another to
140 characterise the changes.

141 Long term batch experiments were performed in Parr reactors at 120 bar and 60 °C for approximately
142 10 weeks with the reactors described in detail previously [26]. A low salinity water (100 ml of 1500
143 ppm NaCl) was added with the WW1 724.1 m rock core (15 mm cube, sub-plug and offcut) at a
144 water:rock ratio of 7 by mass. Data on the in situ formation water chemistry was not available,
145 however measurements in other regions of the aquifer range from ~ 282 – 1863 mg/kg NaCl with
146 variable bicarbonate alkalinity ~ 136 – 733 mg/kg [16]. The simplified synthetic formation water
147 chemistry was chosen to both be in the range of possible formation water salinities, and to be
148 consistent with previous studies for comparison. Reactors were purged with N₂ and pressurised to
149 120 bar at 60 °C for 5 days to provide a baseline water-rock soak chemistry. This time was similar
150 to previous work given time constraints, however it is possible that full equilibration of water and
151 rock may not have occurred. After fluid sampling, N₂ was depressurised and reactors filled with
152 160 ppm SO₂ in a balance of CO₂. After another 18 days sodium bicarbonate was added (to 105 ppm)
153 to approximate reservoir buffering. Note that this likely introduced some O₂ from air contact,
154 however O₂ or air may be present anyway in injected CO₂ streams especially from oxyfuel firing.
155 Fluid was sampled during the experiments, with pH and electrical conductivity immediately
156 measured with a TPS WP81 meter and probes. Aliquots were diluted 20 times and acidified to 2%
157 ultra-pure nitric acid for analysis of ions in the UQ Environmental Geochemistry Laboratory by ICP-
158 OES (Perkin Elmer Optima 3300 DV ICP-OES) with an error of ~ 5 % for major elements. Trace
159 element concentrations were measured by ICP MS (Agilent 7900 ICP-MS with collision cell) with
160 errors of less than 10 %. Total inorganic and organic carbon, alkalinity, and sulphate were determined
161 on selected unacidified samples (total organic carbon analyser, and ion chromatography performed
162 at ALS environmental), and also NO_x and phosphate at the end of the reaction (UQ, Lachat
163 QuikChem8500 Flow Injection Analyser). A blank experiment without core was also performed to
164 determine if cations were leached from the reactor.

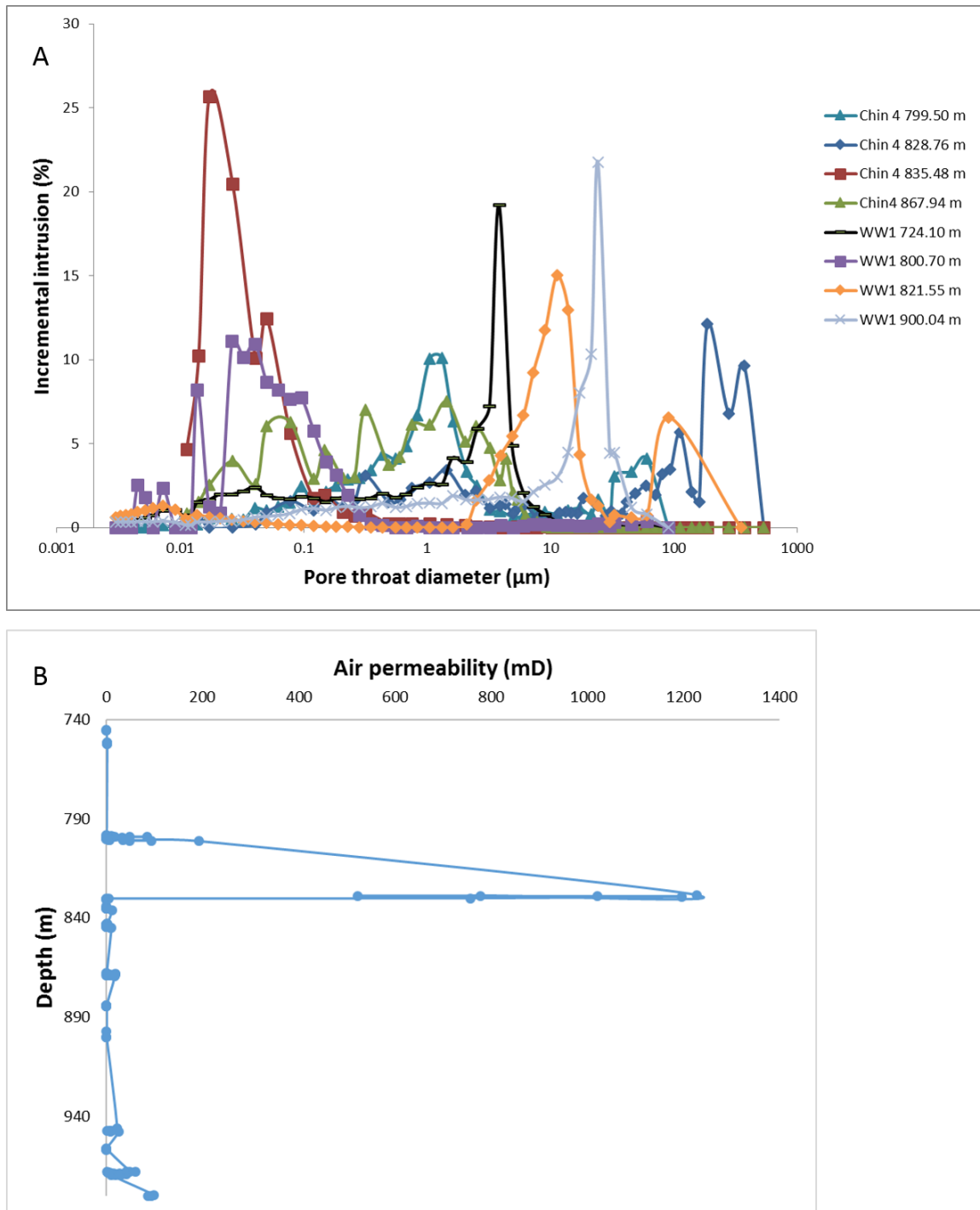
165 Kinetic geochemical models were constructed for the reaction of the WW1 724.1 m Hutton Sandstone
166 for up to 10 years from the characterization data, with the input minerals given in Supplementary
167 material. The upscaled reactive surface areas of minerals used are also given in supplementary
168 material, with the water-rock ratio based on the porosity and an equilibrated water chemistry based
169 on formation water measurements [16]. The general methods and mineral kinetic and
170 thermodynamic parameters have been published in detail previously for other rock reactions [26, 27,
171 28, 29]. Briefly, geochemical models were run in the react module of Geochemist work Bench (GWB)
172 version 9, using the EQ3/6 database, with minerals input via mineral script files to describe acid
173 neutral and basic mechanisms [29, 30, 31]. CO₂ fugacity was calculated at 12 MPa and 60°C from
174 Duan and Sun (2003), with SO₂ gas added by mass, models were also run with the CO₂ fugacity at
175 half of the full fugacity to test the effect on pH [32]. Saturated minerals were allowed to precipitate
176 based on observations of experiments and natural analogue systems, e.g. the carbonates siderite and
177 ankerite/dolomite have been observed to precipitate in natural systems along with kaolinite,
178 smectites, silica, and pyrite [33, 34, 35, 36].

179 **3. Results**

180 *3.1. Core characterisation*

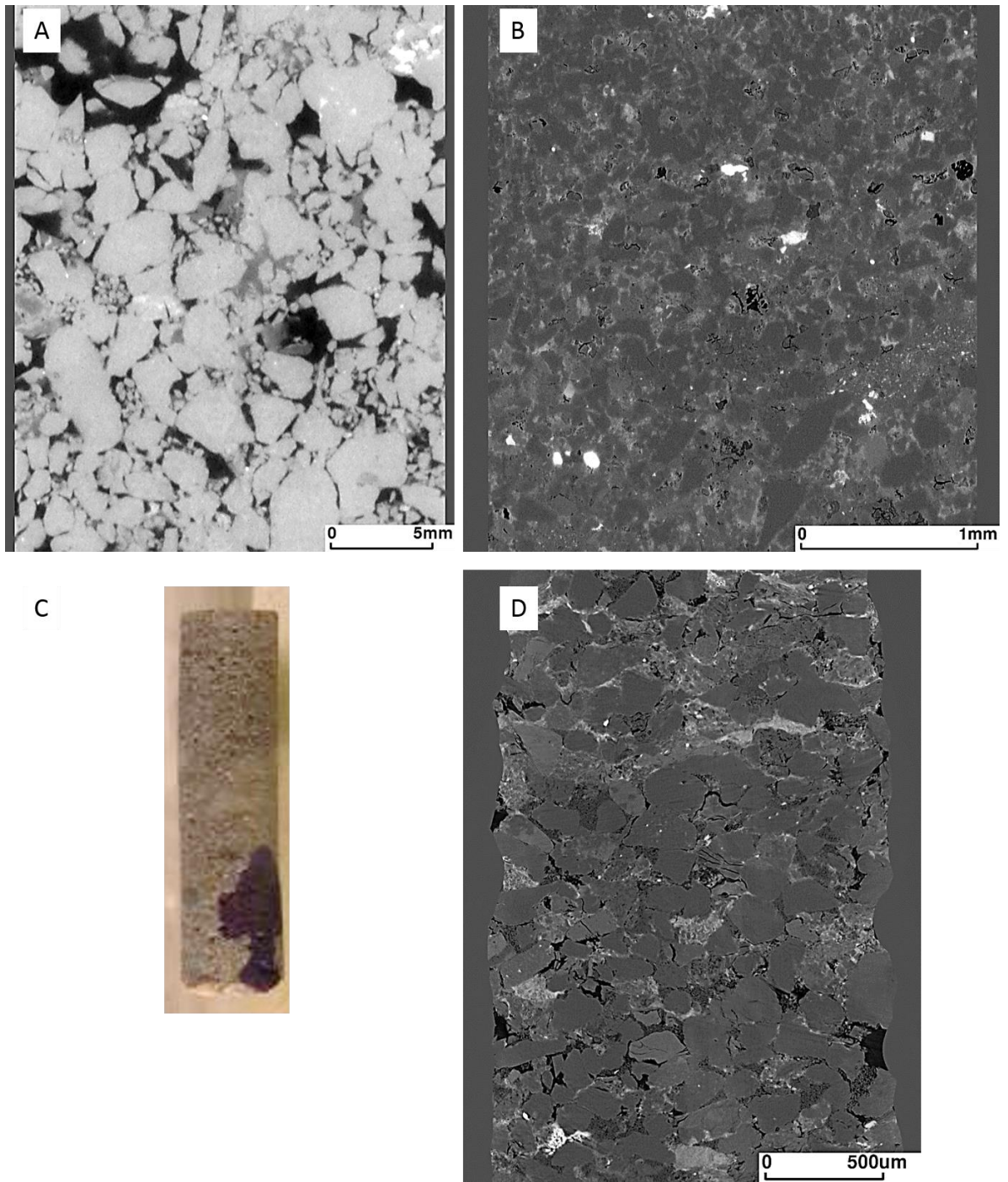
181 The Hutton Sandstone cores from the two wells show a variety of pore throat distributions (Figure
182 1A). The Chin 4 828.76 m core with large pore throats corresponds to the coarsest grained sandstone
183 with visible open pores (Figure 2A), and Chin 4 835.48 m with a relatively high clay content has the
184 majority in the range 0.01 – 0.1 μm (Figure 1A, Figure 2B, Figure 3). The Chin 4 828.76 m sandstone
185 corresponds to a region with high measured air permeabilities up to 1228 mD (Figure 1B). Table 1
186 compares the corresponding MICP porosities with those by μCT or Helium (He) porosities (along
187 with Table 2). The He porosities tend to give the highest estimates likely owing to the small size of
188 the He molecule, with MICP and μCT values generally in reasonable agreement with each other.
189 Selected μCT tomograms and SEM images of the Chinchilla 4 well cores are shown in Figure 2 and
190 Figure 3. The 799.5 m core for example is calcite cemented, the 835.48 m core contains 10 % chlorite
191 which along with kaolinite fills and rims pores. QEMSCAN images and quantified mineral
192 components by QEMSCAN or XRD are given in Supplementary material Figure S2, Table S1 and
193 Table S2. The WW1 cores are equally variable in lithology, including chlorite rich and calcite
194 cemented sandstones, two also contain coal (Figure 4, and supplementary material Figure S3).

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Figure 1. (A) Pore throat distributions of Hutton Sandstone cores from the Chinchilla 4 (Chin 4) and West Wandoan 1 (WW1) wells by depth (m). (B) Core air permeability measured in the Chinchilla 4 well core Hutton Sandstone.



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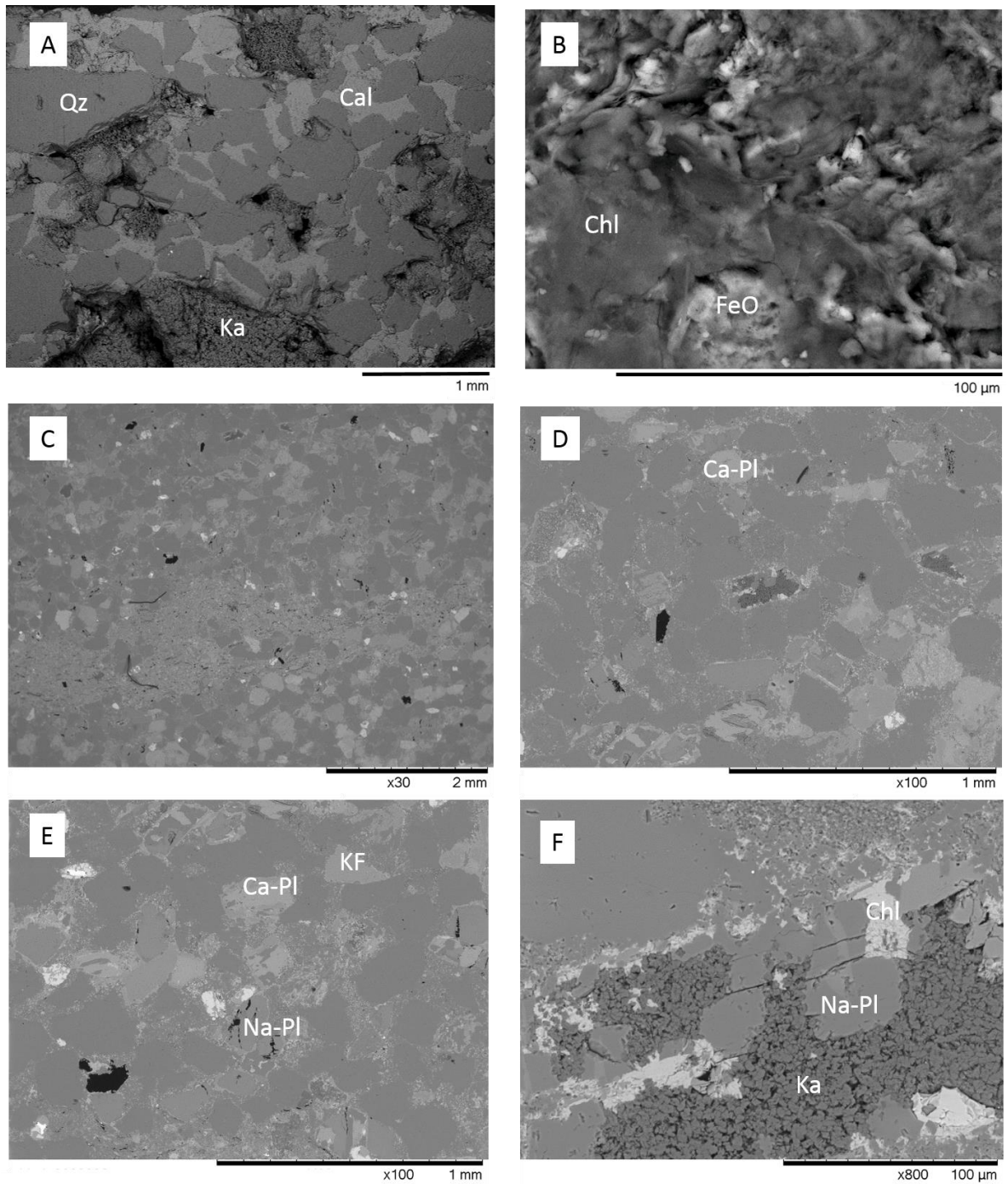
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Figure 2. Micro CT tomogram images of Chinchilla 4 core sub-plugs (A) 828.76 m sandstone containing 9 % clay (28 mm diameter sub-plug); (B) 835.48 m chlorite-rich sandstone (3 mm sub-plug); (C) photo of 835.48 m sub-plug; (D) 867.94 m (2 mm sub-plug).



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205 **Figure 3.** SEM BSE images of Hutton Sandstone from the Chinchilla 4 well (A) calcite cemented

206 sandstone from 799.5 m; (B) chlorite and Fe-oxide in 867.94 m; (C) – (F) 835.48 m, chlorite and kaolinite

207 have rimmed and filled porosity. Qz = quartz, Cl = calcite, Chl = chlorite, FeO = Fe-oxide, Ca-Pl = Ca-

208 plagioclase, Na-Pl = Na-plagioclase/albite, Ka = kaolinite.

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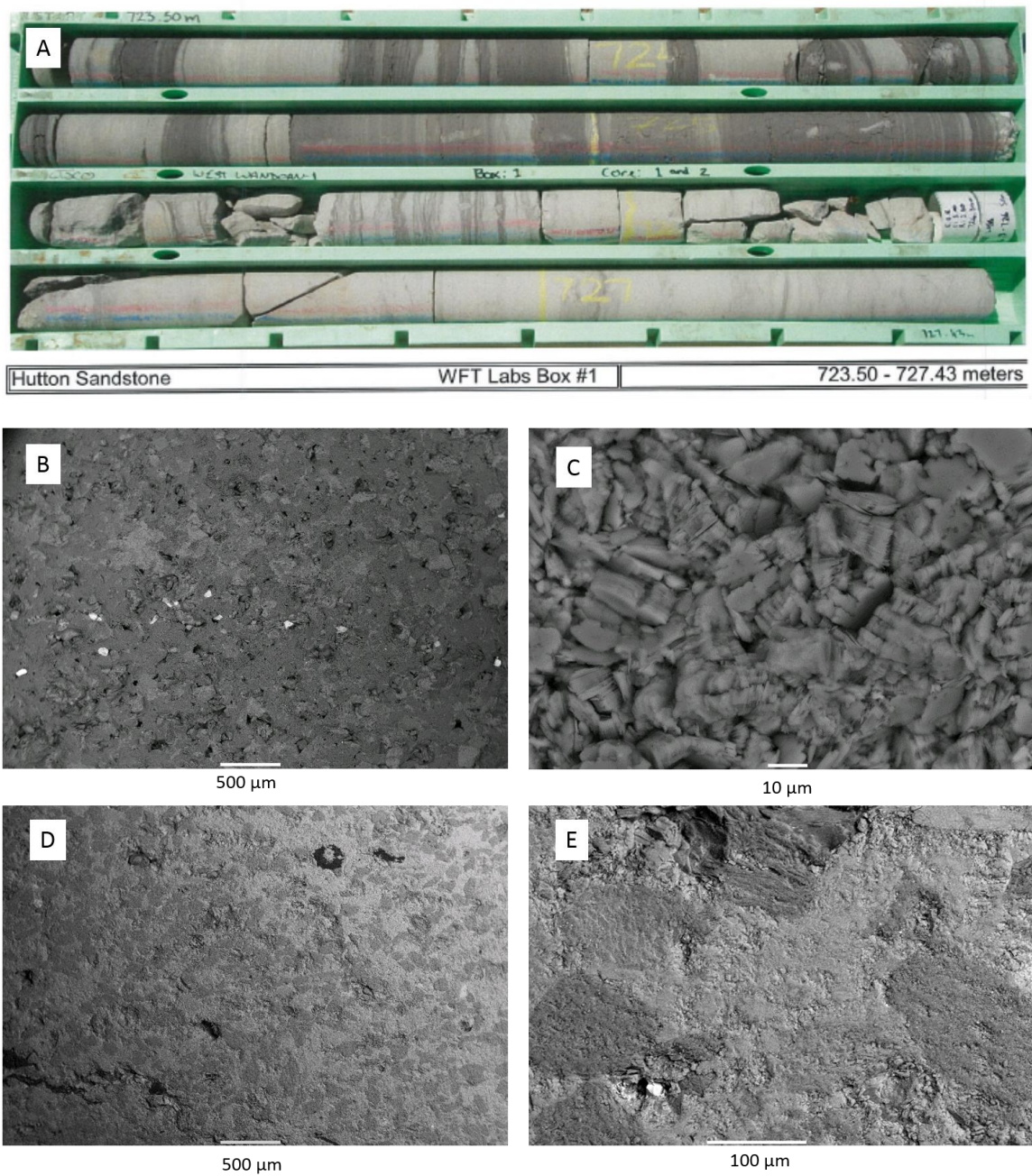
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Table 1. Chinchilla 4 well Hutton Sandstone core porosity measured by different techniques. Connected open porosity is a component of the total μ CT porosity. He = helium. SS = sandstone, MS = mudstone.

depth (m)	Porosity % MICP	Porosity % μ CT	connected open porosity μ CT	Porosity % He	He density (g/cm ³)	
745.1				11.9	2.64	carbonaceous MS
799.5	10.1			11	2.68	Calcite cemented SS
828.76	11.2	13.1	8.6	19.6	2.65	SS carbonaceous
835.48	5.5	7.7	0.5	8.5	2.63	MS/sandy mudstone
867.94	14	15	3.5	16.1	2.67	SS carbonate laminations

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217

218 **Figure 4.** Core photo and SEM BSE images of Hutton Sandstone from the West Wandoan 1 well (A)
 219 photo of core from 723.5 – 727.43 m; (B) SEM BSE image of 724.1 m with a bright zircon layer; (C)
 220 724.1 m blocky kaolinite; (D) 800.7 m calcite cemented sandstone containing minor coal; (E) 800.7 m
 221 detail of calcite cementing quartz grains, with bright sphalerite spot.

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227 **Table 2.** West Wandoan 1 well Hutton Sandstone core porosity measured by different techniques.
 228 He = helium. Brine and N₂ permeability (perm) are also shown where able to be measured on
 229 selected cores, H = horizontal 1 or 2 direction, V = vertical.

230

depth (m)	Porosity %	Porosity %	Post Reaction %	He density (g/cm ³)	Brine perm (mD)	N ₂ perm (mD)	
	MICP	μCT	μCT				
724.1		7.0	7.0	2.71			SS
727.4				2.65			MS
800.7	6.7	5.2, 3.8		2.65		0.2, 4.47 V	Calcite cemented SS
821.55	6.4			2.63	23 V, 18 H1	83 V, 123 H1, 125 H2	Feldspathic SS
900.02				2.63			SS calcite laminations

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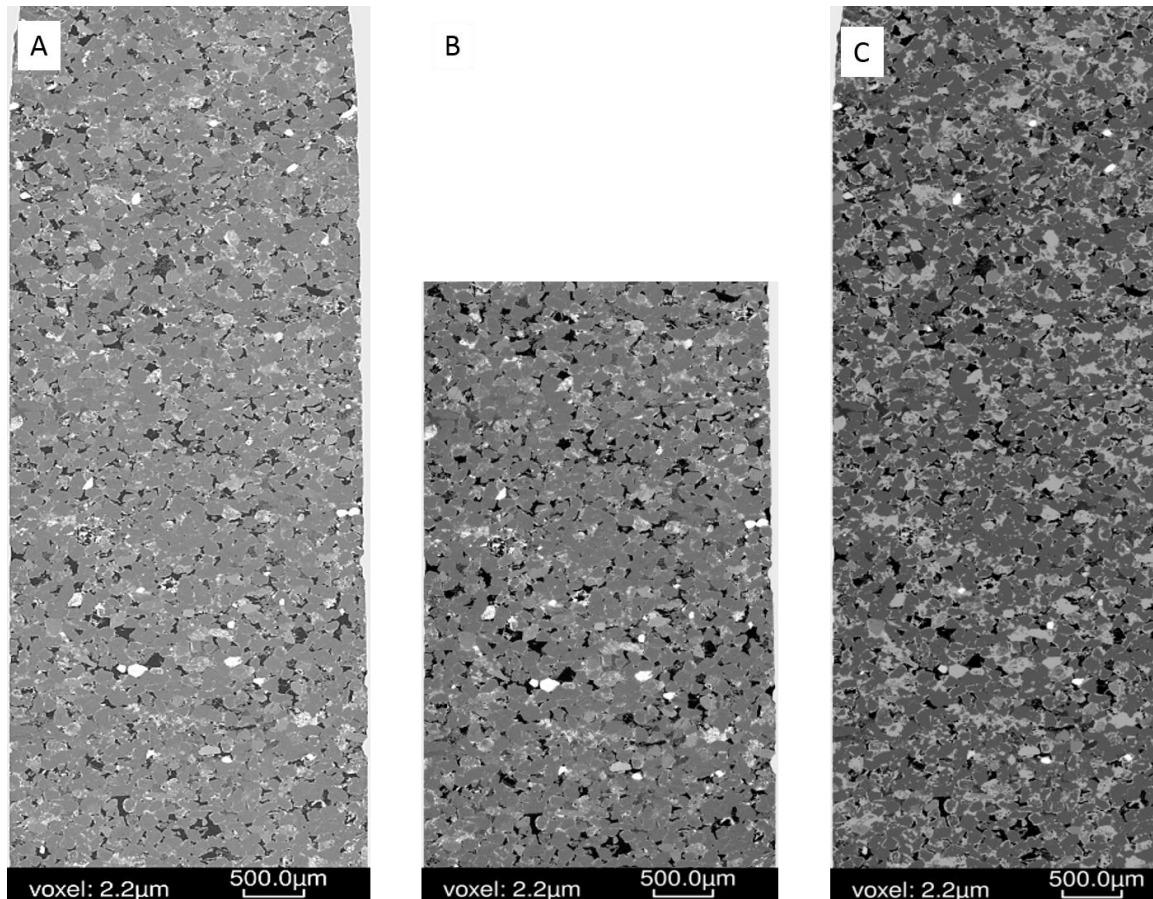
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234 3.2. Hutton Sandstone WW1 724.1 m before and after reaction

235 The chlorite rich sandstone WW1 724.1 m was reacted with CO₂ and SO₂ since chlorite is known to
 236 alter to siderite and ankerite mineral trapping CO₂ in natural systems. The μCT image of the sub-
 237 plug before and after reaction is shown in Figure 5 along with the mineral segmentation image. The
 238 porosity did not change measurably after reaction (Table 2). SEM and QEMSCAN of a sub-plug
 239 slice before reaction show that chlorite tended to rim porosity, the sub-plug also contained ~ 7 %
 240 plagioclase and K-feldspar (Figure 6 , Figure 7). After reaction the mineral content by QEMSCAN
 241 did not appear to change significantly (Figure 7). Some movement of fine material was however
 242 observed in pores (Figure 7, and supplementary material Figure S5, S6). SEM-EDS of a core block
 243 before and after reaction is shown in Figure 8. Along with the minerals identified in QEMSCAN of
 244 the sub-plug, other minerals present included Fe-Mg or Fe-Ti altered micas, phosphates containing
 245 rare earth elements, and coal. Zircon crystals were present in a band through the core, and chlorite
 246 was Fe-rich also containing Mg and Mn, S signatures were present in illite. After reaction only
 247 alteration to chlorite surfaces and loss of Fe and Ca signatures from chlorite and trace calcite/ankerite
 248 on illite were observed, with precipitation of Fe-Cr-Ni-oxides on chlorite. Rock mass decreased only
 249 slightly from 13.68 to 13.62 g after reaction.

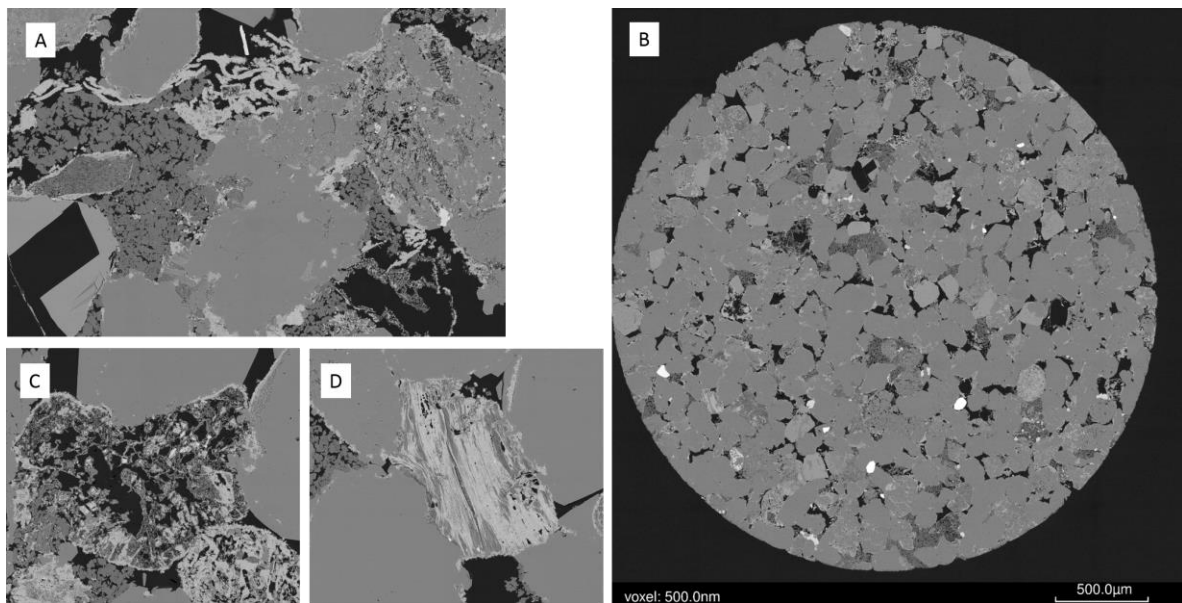
250 Whole rock digest data for total metal content in the core is given in supplementary material Table
 251 S5. Concentrations of U and As in the 724.1 m and other cores from WW1 were generally below 3
 252 mg/kg. Concentrations of Pb were 9 – 11 mg/kg, Cr 6 – 40 mg/kg (with the highest in 724.1 m), and
 253 Ni 3 – 15 mg/kg (with again the highest concentration in 724.1 m). Rb and Li were 38 – 64 mg/kg
 254 (with the lowest in 724.1 m), and 9 – 21 mg/kg (with the highest in 724.1 m) respectively.

255



256 **Figure 5.** West Wandoan 1 Hutton Sandstone sub-plug from 724.1 m (A) Tomogram pre-reaction; (B)
 257 tomogram post-reaction (note the top section was used for QEMSCAN analysis); (C) mineral
 258 segmentation image pre-reaction.

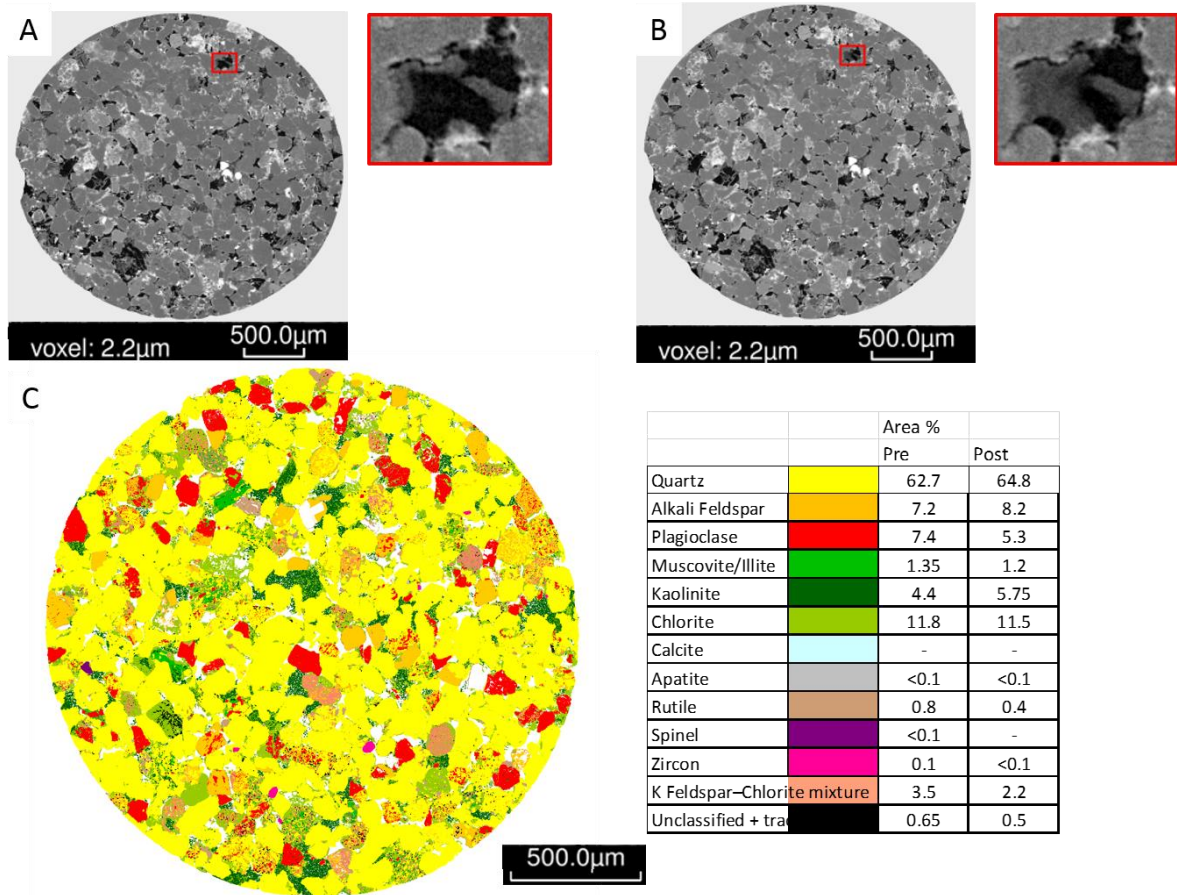
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261 **Figure 6.** West Wandoan 1 Hutton Sandstone sub-plug slice SEM BSE images from 724.1 m pre-
 262 re-reaction (A) Pore filling kaolinite and pore rimming chlorite, image width 500 microns with 30 nm
 263 voxel; (B) SEM BSE image of the full sub-plug slice; (C) detrital altered/weathered grain, image width
 264 250 micron, 30 nm voxel; (D) muscovite/biotite partly altered to chlorite, image width 250 micron, 30
 265 nm voxel.

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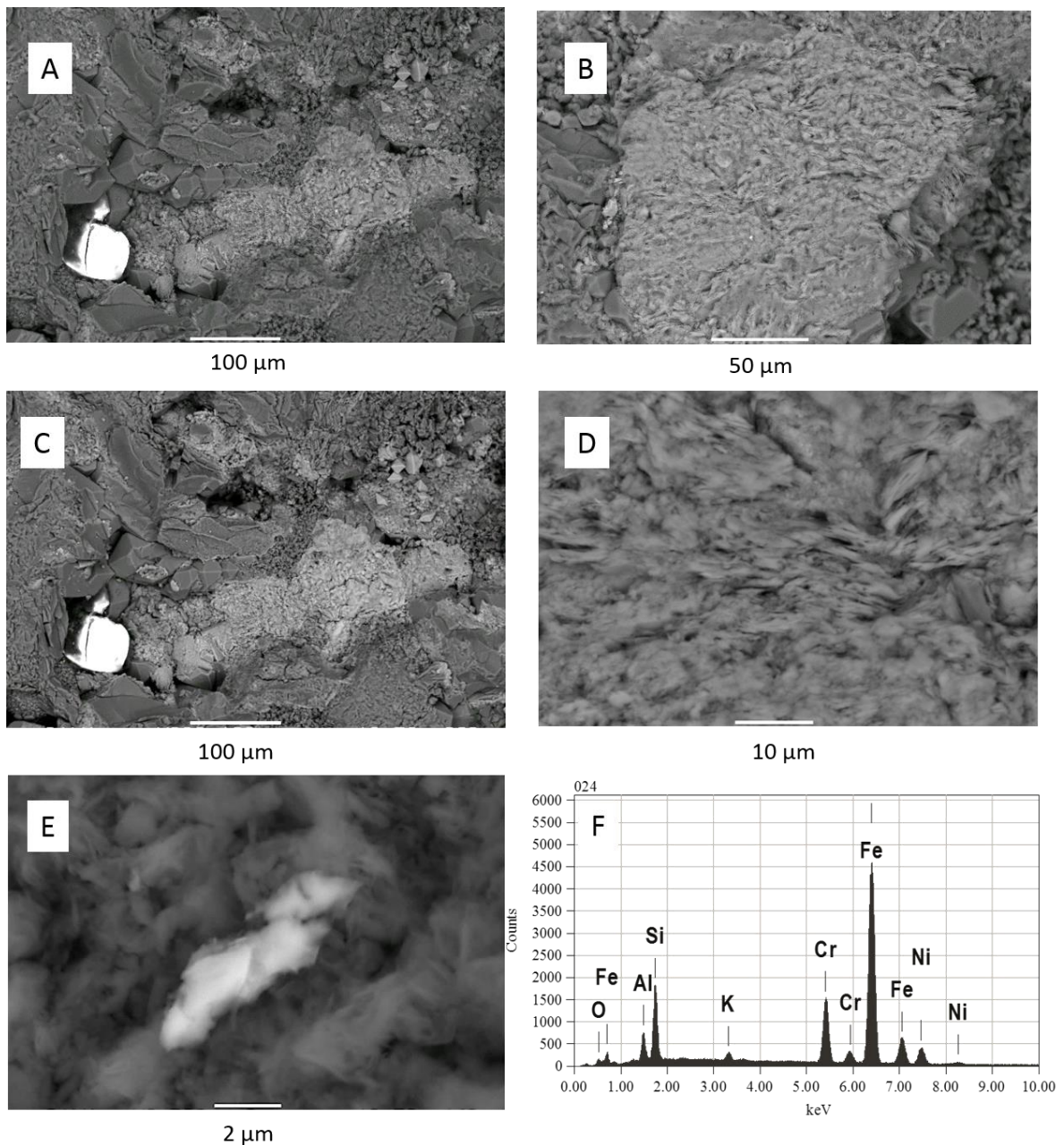
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Figure 7. West Wandoan 1 Hutton Sandstone sub-plug slice images from 724.1 m (A) Pre-reaction tomogram image, and inset pore detail (200 micron image width); (B) Post-reaction tomogram image and inset detail of a pore with fines movement/clay bridging (200 micron image width); (C) Pre-reaction QEMSCAN image, color legend, and pre and post reaction mineral quantification.

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274 **Figure 8.** West Wandoan 1 Hutton Sandstone SEM-EDS images from 724.1 m core block pre- and post-
 275 reaction (A) Pre reaction quartz, Fe-Mg-silicate, zircon kaolinite; (B) Fe-Mg-chlorite pre-reaction; (C)
 276 same area in A post reaction with little obvious change; (D) post-reaction chlorite surface alteration;
 277 (E) post-reaction precipitated Fe-Cr-Ni-oxide on clay; (F) EDS spectrum of Fe-Cr-Ni-oxide, note there
 278 was a technical issue with the O peak being very low.

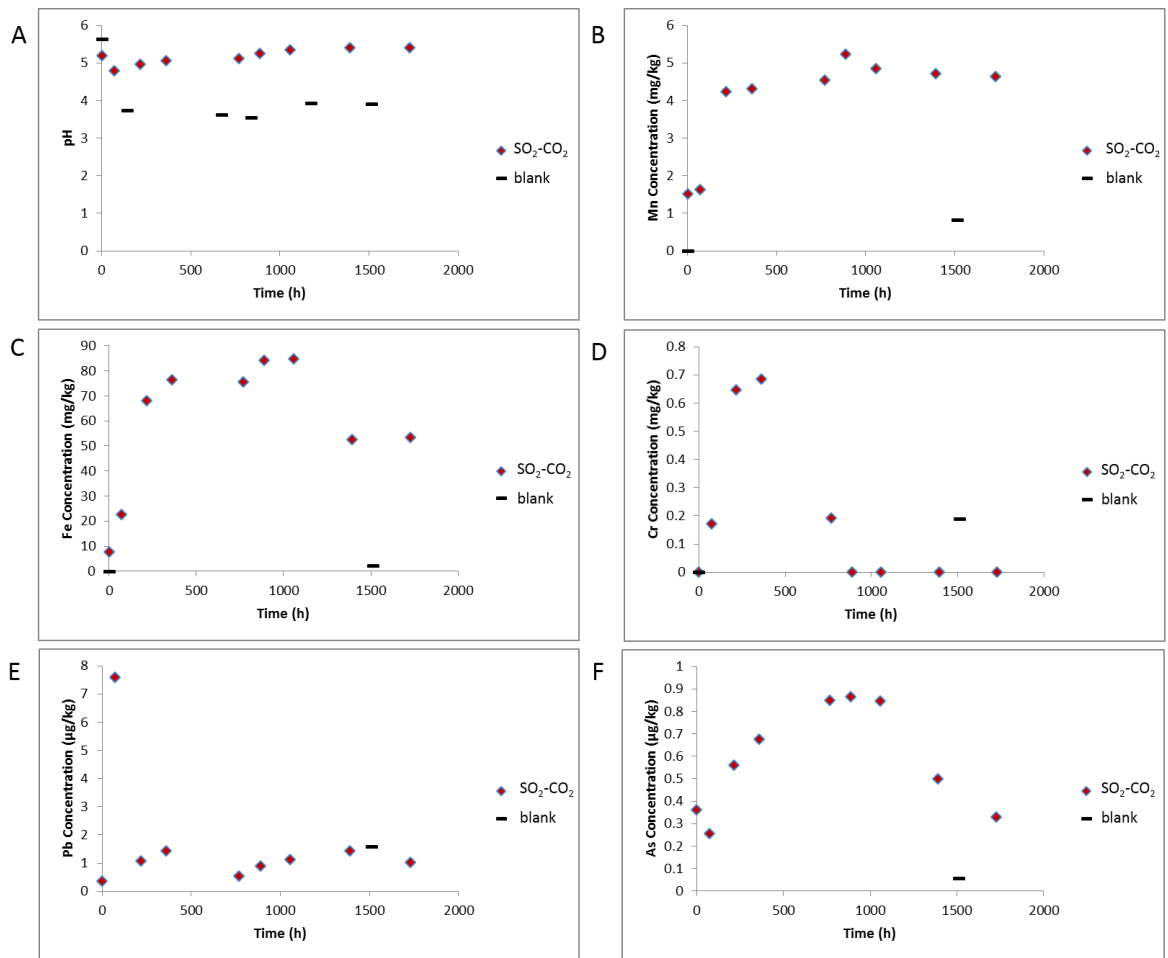
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280 3.3. Water chemistry during reaction of WW1 724.1 m

281 The measured ex situ pH decreased from 7.5 to 5.2 after the rock – water soak period, and then to 4.8
 282 after CO₂-SO₂ addition to reactors. The pH then increased slightly to 5.41 by the end of the reaction
 283 (Figure 9). The measured electrical conductivity decreased slightly from 2.79 to 2.48 ms/cm and
 284 increased to 3.57 ms/cm by the end of the experiment (Supplementary material Figure S7). The pH
 285 varied from 3.54 to 3.93 during the blank experiment without rock, and conductivity from 2.09 to 2.59
 286 ms/cm indicating some pH buffering by minerals in the experiment containing the rock core. After

287 CO₂ - SO₂ injection, several dissolved elements increased including Ca, Mn, Mg, Fe, Cr, As, Pb, Rb,
288 Ti, Tl, Al, Zn, K, Si, S (Figure 9, Figure 10, Supplementary material Figure S7, S8). Fe-Mg-
289 (Mn)chlorite corrosion was observed directly in SEM images, and contributed to dissolved Fe, Mg,
290 Mn, Si, and Al. Ni, Zn, Ti and Li can also substitute into the chlorite structure and may have been
291 partly sourced from chlorite dissolution. Dissolution of trace amounts of calcite or ankerite/siderite
292 would contribute to the Ca, Mg, Mn, and Fe. Tl has been shown elsewhere to substitute into and be
293 sourced from carbonate mineral dissolution in CO₂-water-rock reactions of calcite or dolomite [3].
294 The gradual increases in K and Rb indicate minor corrosion of feldspars or illite continuing over the
295 reaction timescale. Several elements including Fe, As, Zn, Al, Ca, had a decreasing trend after ~ 1000
296 h, with dissolved concentrations of Cr, Pb, Al, Ba, decreasing significantly before ~ 500 h. These
297 were likely either adsorbed or precipitated onto rock surfaces e.g. in the precipitated oxide minerals
298 observed or as surface coatings. Barite precipitation was not directly observed however its low
299 solubility, the decreasing dissolved Ba, and the presence of dissolved S indicates its likely
300 precipitation. Barite precipitation has been directly observed in other CO₂-SO₂-water rock reactions
301 of calcite cemented sandstone where higher concentrations of SO₂ (0.16%) were used [25, 37]. The
302 rock surfaces had a brown colouration after reaction supporting precipitation of Fe-containing
303 minerals as surface coatings that may not have been visible in SEM images (Supplementary material
304 Figure S9). Dissolved Ni was variable and appeared to increase at the end of reaction with the blank
305 experiment indicating some potential contribution from the reactor. Dissolved Cr concentration at
306 the end of the blank experiment was higher than the experiment with the rock present also indicating
307 some contribution from the reactor. The reason for the lower Cr concentration at the end of the
308 experiment with rock present may be owing to the higher pH (therefore less reactor corrosion), or
309 likely the precipitation of Cr containing minerals seen on the rock surface. The dissolved
310 concentrations of Pb, U and As were relatively low at less than 8, 1 and 1 µg/kg respectively during
311 reaction.

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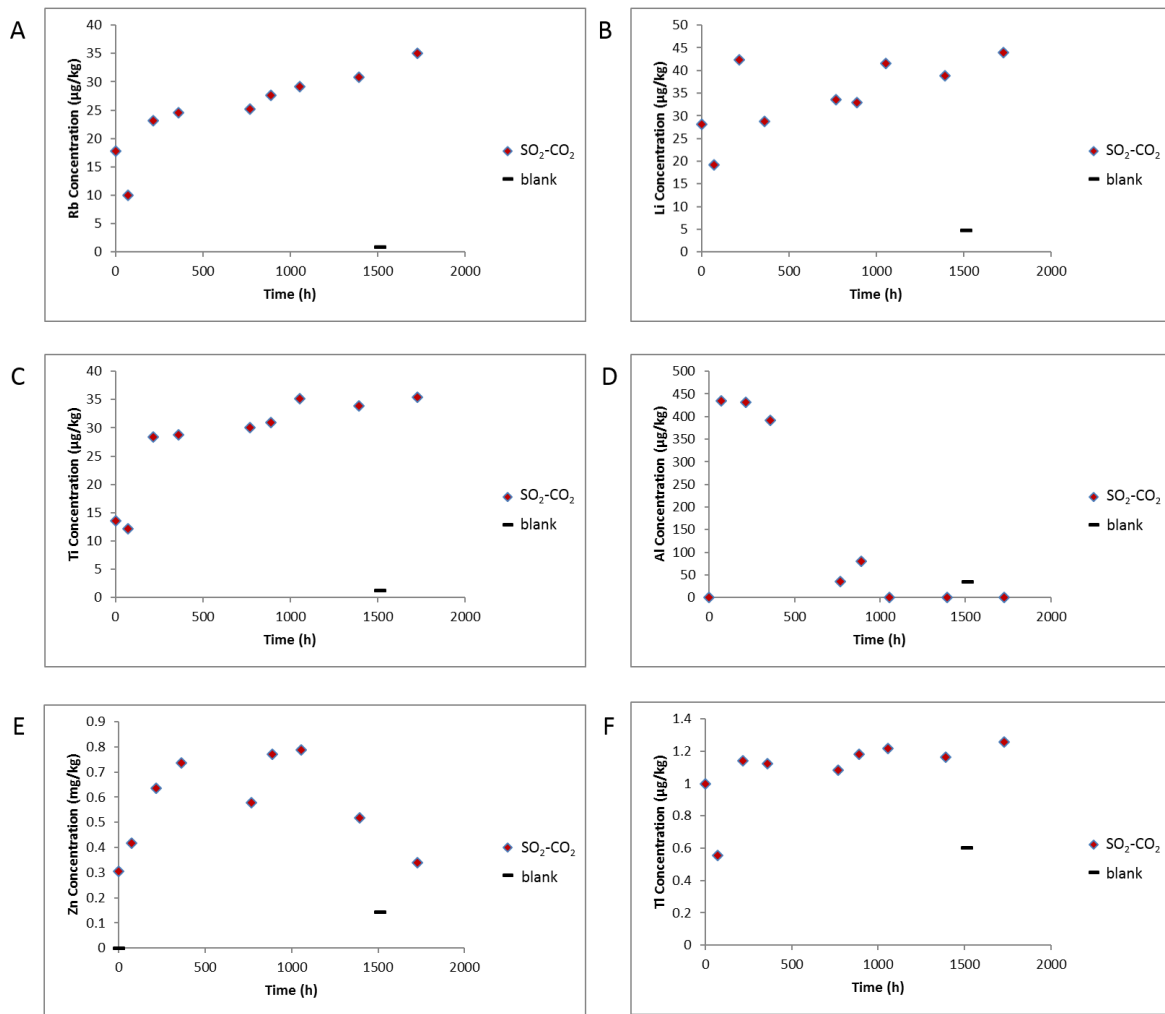
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Figure 9. Water chemistry during reaction of West Wandoan 1 Hutton Sandstone 724.1 m, and the blank reaction without rock. The point at time 0 h is after the N_2 -low salinity water-rock soak, (A) pH; (B) Concentration of Mn; (C) Concentration of Fe; (D) Concentration of Cr; (E) Concentration of Pb; (F) Concentration of As. Note E and F are shown in $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$.



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Figure 10. Water chemistry during reaction of West Wandoan 1 Hutton Sandstone 724.1 m, and the blank reaction without rock. The point at time 0 h is after the N₂-low salinity water-rock soak (A) Concentration of Rb; (B) Concentration of Li; (C) Concentration of Ti; (D) Concentration of Al; (E) Concentration of Zn; (F) Concentration of Tl. Note E is shown in mg/kg.

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Total S was 4.6 mg/kg after the N₂-low salinity water-rock soak indicating some trace pyrite or sphalerite may have reacted or adsorbed S released, this may have also contributed to the decrease in pH. Sphalerite is acid reactive, and reaction would also have contributed to the increase in dissolved Zn and metals such as Pb and As. While it was not directly observed in 724.1 m core here, trace amounts of sphalerite have been observed sporadically in other Hutton Sandstone sections e.g. 800.7 m. Total S increased to 14.4 after CO₂-SO₂ injection and reached 18.5 mg/kg at the end of reaction. Alkalinity was in the bicarbonate form at 358 mg/kg, and Cl was 845 mg/kg on experiment termination. This is lower that might be expected from the initial salinity and indicates either minor salt precipitation, or adsorption onto clays and surfaces. Dissolved total carbon, total organic carbon, inorganic carbon and sulphate measured during reaction are shown in Supplementary material Figure S7.

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3.4. Geochemical model

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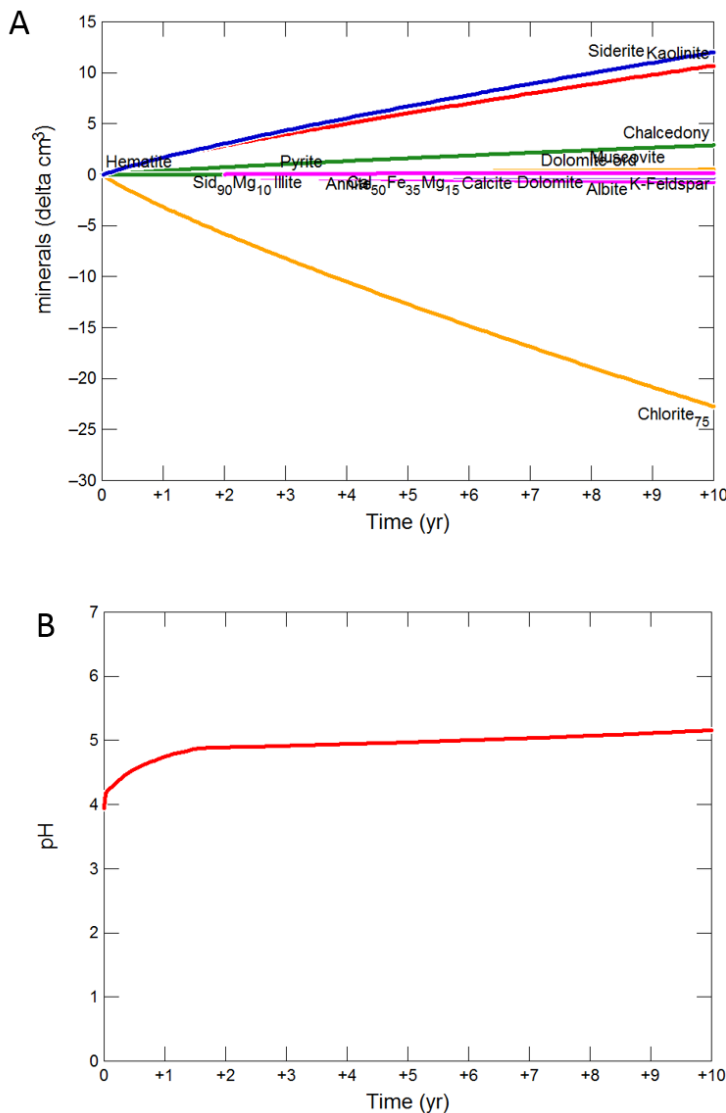
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The kinetic geochemical model prediction of reaction of Hutton Sandstone with a mineral composition of the 724.1 m core is shown over 10 years in Figure 11. The alteration of

340 chlorite to siderite, kaolinite and chalcedony is mainly predicted. Dissolution of albite, K-
 341 feldspar, siderite, ankerite, calcite and precipitation of pyrite and ankerite is also predicted.
 342 Pyrite was predicted to precipitate in Hutton Sandstone WW1 724.1 m, sourcing S from the
 343 co-injected SO₂. In the current reaction of Hutton Sandstone WW1 724.1 m the predicted
 344 altering mineral volumes are relatively small, with only 25 cm³ of (original 1279 cm³
 345 Supplementary material Table S4) chlorite dissolved, and 13 cm³ of siderite precipitated
 346 with 12 cm³ of kaolinite, and with no net change in volume (or porosity). A pH of 5.2 was
 347 predicted after 10 years, with the concentration of dissolved Fe only 4.18 mg/kg as Fe was
 348 mainly sequestered with CO₂ as siderite. Net mineral trapping was predicted as 1.55
 349 kg/m³ CO₂ as siderite after 10 y (based on the method of Watson and Gibson-Poole) [38].

350 Additional modelling scenarios for Hutton Sandstone WW1 724.1 m allowing precipitation
 351 of smectite are shown in Supplementary material (Figure S10), where precipitation of
 352 smectite occurs mainly replacing kaolinite precipitation.



353
 354 **Figure 11.** Geochemical model of reaction of West Wandoan 1 Hutton Sandstone 724.1 m over 10
 355 years (A) Change in minerals; (B) predicted pH.

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358 4. Discussion

359 Overall the drill cores characterized from the Hutton Sandstone were variable in mineral
360 content, metal content, porosity, pore throat sizes, and permeability. Air permeability
361 measurements of the Chinchilla 4 Hutton Sandstone core showed a high permeability section of ~ 50
362 m which is in agreement with the findings of [17, 18], that suggested groundwater flow may be
363 restricted to a ~ 50 m section of the Hutton Sandstone near the Mimosa syncline. Here a chlorite rich
364 Hutton Sandstone, WW1 724.1 m was reacted with CO₂ and SO₂ in a low salinity water. Porosity
365 measured by micro CT did not change measurably on reaction, although fines movement was
366 observed. No increase to porosity would be favorable to avoid further leakage or migration of CO₂.
367 In contrast, an increase to porosity of 1.1 % on pure CO₂ reaction of calcite cemented Chinchilla 4
368 Hutton Sandstone 799 m at 60°C was reported elsewhere [8]. In that case, however, dissolution of 2
369 vol% calcite cementing framework grains had caused the increased porosity. Two previous studies
370 have reported the reaction of a calcite cemented Hutton Sandstone core from WW1 800.83 m with
371 1500 mg/kg NaCl and CO₂ or CO₂ containing 0.16 % SO₂ and 2% O₂ at 60 °C [22, 25]. They also
372 reported calcite cement dissolution, and a porosity increase from 5.2 to 11.3 % after CO₂ reaction; or
373 from 3.8 to 7.5 % after CO₂-SO₂-O₂ reaction. These studies indicate that the lithology of the section
374 of the overlying aquifer receiving a potential leak may influence its extent of propagation, with
375 carbonate cemented lithologies a higher potential risk than chlorite rich sandstone.

376 Precipitation of gypsum or anhydrite had been observed or predicted in CO₂ reactivity studies
377 with SO₂ +/- O₂ reaction of rock containing calcite cements as a source of calcium [39, 40, 27, 41, 42].
378 The sandstone reacted here however had a small amount of calcium containing minerals, so a lower
379 dissolved Ca concentration, therefore gypsum/anhydrite did not reach saturation and was not
380 predicted to precipitate. In addition the experiment performed here was at 60 °C, below the stability
381 for anhydrite. A feldspar rich sandstone from the Chinchilla 4 well 868 m was also recently reacted
382 for 16 days with water and CO₂ containing 0.16 % SO₂ and 2% O₂, with reported corrosion of siderite
383 and chlorite, precipitation of Fe-oxides with Cr and Ni signatures, and an Al-sulphate mineral jarosite
384 [29]. While Fe-oxides were observed to precipitate in the current reaction reported here, no sulphate
385 mineral precipitation was observed, in contrast FeS/pyrite was observed and predicted to form owing
386 to the lack of co-injected O₂. Precipitation of pyrite was observed elsewhere in a natural analogue
387 system of CO₂ and S co-sequestration in the Madison Limestone of the Moxa Arch, Wyoming, at
388 current reservoir temperatures of 90 – 110 °C [34, 43]. There a high natural CO₂-rich reservoir with
389 dissolved aqueous sulphur complexes contained pyrite, native sulphur, and anhydrite cementing
390 pore space in the drill core. These were shown by the authors to be an example endpoint for CO₂
391 and S co-sequestration. Anhydrite precipitation could be expected to dominate over gypsum
392 precipitation at those higher temperatures (above 60 °C) in the presence of dissolved Ca from the
393 dolomite, and dissolved S from H₂S. The prediction in the work presented here of pyrite
394 precipitation with SO₂ co-injection is in agreement with that work, although the temperature of the
395 current study is much lower.

396
397 During the experimental reaction of the chlorite rich Hutton Sandstone WW1 724.1 m reported
398 here for the reaction with CO₂ and SO₂, dissolved Fe was somewhat correlated with Mg (R² = 0.71),
399 Fe was also correlated with Mn (R² = 0.82) as the majority of these were sourced from the chlorite
400 dissolution. The correlations also reflect subsequent precipitation of metals including Fe and Mn,
401 likely into Fe-oxyhydroxides. Fe was also somewhat correlated with Ba (R² = 0.73), and dissolved
402 Ca with Fe (R² = 0.69). This indicates that the dissolution of trace amounts of ankerite also
403 contributed to dissolved cations and was likely the source of Ba. The correlations of Fe with Ca and
404 Ba also reflect later decreases in concentrations through precipitation indicating their incorporation
405 into similar precipitating minerals. Dissolved Rb was somewhat correlated with Li (R² = 0.69)
406 indicating a similar source mineral, likely plagioclase. The increase and subsequent decrease of

407 dissolved Zn was also correlated with As ($R^2 = 0.72$) likely from trace amounts of sulphides dissolving
408 and re-precipitating. Published experimental reactions of core overlying CO₂ storage sites have
409 mainly included calcite cemented sandstone, dolomite or limestones [2, 3, 4, 8]. In those cases the
410 majority of dissolved cations or metals were released from calcite (or dolomite) dissolution and
411 reflected metals substituted into the calcite structure including Ba, Sr, Mn, Mg. The current study
412 has shown that Fe, Mg and Mn are also released from reactive clays such as chlorite in overlying
413 sandstone aquifers. The Fe, Mg and Mn are then available for mineral trapping over longer time
414 periods. After 10 years, mineral trapping of CO₂ was predicted to be 1.55 kg/m³ in the form of siderite
415 in models for our current study at 60 °C. Predictions of CO₂ mineral trapping have been reported
416 over longer time scales elsewhere. After 1000 y of CO₂ reaction, the quartz rich Precipice Sandstone
417 had a predicted mineral trapping from the reaction of trace amounts of chlorite to form siderite
418 trapping only 1.24 – 1.30 kg/m³ CO₂ [44]. No mineral trapping was predicted before 30 y reaction in
419 that case. Up to 2.57 kg/m³ CO₂ was predicted to be mineral trapped as siderite or ankerite after 30
420 y CO₂ reaction of chlorite and plagioclase rich mudstones and sandstones of the Evergreen Formation
421 caprock [44]. Watson and Gibson-Poole determined that 34.3 and 231.7 kg/m³ of net CO₂ was
422 trapped as siderite, ankerite and calcite in the quartz-rich Waare Sandstone reservoir and the
423 chlorite/berthierine-rich Flaxman Formation respectively [38]. These much higher mineral trapping
424 amounts were estimated from observations of natural mineral trapping in a CO₂-rich well vs a low
425 CO₂ well (natural analogue system) reacted over unconstrained geological time scales (thought to be
426 since ~ 5 Ka – 1 Ma), with the CO₂ sourced from magmatic activity, and at higher present day
427 temperature ranges ~ 75 – 116 °C. The main process mineral trapping CO₂ was alteration of Fe-rich
428 chlorite/berthierine clay to form siderite and ankerite. Clay minerals were additionally observed to
429 have precipitated in that natural system, mainly kaolinite from alteration of plagioclase, in agreement
430 with the current study, and additionally smectite/illite from alteration of K-feldspar. The
431 predictions of mineral trapping of CO₂ as siderite from reaction of Fe-rich chlorite clay in the Hutton
432 Sandstone 724.1 m presented here are reasonable given the above and other studies of natural
433 systems [33, 36, 45, 46, 47]. A reactive transport modelling study of an arkose (20 vol% plagioclase),
434 saline reservoir predicted Ca-Na-plagioclase (oligoclase) and chlorite alteration to ankerite,
435 dawsonite, and siderite on reaction with CO₂ and 1 % SO₂ at 75 °C. Predicted mineral trapping was
436 40 – 50 kg/m³ over 1000 – 10,000 y, with dawsonite predicted to be formed from the Na supplied by
437 plagioclase dissolution. SO₂ was trapped as alunite, anhydrite and pyrite. In general, although the
438 studies above were at different temperatures, mineral trapping as siderite and ankerite has been
439 observed in reservoirs with Fe-bearing reactive minerals present e.g. Fe-rich chlorite; with dolomite
440 or calcite precipitated from Mg and Ca-rich source minerals such as Mg-chlorite or Ca-plagioclase.
441 Siderite and ankerite are able to precipitate at lower pH than dolomite and calcite, therefore if Fe is
442 present in reducing conditions these ferroan carbonates tend to precipitate first [33]. In sandstone
443 reservoirs, the presence of chlorite and Ca-rich plagioclase are generally associated with higher
444 mineral trapping capacities. Precipitation of dawsonite has been predicted or observed in a few
445 systems with, for example, high Na-plagioclase content and persistent high CO₂ partial pressures.
446

447 5. Conclusions

448 This study has shown that low salinity aquifers overlying CO₂ storage sites may be very variable
449 in porosity, permeability and mineral content. The response to a possible CO₂ leakage is therefore
450 dependent on the lithologies receiving the leak. A chlorite rich sandstone showed no measurable
451 increase in micro CT porosity when reacted with CO₂ and low concentrations of SO₂ over
452 experimental timescales. This is favorable to avoid an increase in porosity and potential further
453 leakage or migration. Fines movement however was observed in experiments and has the potential
454 to plug permeability. The likelihood of this occurring in a reservoir could be tested in future with
455 flow-through or core flood experiments at a range of flow rates to simulate different potential leakage
456 scenarios. Reaction of mainly Fe-rich chlorite and minor amounts of carbonates, plagioclase and
457 sulphides were observed via changes in the experimental water chemistry. Dissolved elements

458 increased in concentration after CO₂-SO₂ injection, however several including Fe, Cr, Al, Zn, Ba, As,
459 Pb subsequently decreased with Fe-oxide precipitation in the experiment. Concentrations of Rb and
460 Li increased steadily in the experiment and deserve further investigation as potential indicators for
461 monitoring a leak. Simulations indicated that siderite may mineral trap CO₂ in Fe-chlorite rich rocks
462 after 5 to 10 years, with pyrite trapping dissolved S.

463

464 Future work is suggested to react different lithologies of core overlying potential CO₂ sites (e.g.
465 mudstones, sandstones, carbonate cemented core), such as the Hutton sandstone, and to directly
466 compare reactions with pure CO₂ or CO₂ containing SO₂, NO_x or O₂ to understand more broadly the
467 potential impacts to porosity, permeability or water chemistry in the unlikely event that a leak were
468 to occur. The use of both batch reactors and flow-through experiments is also suggested to
469 determine if minor gases in CO₂ streams such as SO₂, NO_x or O₂ are transported or depleted by
470 reaction with formation water and minerals when moving through the core subsurface.

471 **Supplementary Materials:** The following are available online at www.mdpi.com/link, Figure S1: Stratigraphic
472 column and map, Figure S2: QEMSCAN images of a section of sub-plugs, Table S1: QEMSCAN minerals (%),
473 Table S2: XRD % semi quantitative mineral components, Figure S3: Photo of coal in Hutton Sandstone core,
474 Figure S4: QEMSCAN selected areas of WW1 724.1 m, Figure S5: Pre-reaction tomogram and area, Figure S6:
475 Post-reaction tomogram and movement of fines, Figure S7, and S8: Water chemistry during reaction of WW1
476 724.1 m, Figure S9: Photo of the rock surface before and after reaction with brown coloration. Table S3: Volume
477 percentages of X-ray distinct components, Table S4: Geochemical model input. Figure S10: Geochemical models
478 over 5 years, Table S5: Rock core acid digest total metal content or lithium metaborate fusion major elements
479 and loss on ignition data.

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492

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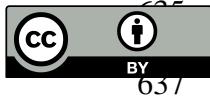
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