**To: The Independent Planning Commission**

**Re: Review of Narrabri Gas Project**

**From: Chris Regan, 28 Singles Ridge Rd, Winmalee NSW 2777 (02) 47542829**

**SUBMISSION**

**Key points:**

* **climate change and global warming;**
* **environmental damage;**
* **political and media manipulation by vested interests;**
* **misinformation to public by politicians and media;**
* **profits made by middlemen, not Australia;**
* **off-shore profits in tax havens so real beneficiaries unknown;**
* **large untraceable and opaque political donations;**
* **lucrative short or long-term “job opportunities” for politicians to reward representation or facilitation;**
* **costs of restitution, reparations and rehabilitation, and adverse health outcomes, will be borne by Australian taxpayers.**

Santos plans to plunder 850 coal seam gas wells through the recharge zone of the Great Artesian Basin in the precious Pilliga forest.

I object to the proposed Narrabri Gas Project due to its global and local environmental impacts, as well as due to its economic and social impacts.

**CLIMATE CHANGE – GLOBAL WARMING CONSIDERATIONS**

**Methane gas is a greenhouse gas**

**Methane gas (Coal seam gas or CSG) is obtained from coal seams** when chemicals, water and pressure are used to shatter horizontal coal seams deep in the sub-soil profile. Gas companies then attempt to capture all the methane that is released. **Inevitably, predictably, not all the methane is captured.**

**Methane** **is a toxic gas and is a worse greenhouse gas than CO2.** The uncaptured methane leaks into the soil, our water and our air which is catastrophic for people, animals and plants – for all life on the planet. Despite gas having previously been touted as “environmentally clean” research has shown that **gas is not a cleaner energy option than coal because all gasfields and all gas pipelines leak methane, and methane is an exponentially worse greenhouse gas than the CO2 produced when methane or other fossil fuels are burnt.**

**CSG mining is a global issue**

Initially the worst effects are seen locally, but polluted water and air travel beyond the local areas, through our underground water supplies and water catchments and our atmosphere. We need clean water, air and soil to grow our food and live.

Because we share the atmosphere with every living organism on the planet, CSG mining and leaking gas pipelines are global issues as well as local issues.

**Gas companies under-report gas leaks**

When researchers managed to gain access to gasfields to measure the magnitude of methane leaks, and monitored leaks in the gas pipelines which criss-cross the country and our urban areas, they found that **self-monitoring gas companies have been under-reporting the amount of fugitive gas leaking into the atmosphere.** So methane has been leaking, and continues to leak, continuously into the atmosphere above gasfields and pipelines, across our countryside and urban areas**,** in volumes previously not admitted by the gas industry. Unfortunately the leaks will only increase as the pipelines age.

**CSG mining is an environmental disaster**

CSG is held in place underground by water pressure. To extract it, wells are drilled through the coal seams and the water pressure is reduced by extracting some of the water. This may affect the quality and reduce the quantity of groundwater in adjacent aquifers that may be used for town water supply, irrigation, or by springs and other ecosystems. Environmental impacts may also occur from the storage and disposal of extracted groundwater and the effects of chemicals used in drilling and hydraulic fraction. Subsidence may also result following water and gas extraction.

Santos will drain 37 billion litres of groundwater. Water is essential for all life. Water is a scarce and precious resource in our dry country. Poisoned water poisons land.

Coal seam gas mining (with its toxic chemical fracking cocktail, its polluted waste water, and its widespread, uncontrolled and uncontrollable methane leaks) is one of the most environmentally disastrous activities man has ever undertaken on the planet. The most environmentally responsible thing that government can do is to ban coal seam gas mining everywhere. We beg and implore you to do this in the Pilliga.

CSG mining in the Pilliga puts at risk drought-affected farms as well as destroying an important ecosystem. Santos will bulldoze the Pilliga forest, an ecosystem which supports diverse wildlife and which attracts clouds which generate rain for the forest and the surrounding farmlands. The vegetated area is a soak which allows water to be absorbed to recharge the aquifers of the Great Artesian Basin.

**ECONOMIC FACTS VS CLAIMS BY THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

**Jobs**

According to research data from The Australia Institute, gasfields are largely approved on the basis of the claims they make about jobs and economic benefits. Here are some facts:

* The oil and gas industry is highly mechanized and a very small employer – in 2012 it employed just 0.2 of 1% of Australian workers – less than Bunnings. In 2018 they employed just 17,291 workers.
* All industries create indirect jobs. If all industries claimed to provide as many “indirect jobs“ as the gas industry it would add up to more than 3 times the number of jobs that actually exist in Australia.

**Economic facts**

* The oil and gas industry pay a low rate of company tax, well below the average rate paid by Australian industries. (5.4% vs 17.6% in 2012)
* The gas industry pays a Rent Tax on its “super profits” as well as company tax, and together these comprise the majority of Commonwealth taxes paid by the industry. In 2011-12 these combined made up less than 1% of federal government revenue.
* Economic modelling by Deloitte Access Consulting in 2014 showed that gas price rises caused by CSG exports had created a $69 billion bonanza for the gas industry, but cost the manufacturing industry in Australia $118 billion dollars.

**Who will pay and who will profit?**

When the CSG companies retreat, with their profits, to their countries of origin (85% are foreign-owned and the CSG gas extracted is for export – we have plenty of “natural” gas for the domestic market), who will take responsibility (in the event of Royal Commissions into the issuing of licences, the failure to protect health and the environment, the failure to act in respect of climate change, and the environmental wasteland left behind) and who will bear the financial burden of reparations, restitution and rehabilitation?

Surely the longer CSG mining is permitted, the higher the level of compensation that will be demanded by both the industry and the community when it finally does cease.

Our government needs to encourage the phasing out of fossil-fuel energy systems, not the proliferation! Our government needs to encourage the adoption of renewable energy systems which would reduce our carbon footprint and make new and old gasfields and coal-fired power stations unnecessary.

**OPPOSITION IGNORED**

**97% of the local community say NO to Pilliga CSG,** and tens of thousands of Australians have already voiced their concerns about this project with a record-breaking **22,700 formal objections** in 2017, but the NSW government, under pressure from the Morrison Government, is not listening while continuing to promulgate their misinformation about renewable energy.