

Dear Planning Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to object to the extraction of gas from the Pilliga forest region. There are many reasons for objection.

They include the effect on the ground water upon which all life in the area depends, the effect on native species already decimated in eastern Australia by the recent fires, increase in global temperature (gas is a fossil fuel!), polluting our water, disappointing economic outcomes and the destruction of much Kamilaroi land and culture.

ANIMALS AND PLANTS

35 threatened animals and 10 threatened plants (within the project area) rely on the Pilliga for survival—including the endemic Pilliga Mouse, Squirrel Glider, Koalas and Black-striped Wallaby. It is habitat for threatened woodland birds including the Glossy Black Cockatoo, Barking Owl, Regent Honeyeater, and Diamond Firetail.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Extracting and burning gas will make the climate crisis worse. Science dictates that no new fossil fuel basins can be opened if we wish to mitigate extreme weather events already impacting us all right now.

Solar and wind are developing faster than expected, reducing in cost and already displacing the need for gas-fired electricity.

Total greenhouse gas emissions produced by the project could be 127.8 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, or 5 million tonnes a year. In a time when Australia is struggling to meet its commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement, this one gasfield would increase Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 1% per year.

WATER

The Pilliga Forest is a critical recharge area for the Great Artesian Basin.

Underground aquifers, like the Great Artesian Basin, support life across inland Australia. Little is known about the deep aquifers Santos will dewater to extract gas. Over 20 years, Santos will remove 37.5 billion litres of water from deep below the Pilliga and removing this water will cause depressurisation and loss of water in the Pilliga Sandstone, the southern recharge of the Great Artesian Basin, which outcrops in the Pilliga.

Salty waste will leach from landfill and contaminate groundwater, farmlands and ecosystems.

Already, Santos has recorded over twenty spills and leaks of toxic CSG water. Over 10,000 litres of CSG wastewater was spilt, causing forest dieback that is unremediated seven years later.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The Department states the project would “put downward pressure on gas prices.” However, the Institute for Energy Economic and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) states production costs at the Narrabri Gas Project are some of the highest in the country. The economic assessment found that there would be lost employment in agriculture, manufacturing and mining as a result of the project.

CULTURE

Aboriginal heritage is not adequately assessed.

0% of Indigenous Land Use agreements have been signed, despite years of negotiations.

Coal seam gas brings upheaval and division to rural communities. Santos’ own assessment found that there would be “almost certain” impacts on housing affordability for Narrabri residents, which will disproportionately affect low-income households and Indigenous people, who are far more likely to be renters.

M. Street

AALIA, GradDipTourismM, M EnvStud