OBJECTION TO THE NARRABRI GAS PROJECT

27 June, 2020

As there were nearly 23,000 submissions to the Environmental Impact Statement regarding the CSG development within the Pilliga Forest (myself being one) I am sure there will be at least as many this round so I am confident that the arguments pertaining to the negative environmental and social impacts will have been covered quite extensively. While I do not want to make small of these very real and very serious impacts, I would like draw your attention to the future.

After graduating Environmental Science Natural Resource Management 2016 from Southern Cross University, Lismore I pursued more climate targeted studies. I read Tim Flannery’s book “The Weather Makers”, completed the “Climate Change: The Science” course through The University of British Columbia and “Climate Action: Solutions for a Changing Planet” course delivered by the Sustainable Development Group Academy. My goal was to asses for myself the severity of climate change. I am now of the firm belief that the consequences of climate change caused by human related greenhouse gas emissions, will be catastrophic if we do not take drastic action immediately.

Embarking on a 850 well CSG project that will be responsible for: mobilising gross quantities of greenhouse gases; drawing vast quantities (37.5 billion litres) of water from, and causing depressurisation and leakage within, a poorly understood aquifer system in a semi-arid agricultural zone; compromising a Great Artesian Basin recharge zone; contaminating water supply (it’s already happened) thereby jeopardising food productivity, stock and wildlife; fragmenting the largest woodland forest west of the Great Dividing range that is home to at least 10 threatened plants and 35 threatened fauna species; is not conducive to taking the climate issue seriously.

To me, a most serious threat posed by a CSG project of the scale proposed for the Pilliga is to the region’s hydrology. The Department of Planning’s Water Expert Panel has expressed concern over the groundwater model used by Santos saying that the model “may have poor predictive capacity in relation to the impact of production of the surrounding impacted water sources”.

Water availability in rural Australia has already been proven to be a serious concern. Most recently demonstrated by the desperate (and extremely expensive) act of having to cart water to outlying communities who had run out of water during drought. The inevitable effects of our climate future are destined to exacerbate such issues. This will be challenge enough to combat, without further putting water quality and quantity at risk by allowing CSG development.

On a personal note, I have visited the area of the Pilliga Forest on many occasions. I have camped beside the hot spring in the town of Pilliga, explored the Discovery Centre at Baradine, visited Pilliga Pottery, assisted in vegetation surveys throughout the forest, camped in the Pilliga National Park and visited Sculptures in the Scrub and the sandstone caves. And I have stood aghast at the sight of a giant naked flame flaring gas in the middle of the forest during a total fire ban. And have been mortified at the sight of the dead zone cut through the trees after contaminated wastewater overflowed the Santos holding pond. Ten years on the dead zone is still unable to be rehabilitated. That is how toxic the wastewater is.

The Pilliga is a ruggedly beautiful woodland so uniquely Australian and it deserves protection for the sake of future generations in our uncertain climate future. It is for all the above reasons that I most strongly object to the Santos Narrabri Gas Project.