

Objection to Narrabri Gas Project

The concept that we are considering a natural gas project of this size in the 21st Century is outrageous. That we are still putting the commercial interests of large business and wealthy individuals ahead of the community and the environment is beyond words.

This project will destroy the local water supply. Over 20 years, Santos will remove 37.5 billion litres of water from deep below the Pilliga and treat it in the Leewood water treatment facility. This treatment will produce up to 840,000 tonnes of solid salt, laced with heavy metals, for which Santos still has no disposal plan. 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.

This project will destroy the lives of the local community. A CSIRO survey in 2014 found that only 6% of local people living in Queensland gasfield areas thought the industry had improved their lives while 42% said that they were “not coping” or “only just coping”.

This project will destroy our indigenous cultural heritage. Santos’ Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment identified 90 known Aboriginal cultural heritage sites in the project area, including rock shelters, burials and historic camps and hearths.

This project will destroy the local biodiversity. The Pilliga is the largest temperate woodland in eastern Australia and CSG will industrialise 95,000 hectares of it, clearing nearly 1,000 hectares in small patches for well-pads, infrastructure and gaslines, including removal of several endangered ecological communities. Only limited surveys were actually undertaken as part of the assessment of the gasfield, but these found 10 threatened plants and 35 threatened fauna in the gasfield area, including pygmy possums, koalas and the Pilliga mouse. The Pilliga once hosted one of the most important koala populations in New South Wales, but the species is now on an extinction trajectory in the area. With so much habitat and lives lost to recent bushfires, it is crucial to the survival of the koala that its bushland habitats be spared industrialisation.

This project will contribute to the destruction of the planet through climate change. 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.