July 5, 2020

NARRABRI GAS PROJECT SUBMISSION 2020

Commissioners OConnor, Barlow and Hann, thank you for the opportunity to present my submission **against** the Narrabri Gas Project to the IPC Hearing at the Crossing Theatre in Narrabri, NSW today. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of Gomeroi country that we are upon and pay my respects to the elders past, present and future.

Commissioners, the referral of Santos’ Narrabri Gas Project to the Independent Planning Commissionwas made just three business days after a Parliamentary Inquiry found that **5 long years have passed** since the Chief Scientist’s report was conducted and yet, only **two** of the Chief Scientist’s 16 recommendations on coal seam gas have to date been implemented. If taxpayers of Australia cannot trust the government to act upon their own findings in a timely and comprehensive manner before unleashing invasive industries upon vital farming and wilderness areas, it is evident that the integrity of the entire process is failing.

Last month IAG Insurance declared that if landholders "have operational CSG or shale gas activities or infrastructure on their property, such as a coal seam gas well, we will be unable to provide liability cover as part of their insurance policy”. NSW producers, like any businesses, cannot operate without insurance. North West farming communities provide much of the food and textiles for our nation. If multi-generational landholders are continually marginalised by bureaucrats approving industrial landscapes over food-growing landscapes, thousands of farming jobs and our food security will be lost.

Agriculture and unconventional gas infrastructure cannot coexist when presumed strict regulations are repeatedly abused by the gas industry and offer not protection to existing agribusinesses. I saw evidence of this in 2012 and over subsequent years when I visited gas field communities west of Brisbane in Queensland. I have witnessed swathes of dead and dying forests unable to reach water as a result of lowered bore levels due to CSG mining. I’ve witnessed bleeding noses, neurological damage, painful rashes, breathing difficulties and other serious health impacts in people of all ages who are forced to live in those gas fields. Land values have plummeted and residents are unable to sell their properties. Noise, lights, workers, machinery and pollution invades their daily lives 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I have seen parts of the Condamine River bubbling from gas leaks that can be lit with a match, something locals here would not want to see happen to the Namoi River.

The NSW Planning Department should heed the experiences north of the border and steer NSW away from gas onto a plan of sustainable climate-friendly energy industries solidly backed by science. Just recently Dubbo sheep grazier Tom Warren announced that the solar farm across 55 hectares of his property collects nightly condensation and during the drought grew green grass below the panels to provide feed for his Merino wethers. He was one of the only graziers in the area who barely had to hand feed his stock. He says that the solar panels also give valuable shade to his livestock and provide a substantial dual income stream with rent for the land he leases to Neoen solar company. This is an example of a healthy water-wise and sustainable coexistence between two industries that this Namoi region really needs.

The CSIRO, federal government agency for scientific research in Australia, has forecast that climate change will cause decreased precipitation and exacerbate challenges in water availability and quality for agriculture. NSW therefore **cannot risk** a water wasting industry such as unconventional gas to dewater precious aquifers in the parched North West where droughts have lingered for so many years and will continue to do so.

As a proud foundation member of Knitting Nannas Against Gas, a member of the Country Women’s Association of NSW and daughter of a farming family, I ask that you please reject the Narrabri Gas Project and recommend to the NSW Planning Department that they instead preserve this vital Great Artesian Basin recharge zone for all future generations. The NSW Planning Department states on their own website that “The Department exists to make people’s lives **better** by making NSW a great place to **live** and work.” We now need to see proof of that.