IPC: Santos CSG mining in Pilliga Decision

More gas? More destruction of the NSW environment and ecology? More destruction of communities? No, none of those is what we need in NSW. What we need is an environmentally sustainable society and economy in NSW and across Australia. What we need is to stop exporting our last-century technology, particularly to stop exporting it to developing Asian countries so that they can pollute their skies and water, pump more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and kill their citizens. What we need is to increase the roll out in NSW of cheap, clean, healthy, environmentally sustainable renewable energy for both domestic use and export. What we need is to stop letting gas mining companies bully and bribe their way through proper democratic process and sound policy making. What we need is a clear commitment with a proper plan to make NSW carbon neutral, or even carbon negative, by 2040 (not 2050 - 2050 is the deadline needed globally; developed economies such as NSW need to get there by 2040 so that developing countries have a chance to do some catching up). What we need is the cooperation of all levels of government, industries (e.g. mining, agriculture, tourism, IT, etc.), unions, communities, etc. to formulate regional development and re-skilling plans for areas, communities, employees etc. affected as fossil fuel industries close.

I imagine that you are fully aware that coal kills people … but gas also kills people. It produces fewer air pollutants when it is burnt than coal but it still kills people when it is burnt by producing carbon dioxide, the major cause of global warming and climate change. Global warming and climate change are already causing injuries, disease and premature death all around the world, including Australia, and this is only going to get worse as global warming increases. The only question is, how much worse is global warming going to get? The answer to that question principally depends on how many more tons of greenhouse gases we pump into the atmosphere - completely unnecessarily and irresponsibly pump into the atmosphere when there are perfectly viable clean, healthy technologies available now to replace fossil fuels. How much longer will NSW bury its head in the sand and keep recklessly mining, burning and exporting gas for purely selfish reasons.

So, let us be under no illusions: gas kills. Anyone involved with the mining, transport or burning of gas is contributing to killing people. Anyone involved with approving the mining, transport or burning of gas is contributing to killing people. No one who is a party to any such approvals in NSW will ever be able to honestly say ‘I did not know’.

There are many other reasons to reject the application by Santos to develop a CSG field near Narrabri, which I am sure that others will remind you about. However, these are the issues that I, a public health doctor, ask you to pay particular attention to when making your decision.

Thank you.

Peter Sainsbury

5 July 2020