65 White St

Tamworth NSW 2340

6 July 2020

My Submission Against the Narrabri Gas Project

The attention of the Independent Planning Commission,

Disgracefully and very sadly, we continue to pursue what I imagine to be economic growth at the expense of our precious environment. When are we going to cease this attitude? It will cause a rapid and unneeded increase in carbon emissions in Australia, and create irreparable harm to our largest temperate forest in eastern Australia; the Pilliga forest.

**Every day that passes before making a stand for the environment is one day less to stabilise the world’s environment and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. We must remember that once we hit the day in which the critical threshold for the environment is reached, the world’s future is irreparable. It’s no good saying that Australia’s only a small part, we have a moral responsibility, to not be overcome with greed and make a stand for what is right.**

In 2016, the Paris Climate Agreement was signed and ratified by Australia, agreeing to a reduction of emissions and setting us down a path to make an attempt to repair the damage we have done to the environment. It is surely time to think forward in regards to our land, water, fauna and flora. Of particular relevance to the Narrabri Gas project is that of the damage that will be made to the local koala populations, the poisoning of the Great Artesian Basin and disruption to the livelihoods and culture of the people inhabiting the area.

Many unique species of animal will be threatened with extinction if we don’t preserve the precious Pilliga forest habitat. This includes the koala, Australian icon and resident of the area proposed for clearing. Of the area proposed for clearing, nearly 1000 hectares are suitable for the habitation of koalas, something that is vital for koala conservation due to suitable land decreasing across the country. At one time the Koala population in the Pilliga was one of the largest populations, but the species in now on the path to extinction in the area. This area must be preserved to ensure the survival of the species. With so much habitat and koala life lost due to recent bushfires, it is absolutely crucial that the koala bushland habitat be spared from industrialization that the gas project will bring.

With regard to Santos, there are plans to develop 815 new coal seam gas wells across 95000 hectares in the north-eastern Pilliga forest, clearing close to 1000 hectares in the forest for connecting lines and well pads. It seems that of the 16 recommendations of the NSW Chief Scientist in 2014, against the risks of coal seam gas, only 2 have been fully implemented.

Water must be one of the biggest concerns. It is quoted that 37.5 billion liters of waters under the Pilliga will be used for the water treatment facility as part of the project, which will produce 84000 tonnes of solid salt and heavy metals, with no adequate disposal plans proposed by Santos. Removing this water will cause depressurization and loss of water from the Pilliga sandstone, which serves as the southern recharge of the Great Artesian Basin. Santos has used the most basic level of groundwater modelling because little is known of the deep-water aquifers they propose to use.

**Landholders in the area are strongly opposed to the project. A CSIRO survey on social history in 2014 found that the general public will receive no benefit from the development of the coal seam gas industry.** Housing affordability will be negatively impacted due to the development of the industry, disadvantaging low-impact households in the area. Furthermore, 100 homes are in the area of proposed destruction. The Pilliga is also a significant area for the Gomeroi people. No detailed surveys on Indigenous cultural sites have been conducted in the area.

With regard to climate change and greenhouse gases, the gas emissions produced by this project could be over 127 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, or 5 million tonnes a year. At a time when Australia, alongside a majority of the world is trying to meet agreements made at the Paris Climate Agreements, this one gas field would increase Australia’s greenhouse gas by at least 2% a year. With the average operating lifetime of pipelines being 20 years, the time to begin preparing the winddown of the use of gas and fossil fuels is NOW. To keep global gas emissions below 2%, global gas production needs to peak this year. Santos claims the development is required to increase the supply of gas, but there is a glut of exported gas in Queensland that could be used.

**Now is the time to have courage as the Independent Planning Commission and say NO!** Our future depends upon responsible government for the environment. Australia’s habitat, our valuable water supply and precious fauna are all at risk.

I thank you for your consideration and ask that you make the sensible choice,

Rosemary Milson