

Dear Sir/Madam,

The implementation of gas fields within the Pilliga is rife with many environmental risks – use of groundwater from the artesian basin, toxic wastewater and drilling fluids contaminating water and ecosystems, the contamination of fresh water supplies, not to mention the flares that will burn 24 hours a day and the potential fire risk of these. This seems like total madness after the devastation caused in the last fire season.

Let alone the physical destruction of the environment with the wells and roads which will have to be built throughout the Pilliga. When are we going to start “giving back” to our environment? When are we going to start putting more carbon under the ground than allowing its release from the ground? Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that leaks from all stages of CSG extraction and production. This gasfield would increase greenhouse gas emissions by 1%. In a world that is experiencing increasing deleterious effects from global warming why are we contemplating this?

In the past 2 and a half years this area has been through the worst drought in living history. Our own town ran out of its dam water and this was then replaced with bore water from several bores sunk around the town in the height of the drought. Coonabarabran and Bugaldie communities are reliant on these bores and the Narrabri Gas Project risks this groundwater supply that sustains our towns and our farming communities.

And what of the significance of these areas to our Gamilaroi peoples? Have acknowledgements of the original custodians of this land become mere tokenism? In recent weeks we have seen the injustices dealt to these first peoples all over the world, brought to our attention by the “Black Lives Matter” movement, and a truthful history of this continent reveals the many injustices that have occurred and are still occurring in this country. The Santos’ Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment identified 90 known Aboriginal cultural heritage sites in the area, as well as areas of potential cultural heritage sensitivity, which the company has committed to avoiding when it situates its drill pads and infrastructure, but this is based only on already-known areas. No detailed new surveying of the area for Aboriginal cultural heritage has taken place yet. Santos proposed to undertake detailed surveys after it gets approval and avoid newly found sites of high significance, but this is a highly risky strategy and once granted, the approval will not be able to be revoked. Where is the conscience that allows Aboriginal sites to be treated in such a manner? We have only to remember Rio Tinto blasting a 46,000 year old cave in the Pilbara in our very recent history.

The Proposed Gas Field in the Pilliga poses serious risks to the environment and sustainability of our local area and is threatens the cultural heritage of our indigenous population.