Objection to the Narrabri CSG Project

Australia is one of the world stages for environmental change, we are the largest exporter of Fossil Fuels and are currently ranked the 2nd worst in the world on Environmental Protection. The proposed CSG Project on Narrabri land is immoral and endangers the future of humanity both economically and in terms of our symbiotic relationship with the planet. Gas is not a transition fuel and should not be treated as one.

Over 20 years, Santos will remove 37.5 billion liters from deep below the Pilliga, removing this water will cause depressurization and loss of water in the Pilliga Sandstone, the southern recharge of the Great Artesian Basin which outcrops in Pilliga. Australia is a country that deals with drought regularly however through allowing Santos to take this water they are depriving the local community and agriculture sector of it’s life blood and what it needs to survive, and that is ignoring the damage that will occur to the ecosystem within the Great Artesian Basin.

Coal seam gas brings upheaval and division to rural communities CSIRO survey in 2014 found that only 6% of local people living in Queensland gas field areas thought the industry improved their lives with 42% saying that they were “not coping” or “only just coping”. Santos’ own assessment found that there would be “almost certain” impacts on housing affordability for Narrabri residents, which will disproportionately affect low-income households and Indigenous People, who are far more likely to be renters. Claims of job creation are crucial to the project’s justification, with an anticipated average 190 jobs created locally and 322 in the rest of the state, but this comes at other industries’ expense. Santos’ own assessment admits there would be lost employment in agriculture and manufacturing as a result of the project, despite unsubstantiated claims of flow on jobs in NSW. An investment in fossil fuel is not an investment in our economic future, the fact is that at the end of the day the truth is that Gas is not unlimited and investing money into these projects will result in an unsustainable future within the region and impacts sustainable industries both in Environmentally Friendly Manufacturing and the development of renewable and sustainable energy which is known to lead to the creation of more jobs than our current mining and exportation for coal. Santos claims the gas field is needed to “increase supplies” of gas, but there’s a glut of exported gas from Queensland and ships of Australian gas are sitting idle unwanted. The majority of social impacts are proposed to mitigated through the use of the Gas Community Benefit Fund, the use of the Community Consultative Committee and a range of Landholder Compensation agreements, Ignoring many of the negative impacts of the project.

The Pilliga is a hugely significant landscape for Gomeroi people. 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. Santos promises its drill pads and infrastructure will avoid these sites, but they’re based only on previous work. No detailed new surveys for Aboriginal cultural heritage have taken place yet. Santos proposed to undertake detailed surveys after it gets approval and avoid newly found sites of high significance but by that time it will be too late to stop the gasfield.

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.

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! Mobilising methane in coal seams could lock in ongoing fugitive emissions of this potent greenhouse gas for decades to come. Globally, the UN Environment Program’s Production Gap Report in 2019 found that, “With average lifetimes of 20 years or longer for pipelines, terminals, wells, and platforms, the time to begin planning for a wind-down of gas production is, as with other fossil fuels, already upon us.” Their report found that to achieve the Paris Climate Agreement goal of keeping average global warming well below 2 degrees, global gas production needs to peak by 2030 and decline after that. To meet the safer 1.5 degrees warming limit, gas production needs to peak this year.

The Narrabri CSG Project is immoral and is an unsustainable investment in fossil fuels, it negatively impacts the future of renewable and sustainable industry in Australia and leads to a mass ecosystem loss which will have flow on affects to local agriculture and Indigenous Communities.

Do not approve this Project in the name of morality and a sustainable future in Humanity.