

25 July 2020

To the Independent Planning Commission

Re: Narrabri Gas Project

My name is Anna Rose. My grandparents ran the mixed cattle/ cropping farm “Manaree” near Gunnedah. It was here that I spent a large portion of my childhood and this is what makes the Liverpool Plains so special to me personally. Below is a photo of my Mum, sister and I on the banks of the Naomi river as children. This spot is approximately a 30-minute drive from the proposed site of the Narrabri gas project.



These early experiences on the Liverpool Plains gave me a great love for nature, agriculture, and rural and regional communities. Now, I am an author and conservationist.

I am an Advisory Director of the Australian Geographic Society, a Governor of WWF-Australia, a Director of Farmers for Climate Action, and a Churchill Fellow. I am a former Director of the Aussie Farmers Foundation, a former Myer Foundation Innovation Fellow, and Finalist for ACT Australian of the Year Awards. I am a visiting Fellow at the Australian National University and an Associate at the Melbourne University Sustainable Society Institute.

My comments in relation to the proposed Narrabri gasfield are based not just on my family's connection to the region, but my research and understanding of the significance of the region to Australia's water security, climate stability, Aboriginal cultural heritage and agricultural productivity.

My key objections to the project are based on its unacceptable impacts on:

- Water
- Climate
- Aboriginal cultural heritage

I have included more detail below under each of these headings.

Water

It was through experiencing the Millennium Drought and its impacts on the Liverpool Plains and North West NSW in high school that I first became concerned about climate change. Devastating drought affected farming families across the region.

This opened my eyes to the fragility of Australia's water security. In a warming climate, there is nothing more precious to the viability of rural and regional communities than water; something we should have learned by now, in light of the recent drought.

The fact that Santos is planning to remove 37.5 billion litres of water from deep below the Pilliga - and then produce up to 840,000 tonnes of solid salt mixed with heavy metals – is unconscionable given the precautionary principle. Little is known about the deep aquifers that they plan to dewater to extract gas.

The Liverpool Plains water is far more critical to the region's agricultural and economic future than the proposed Narrabri gasfield. We should have learned from Queensland's experience that the risks of these gas projects to water are unacceptably high.

Climate

I have been writing about climate science, impacts and solutions for the past two decades. In that time, our state and federal Governments' understanding of climate science has increased. Australia has signed up to the UN Paris Climate Agreement, which sets a target for the world to limit global warming to 2 degrees maximum above pre-industrial levels. To reduce emissions in line with this goal, Australia needs to rapidly move away from fossil fuels and transition to renewable energy.

As Bob Carr wrote in a [recent article in the Sydney Morning Herald](#):

“Scientists are now alarmed at methane surging skyward from coal, oil and gas development. It's tipping the planet to upper projections of warming... The evidence is mounting that the gas industry has not been reporting the extent of methane it dumps in the upper atmosphere.”

Carr quotes from a major new scientific study, the results of which were published in the peer reviewed journal *Nature* in February this year. The study showed methane emissions from fossil fuel production are 25 to 40 per cent higher than previously understood.

As Carr goes on to write: *“This undercuts the industry's claim to provide a clean fuel. On a 20-year time frame, a molecule of methane is 86 times more effective at trapping heat in the atmosphere than a molecule of carbon. Put simply, if gas leaks at more than a rate of 3 per cent, it's worse than coal.”*

Projections show that this one gasfield would *increase* Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 1% per year. To approve such a major new fossil fuel development in an era where we are already experiencing the impacts of the climate crisis, including last summer's bushfires, is condemning our children to an even hotter, more dangerous world.

Aboriginal cultural heritage

Australia has a legal and moral obligation to respect and protect the incredible cultural heritage of First Nations peoples. As the Independent Planning Commission would be aware, The Pilliga is a hugely significant landscape for Gomeroi people. Over 90 known Aboriginal cultural heritage sites were identified by Santos in the project area during its cultural heritage assessment. These include rock shelters, burials and historic camps and hearths. Especially in light of the shocking blasting of Juukan Gorge 1 and 2 by mining company Rio Tinto, these Gomeroi sacred sites must be protected.

Thank you for considering this objection to the Narrabri Gas Project.

Sincerely

Anna Rose