My name is Abigail Humphreys and I am submitting an objection to the Narrabri Gas Project.

I am a 65year old woman and a nurse for 35 years.

I am objecting to the approval of the Narrabri Gas Project for a number of reasons.

When I first heard about this project 10 years ago, to be honest I wasn’t sure where Pilliga was, so I looked it up on a map and was astonished to find it to be a little patch of green near Narrabri. I have passed this scrub many times over the years. This little patch of green amongst the cleared land I have learnt is the remanent of the forest which once covered much of NSW, that alone should see it preserved.

I have since that time gone up to see this unique place, as recently as November 2019, when NSW was under severe fire restrictions, you couldn’t even light a BBQ and yet when I went to one of the wells, the gas flair was shooting up about 4-5 meters, no one about to monitor this open fire. How can this be possible? How can this be legal? So dangerous and neglectful of Santos and yet it’s business as usual for them regardless of the extreme fire risk.

This brings me to one of many concerns I have and that is the reliability of Santos to self-regulate. There have been numerous examples in the past where Santos has not regulated the sites, they have not notified the regulator of spills, notably the Bibblewindi spill in 2011 and Bibblewindi contamination of the water aquifer, in 2014, which in spite of Santos claims is not rehabilitated and interesting they do not use their ‘safe’ extraction water but continue to draw down from the artesian water supply. There have been more than 20 spills, leaks and unapproved releases of produced water, approval which is required by Santos prior to release of this water. Yet the Water Expert Panel seem to think there is no problem to proceed with approvals as long as there is robust regulatory regime and rigorously monitored. The question is by whom and who will meet the cost?

Santos has demonstrated it can not to be trusted with any self-regulatory roles.

The risk to ground water by the project poses considerable adverse impacts to future water quality and volume within the Namoi River flood plains, which will further impact water availability for farmers, local communities and wildlife.

This project will have significant social impact on the communities, eroding their cohesion by introducing a large transient population, as has been the case in other areas of gas expansion and extraction. High wages will drive up the cost of living for local communities resulting in ghost towns after Santos is finished.

This project does not demonstrate intergenerational equity as the generation that might benefit financially from the dubious profits from this extraction industry is not the generation that has to foot the bill of clean ups and other mitigating events and experience the impacts of climate change.

This project cannot be considered an Ecological sustainable development which premises the ideals of equity, maintaining and enhancing the land and development for the benefit of future generations. It does not conserve the biological diversity of the area which as the remanent sub arid forest in NSW, the biodiversity of this region is of paramount significance.

Economic development can not proceed at the cost of environmental protection, biodiversity and water security.

This project is not within the public interest as it will jeopardise the chance that the world’s temperature will be able to stay below 1.5\*-2\*C. As is required by The Paris agreement signed by governments worldwide. There have been numerous reports that state that to have any chance of achieving a reduction of Carbon parts per million in the atmosphere is will be necessary to not access and extract any further fossil fuels. The latest monitoring of atmospheric Carbon measurements is 416PPM. I ask you how can we with any consciousness even consider such a project, when the science is screaming out to be listened to and not proceed with further fossil fuel extraction?

Finally, I ask you to reflect and consider the Traditional Custodians, the Gomillaroi people who have stood film to oppose this destruction of their lands. Successive governments ask why there is such a disparity in Closing the Gap and always Aboriginal peoples say ‘Listen to us, we know the problems, we know the solutions’ and yet here is another junction in time when the Indigenous voice is not listened to and their leadership and custodianship is not acknowledged and followed.

Gomillaroi people have lived here for countless thousands of years but yet again extraction industries and economic benefits for a few somehow make cultural genocide acceptable. Australia is a signatory of the UN Rights of Indigenous Peoples but Native Title legislation prioritizes mining interests above sovereignty. This must not continue; Australia must not continue to place the interest of a few above the lives of Indigenous peoples.

I call on the IPC to build public trust by exerting its independence and to demonstrate transparency to reject this project, which will strengthen the community’s confidence in this planning process.

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