



27th July 2020

Submission on Narrabri Gas Project

The Grafton Loop of the Knitting Nannas Against Gas objects in the strongest terms to Santos' proposed gas project in the Narrabri region.

The Grafton Loop of the Knitting Nannas became involved in gas campaigns when Metgasco tried to develop a coal seam gas industry in the Northern Rivers. As we have researched the issue, we have an extensive understanding of the impacts that this invasive industry has on the environment, on agriculture and on communities. Some of our number visited the Queensland gasfields in 2016 as well as the Pilliga in 2017.

Some of the reasons for our objection are:

- **This huge industrialisation of the rural landscape will have an enormous impact on the people living in the area.** Our understanding is that there is strong local opposition to the project because the local people know about the devastating effect this will have on their environment and their local communities.
There is obviously no social licence for this project in the area.
- **The Pilliga is a very significant area for the Gomeroi people.** While Santos' Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment identified 90 known cultural heritage sites in the project area, no new detailed surveys have taken place to establish how extensive this heritage is. And mining companies do not have a good record in protecting Aboriginal heritage.
- **There will be a major effect on the very important Pilliga Forest** because of the amount of clearing (almost 1,000 ha) Santos is proposing and the general fragmentation of the forest habitat from the network of well-pads, tracks and pipeline easements. This will affect many important species – some of which are threatened under the TSC Act - which rely on the ecosystems of this area.
The Nannas are particularly concerned about the fate of Koalas in the forest. Their numbers have been declining in recent years and this major intrusion into their important habitat area will make their continued survival more problematic.
- **Santos' removal of groundwater as it extracts gas will deplete the aquifer which is part of the recharge zone for the Great Artesian Basin (GAB).** The GAB, a very important water resource over an extensive inland area, has already been affected by gas mining in Queensland. We understand there are also questions about possible impacts the dewatering of the coal seam will have on flows into the Murray-Darling system.
Disposal of this produced water is also of concern. Santos has said it will be treated to remove the salt before it is disposed of and that the large amounts of salt will go to landfill. Just how effective their treatment process will be and whether it is safe to dispose of the salt in landfill is open to question. Santos does not have a good record of wastewater disposal in the Narrabri area.
- **The project's production of greenhouse emissions is another major concern.** The Nannas are very concerned with fugitive emissions which are common in gasfields – despite the claims of the

industry. As methane is a much more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, the size of this project and the potential emissions have serious implications for Australia's climate change commitments. Furthermore we are aware that these fugitive emissions would continue beyond the life of the project as the well-seals fail over time - as has happened elsewhere in the world.

- **The Nannas have concerns about the health issues that will affect people living in the gasfield.** In their visit to the Queensland gasfields in 2016 members of our Loop became only too aware of the impacts of constant noise and the effect of vented and fugitive gas. This is something that governments have tried to ignore but it is quite obvious that these health effects ARE real.
- **The claimed economic benefits do not “stack up” against the long-term detrimental effects of such a large, environmentally and socially damaging project.** As usual proponents claim large numbers of jobs will be created. Obviously we are expected to believe that jobs and a claimed temporary boost to the local economy are more important than retention of an important natural forested area and the survival of its fauna, the viability of a major agricultural area, and the health of local communities. We Nannas are not silly enough to believe this. Unfortunately many politicians are. It's time this was changed!

We also reject the claim that this project will help solve the “gas crisis” – the so-called gas shortage in Australia. There is no gas shortage. The problem is there has been no reservation of gas for domestic use (except in Western Australia). The lack of supply for the domestic market is the result of poor decisions by successive governments.

The Grafton Nannas urge you to reject Santos' proposed gasfield.

Anna Barton
On behalf of the Grafton Loop of the Knitting Nannas