

Angus Chadwick  
"Youie"  
1423 Walgett Road  
Coonamble NSW 2829

30 July 2020

### **IPC Submission: Santos Narrabri Pilliga CSG Project**

Dear Commissioners,

I write to you today with the intention of expressing my complete objection to the approval of the Narrabri Gas Project. The Coal Seam Gas (CSG) industry poses an unacceptable risk to our precious groundwater, which many communities so heavily rely upon.

I was born and raised in Coonamble, NSW. For my high school years I was fortunate enough to attend a Sydney boarding school for my secondary education. After completing the HSC in 2011, I was accepted into Agricultural Economics. I graduated in 2015 with a Bachelor of Agricultural Economics and three majors: Economics, finance and agriculture. Straight after university I moved back to Coonamble to work in the family business. We own and operate a Stock and Station agency, 23,000 acres and a 10,000 head capacity beef feedlot. Between these businesses, we employ 23-26 full time local staff excluding casuals and contractors. The feedlot generates between 50,000 and 60,000 servings of beef PER day, every day of the year. Essential to this production is a clean, healthy and reliable source of water. We are just one business. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of businesses like ours in the bush and together we contribute in excess of \$64 billion to the economy every year and growing.

Of my cohort studying Agricultural Economics, approximately 70% of them were from the bush, and most of these were areas that relied upon groundwater almost entirely. Although not all back home and in their family businesses just yet, their intention is to do so. This is the next generation of Australian farmers. These are the people who are going to ensure Australia's food security, and even that of the world. Without the precious supply of water from the Great Artesian Basin, production will be decimated. Take the last three and half years for instance. Dams all over the state have been dry, and the only water available to livestock has been from bores drawing out of the GAB. Take our town by example: If we had no access to artesian water through this past drought, there would have been no production whatsoever in these years. Without production, they would have packed up and left 3 years ago, not ever to return. As they leave, their staff may be put off who might then also be forced to leave town in search of work. If both of these families had children at the local school, less teachers will be required as well as possibly school buses. The local swimming pool might only need to employ two lifeguards instead of three. The local cafes now have less customers and this pushes them over as well. Now their children won't be

attending the school or pool either and the cycle continues. Every day, three times a day, everyone needs a farmer.

Over the last 10 years, our community has written to politicians, attended rallies, commissioned scientific studies, made donations and voiced our objections to the government, to media, and amongst communities right across the country which has delayed this project for over ten years. A record 23,000 submissions were made at the assessment phase, of which 22,700 were against the proposal. This represents 98.7% in opposition to the project during its assessment phase. Despite this, Santos' Narrabri Gas Project has still managed to receive backing from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. It is difficult to understand how we have even ended up having this debate when by comparison, Australia legalized same sex marriage with a mere 61.6% of voters in support of the change. Why did the NGP get through to the next phase despite such overwhelming opposition?

Santos has used the most basic level of groundwater modelling because little is known about the deep aquifers they will “dewater” to extract gas. Over 20 years, Santos will remove 37.5 billion litres of water from deep below the Pilliga. Removing this water will cause depressurisation and loss of water in the Pilliga Sandstone, the southern recharge of the Great Artesian Basin. Hundreds of bores have already been affected in Queensland and hundreds more will be impacted in the years to come. In 1990, the Cap and Pipe the Bore Scheme was implemented at a cost of \$500 million. The driving force behind this scheme was that it was imperative that the Great Artesian Basin was depleting at such a rate it had to be protected at all costs. Here we are 30 years later and we are considering punching 850 wells in it AND pumping countless amounts of toxic chemicals into it. It is crazy that we are even having this debate.

Australia's biosecurity is at risk through the potential contamination of the GAB and our other waterways. The Narrabri Gas Project will produce toxic waste water and toxic salt. Treatment of water brought up from underground will produce up to 840,000 tonnes of solid salt waste, laced with heavy metals. Santos still have not said how they will dispose of this waste. Their estimated volumes of salt waste has roughly doubled since their first estimates. Where will they put the 840,000 tonnes of salt waste? When producers sell livestock, they sign a National Vendor Declaration (NVD), legally guaranteeing that their produce is not contaminated. How can producers sign this statutory declaration if they can't be 100% sure that their animals haven't consumed contaminated water after their bore has brought it to the surface. Australia cost of production are up there with some of the worlds highest. The one competitive advantage we have over other, lower cost producing nations, is our “Clean and Green” image. If there is any compromise to this status, Australia's food and fibre produce all of a sudden becomes incredibly dear on the global market. This would significantly diminish the Agricultural industry's \$64billion contribution to the economy. As of June 2020, some of the largest risk takers in the world will no longer include liability insurance to those who have CSG infrastructure on their land, it becomes screamingly obvious that significant problems are a certainty to occur.

Santos touts that the Narrabri Gas Project will create jobs during construction as well as ongoing roles during its 25-year lifetime. It is however important to note that these are jobs for only a relatively short period of time. Agriculture can support many more jobs for a much longer horizon if the right decisions are made now. We cannot risk our groundwater that will support an infinite number future generations for the short term gain of a single company.

There is a global glut of gas, yet Australia has some of the dearest energy prices in the world whilst we are one of the top producing gas nations. This indicates a server lack of foresight, planning and policy at a government level. We don't need to extract more gas, we need a better domestic gas policy.

I have attached a couple of images of our district during drought, and then a few more recent images after meaningful rain. As desolate as these images look, it is important to realise that production was still able to take place for one reason and one reason only. We all had access to the precious groundwater.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Angus Chadwick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line at the end.

Angus Chadwick

+61 447 242 393





