Good Afternoon Commissioners

I’m Adam Macrae and I acknowledge your diligence in touring the Santos facility and meeting with their representatives. I sincerely invite you, commissioners, to pencil in a day and witness for yourselves the strengths of, and challenges faced, by a community like ours- of which there are many- whose only permanent fresh water is supplied by the Great Artesian Basin. We have no other option- not only for farming businesses, but for our townships- including our schools and hospitals, our support services, our businesses, our sporting fields and our residents.

I have lived in the Coonamble Shire since 2003. I’m a husband and father of five. Our family farms about 4000 acres, and along with the rest of our extended farming family out here, we produce the cleanest and best quality beef, wheat, barley, chickpeas, lamb and wool for the rest of world.

I have been an agriculture and science teacher at our high school for 18 years. My wife Row owns and operates a café in town. I am president of the Coonamble Bears junior rugby league and netball club, with over 200 registered players. I’m an active member of the Coonamble Show society and vice president of Coonamble Junior Cricket.

The purpose of this impromptu CV is to establish some valid credential as a representative and hard working advocate for our community.

I’m not an economist, a hydrologist, a health expert or an engineer, but I have a firm finger on what is required, what is valued and what is a threat to the people of our community.

I have had first hand experience dealing with a project associated with the NGP- namely APA’s western slopes pipeline. My experience was traumatic and indicative of the slim to zero regard this industry has for due diligence, property rights and communities. This included trespass, intimidation and operating outside the terms of their ATS.

Our people reject any notion that this project will benefit our communities in any way. We are screaming to be heard. The undeniable evidence of this staunch public opposition is:

* 97% of all residents across 3.2 million hectares surrounding the pilliga opposed to the CSG industry.
* 104 communities declaring themselves Gasfield Free over this area.
* 23000 submissions with 96% opposed to this project. I acknowledge the qualification that many were form submissions, but 23000 people did something.
* The national party lost Barwon to the SFF, who openly opposed the project.
* 2 very conservative rural advocacy groups- the CWA and the NSWFF openly oppose the project.

The people of the North West are not prepared to accept the many risks posed by this gasfield, nor any other CSG development that will follow. Risks to their water, climate, economy, health, culture and their community, all of which have been presented to you by people much more qualified that I and are best summarised by SANTOS’s 2/16 scorecard in relation to the Chief Scientists recommendations.

Our communities can see right through any espoused benefits of this industry. The DPP’s acknowledgement that this project will not actually reduce domestic prices is a great start. Median House price is an excellent guage of the economic health of a town. A quick look at Real estate.com shows that, Chinchilla’s median house price in 2006=$275k, in 2015(height of construction boom) =$380k … 2018=$191k (30% less than 12 years ago!).

Added to this is the fact that land hosting any CSG infrastructure is uninsurable.

This industry is an economic and social parasite.

People are aware of the Covid Commission’s push for a gas powered recovery for the economy. We have, right under our nose Agriculture and tourism. Both of which are economic powerhouses that are sustainable, established and capable of tremendous growth in the long term.

For example, in the shires surrounding the Pilliga forest, in ABARES 2015/16 Census, (which was a dry year- We didn’t even sow one paddock) there were 2062 farming businesses with gross receipts of $2.06B And more broadly, the GAB supports $12.8B in economic activity.

Now, Agriculture not only 10 times more jobs per dollar of income than mining, it improves the value of land indefinitely, creating a platform for further investment and employment and in doing so, tremendous inter-generational equity.

Therefore, Commissioners, I appeal to you to not only reject this project, but recommend the cancellation of all PEL’s held by CSG companies in North West NSW.