

LOCK THE GATE ALLIANCE

AUSTRALIANS WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT OUR LAND, WATER, AND FUTURE

Reply to: Georgina Woods
PO Box 290
Newcastle 2300

24 June 2020

Steve O'Connor
Panel Chair, Narrabri Gas Project
Independent Planning Commission
via ipcn@ipcn.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr O'Connor

We are writing in your capacity as chair of the IPC panel considering the Narrabri Gas Project with some suggested issues and questions that we ask be posed to the Department of Planning when the panel meets with the Department on 25 June.

We understand this request is not part of the usual procedures of the IPC but given that the IPC can no longer conduct reviews of major resource projects ahead of making its determination, nor conduct multi-stage public hearings, there are limited opportunities available to us to seek answers from the Department of Planning about gaps and inaccuracies in its Assessment Report for the Narrabri Gas Project.

The list of questions below is not exhaustive, and Lock the Gate will provide more comprehensive comments in our submission to the Commission, but we hoped the panel would be willing to consider asking the Department these questions:

- Why is there no mention in the Assessment Report of the principles of ecologically sustainable development?
- Why does the Assessment Report claim the project will add gas supply and “put downward pressure on prices” when the economic modelling expressly assumed it would do neither and no material has been provided that suggests it will?
- What information was provided to the EPA between their “Final advice” dated 12 February which indicated insufficient information was available to them on fugitive emissions and air toxics and the “Final advice on fugitive emissions” dated 23 March when they expressed satisfactio?
- In brief reference to the Chief Scientist’s 2014 review, the Assessment Report says “As outlined in Section 4” indicating there will be some discussion of the review’s recommendations and the government’s implementation of them, but there is nothing in “Section 4” about this matter and the fact that a parliamentary inquiry found in February that less than half of the Chief Scientist’s recommendations have been implemented.
- Why has the Department not addressed Narrabri Shire Council’s express request that for conditions that apply a three-layered policy of security deposits, enhanced insurance

coverage, and an environmental rehabilitation fund or an alternative to the satisfaction of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer?

- The EPA's policy on *Safeguarding future environmental liabilities from Coal Seam Gas Activities in NSW*, released in February, states that the agency will require CSG operators to hold insurance, or "prove to the EPA the existence of sufficient potential clean up funds." How is this reflected in the Assessment Report and the proposed conditions?
- What is the purpose of condition A23, which gives the Planning Secretary the power to cut out other agencies and parties that would otherwise have involvement in management plans and how does this accord with the EPA's status as "lead regulator?"
- The EPA is the lead regulator for gas. It specifically recommended that vague phrases like "all reasonable and feasible measures," "as soon as practicable" "to the greatest extent practicable" and "as soon as reasonably practicable" be replaced with measurable and quantifiable measures or methods. Why did the Department not comply with this request?
- The Water Expert Panel raises what appear to be serious discrepancies about the impact of the project on the Lower Namoi Alluvium, indicating Santos has underestimated the scale of take from that water source and the impact of that take on other water users. How can consent be granted without this issue being understood and resolved?
- The final "Advice on conditions" from DPIE Water, dated October 2019, includes specific requests not included by the Department in its draft conditions of consent particularly around the timing of data collection ahead of production. Why did the Department ignore this advice that there be "*at least three years of monitoring data collected prior to Phase 2.*"

If any of the above information needs clarification, we would be very willing to discuss them further. I can be contacted on 0437 405 932.

Sincerely

Georgina Woods