

Submission to Narrabri Gas Project

Forty-five years ago, I made my home on the edge of the Warrumbungle Mountains just to the south of the proposed gas field. Apart from its scenic beauty, the property's main asset is a clean, clear, permanent spring that not only provides my drinking water but water for wildlife. As far back as 1920 owners were legally required to protect the spring from contamination. 2019 was the driest year since records began in 1886 but despite the decreased flow of the spring the lives of many animals and birds depended on it. After 4 years of drought my water tanks were empty, but the spring remained.

The spring rises from the pressurised aquifers of the south tilting rim of the Pilliga sandstone where Santos proposes to drill 850 wells for coal seam gas. The National Water Commission has stated that coal seam gas drilling presents significant risks to the supply and quality of water resources. Santos admits that this gas field will de-pressure these sandstone aquifers. If the Narrabri Gas Project goes ahead, it is likely that my spring will stop flowing, wildlife will die, I will lose my drinking water and my property will be severely devalued.

Should the spring continue to flow, I am concerned that the water will be contaminated. Santos has repeatedly demonstrated that it is not capable of managing the risks associated with water contamination. Evidence for this is the number of times the company has been fined for polluting these same aquifers with radioactive uranium and other carcinogenic contaminants. Please understand that this is my drinking water and that if contaminated there are no warnings other than the deterioration of my health.

I began by saying that this was my home. Home is not a word I use lightly. Home is a place that nourishes our being. It is a place we fight to protect. The purity and reliability of my water supply is integral to my sense of home. To have my water supply fail or be contaminated would be as catastrophic for me as it would for anyone.

I bought a small parcel of shares in Santos hoping that I might influence the decision to proceed with the Narrabri Project. However, Santos treats its small shareholders with contempt. The company continues to dismiss community and shareholder concerns about water and health as the actions of a lunatic fringe. 92% of our district does not want a Gas Field anywhere in our district. We know that because we went to the trouble of asking every landholder and resident. We do not want the Pilliga turned into a Gas Field and we do not want our precious water sources ruined. In April 2015, local landholders attended a 3,000 km highway protest. I filmed a short section of it from Dubbo to Coonabarabran and was amazed at the number of local people who made the effort to voice their disapproval. As part of this submission, I ask you to watch and listen carefully to their voices:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtvkaWm_fA

Santos is not behaving as a good corporate citizen. It has sought to influence Government decisions through political donations and has clearly demonstrated that it cannot manage the environmental risks of drilling in the Pilliga or of safeguarding the Great Artesian Basin. Santos's Narrabri Gas Project will inevitably face massive litigation settlements for which it will not have sufficient funds.