

## **OBJECTION**

### **SANTOS' NARRABRI COAL SEAM GAS EXTRACTION PROJECT**

To members of the Independent Planning Commission:

I am making this submission on behalf of my family. We wish to lodge an objection to the proposed Santos Narrabri coal seam gas project.

We operate a broad acre cropping farm on the Western edge of the Liverpool Plains. I am the third generation of my family to be involved in agriculture. Our son, who is now involved in the management of our property is the fourth generation to be involved in agriculture. We are proud of the industry we are involved in and feel threatened by a toxic, transient industry that may jeopardise our future sustainability.

Since 2009 I have dedicated my life to protecting this valuable food producing region and the groundwater that is integral to our farming operation from coal seam gas extraction. I have placed my life "on hold" because I consider that the battle to protect the future sustainability of this nation is the biggest and most important battle this nation has had to face.

As world population increases we need to not only be able to produce enough food to feed our domestic population, but also contribute to feeding the population of other nations. Groundwater is critical to the future sustainability of this nation.

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth. The Great Artesian Basin supplies 22% of Australia. Groundwater is the most precious resource we have in this country.

It seems inconceivable that consideration would be given to a coal seam gas extraction project that is located over an area classified as the Southern Recharge for the Great Artesian Basin.

It is difficult to understand why the proposed Santos Narrabri coal seam gas extraction project has even progressed to this stage.

The battle to protect food producing regions in the NW of NSW and the groundwater of the Gunnedah-Oxley Basin which extends from Boggabilla in the north to almost Mudgee in the south has been until now a game of psychological warfare.

The proponent, Santos, makes sweeping statements which are made to mislead and deceive and the people who have had to stand up and defend this region, when making a statement of scientific fact have been dismissed as “an ill-informed noisy minority” or a group who are “scare mongering”.

People from all walks of life have come together, united and determined to protect food producing regions and our groundwater.

There are more than enough scientific studies relating to coal seam gas extraction that clearly demonstrate that this toxic industry cannot co-exist with agriculture.

Many eminent scientists have contributed valuable information and strongly corrected statements made by the coal seam gas extraction companies who have tried to promote and gain approval for the industry.

The Santos – Narrabri coal seam gas extraction project hopes to gain approval to drill 850 new coal seam gas wells across 95,000 hectares near Narrabri. That does not include the 50 exploration wells. There has already been over 1,000 hectares of the Pilliga forest cleared to accommodate roads, pipelines and well pads.

Santos stated in the first chapter of their Environmental Impact Statement quote....*the EIS found that the project will have minimal risk of impact on agricultural and domestic water sources...In addition, the project is not located within a major recharge zone of the Great Artesian Basin.*”

**FACT: The area that Santos’ EIS covers is termed the Southern Recharge of the Great Artesian Basin and is a major recharge area for the GAB.**

In October 2014 Santos stated in the Referral to the Federal Government Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act – page 65. Quote : *“an assessment of the project indicates that the duration and wider geographic extent of depressurisation of groundwater head within the coal seams and adjacent strata will cause a significant impact to the groundwater resources of the Gunnedah-Oxley Basin.”*

**FACT: The Gunnedah – Oxley Basin extends from Boggabilla in the North to almost Mudgee in the south. Towns, industry, tourism and agriculture depend on the groundwater resources of this basin.**

Santos claim that they will drill through the upper aquifers and despite drawing enormous quantities of water from lower depths (approx. 37.5 billion litres) claim that there will be minimal impact on upper aquifers.

The project is operating in the coal seams that run under the Great Artesian Basin. When Santos take volumes of water from lower levels, an area of **low hydraulic pressure is created.**

**The laws of physics state that all must be in equilibrium as well as the laws around fluids which states that fluids must flow from a high pressure to a low pressure in order to achieve equilibrium.**

**To maintain the law of hydraulics, groundwater that is above the now depleted coal seam flows down to replace the water removed from the coal seam.**

As groundwater levels nearer the surface fall, bores that supply towns, industry and agriculture will dry up.

Santos has ignored the Director General's requirements and refused the EPAs request relating to the disposal of toxic waste.

Santos has refused the Rural Fire Service's recommendation that gas flaring not occur on days of extreme or catastrophic bushfire risk.

In 2013 the Government had such concern relating to coal seam gas extraction that the Chief Scientist was directed to conduct a comprehensive review of CSG related activities.

In 2014 the Government accepted all of the recommendations of the review. At this stage only a couple of the recommendations have been implemented.

The Santos coal seam gas extraction project should not be considered for approval until **ALL OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST'S RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED.**

Santos has a very poor compliance record. In 2014 Santos was found guilty on four counts of failing to comply with conditions of its petroleum exploration licence and has been fined multiple times for spills and aquifer contamination.

It has only been through the vigilance of private citizens who have reported these serious chemical spills and toxic contamination of aquifers. Santos has demonstrated a propensity to flaunt rules and show a flagrant disregard for regulations.

Santos should not be rewarded for such malicious behaviour. There are not enough, nor will there ever be enough compliance officers to manage extraction industry projects across the state.

The Santos –Narrabri coal seam gas extraction project must not be considered solely under the current application, but serious consideration must be given to the extent of the area covered by eleven CSG licences covering 4.5 million hectares from Murrurundi to the QLD border.

Once approval is granted, it must be considered that it will be impossible to contain this toxic industry.

Santos quote jobs numbers as an inducement to gain approval for this project. The job numbers quoted are wildly inflated. It has been revealed in QLD that the promise of jobs never eventuated and many businesses that invested on the strength of the CSG companies claims have been left hurting financially. It must also be considered that if the groundwater resources that support towns, tourism, industry and agriculture is negatively impacted, (as Santos stated in 2014) across the Gunnedah- Oxley Basin, many, many hundreds of people will either lose employment or be dispossessed as they will no longer be able to live in the region.

We have only just emerged from the most prolonged drought period in recorded history. As dams and all surface water sources dried up, the importance of groundwater reserves was impressed upon us all.

We are fortunate to have the largest groundwater reserve in the world. We cannot risk its depletion or contamination to appease a coal seam gas extraction company who will make statements to mislead or deceive to achieve an outcome in their favour.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Robyn King