

To The Independent Planning Commission

Narrabri Gas Project

I am writing on behalf of myself and my family.

We strongly object to this proposal.

We are immediate neighbours of the Narrabri Gas Project. The project lies west of our property. Our western boundary joins the Pilliga State Forest. We have a 10000 acre farm comprised of beef cattle and cropping. We are a family run farm.

Our first objection is that as immediate neighbours of this proposed project we have never been personally consulted by Santos nor have they provided us with any details of this development such as the location and scale of the project. Due to the close proximity of the proposed development to our farm and home, consultation should have been mandatory. Santos has not attempted to establish a relationship with us. They have not entered into any discussions with us so that we could express our concerns regarding the project such as any impacts this development may have on our land, our water, our farm enterprise, our health and our quality of living. This shows Santos' disregard for neighbours and members of the community and with their only interest being the progression of this project at any cost. If this is their attitude before the commencement of the Narrabri Gas Project what hope would we have of solving any problems that arise if the project was approved. Any information we have is from our own research and efforts. I have attached a map showing the location of our property in relation to the Narrabri Gas Project. Our boundary is marked in blue. It runs a length of 3.3 kms.

The Pilliga State Forest is fundamental to the water catchment for the Great Artesian Basin. The GAB is the only source of reliable water for human activity and water dependent ecosystems in much of the arid and semi-arid landscape overlaying the Basin in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory. This water resource is the central to many rural communities and associated pastoral and agricultural, cultural and tourism activities. The Narrabri Gas Project poses a risk to the contamination and supply of this water resource. Santos says the risk is small but I don't accept that but regardless of whether the risk is small or not, a risk is a risk, and no approval should be given to any development that jeopardises this irreplaceable resource.

According to the underground water maps the bore on our property is located in the Gunnedah Oxley Basin which according to the Santos EIS will be significantly impacted. This is of great concern to us. While the impacts on the ground waters of the GAB rightfully receive much attention many farming businesses including ours rely on the water from the Gunnedah Oxley Basin.
(Ref: ECO Logical Australia, Page 65. Part of Santos EIS)

I am aware of soil contamination from operator error from existing Santos operations in the Pilliga. These have consisted of contaminants and heavy metals such as arsenic, barium, boron, lead, nickel and uranium from contaminated water spills. These spills have caused significant soil contamination resulting in the die-out of flora in the area. These spills are claimed to be of relatively small amounts but are having lasting impacts with Santos struggling to successfully rehabilitate the affected site. This would suggest Santos have downplayed the negative impacts of these spills. What can be expected with full production? With many kilometres of pipelines carrying produced water from the wells to the water treatment plant there are just as many kilometres of potential points of leak or failure. We believe the risks are too high.

At a time where globally we are more aware than ever the need to reduce our impact on the environment and proceed into the future in a more sustainable way it is totally irresponsible to proceed with harvesting unconventional gas. Coal Seam Gas is almost pure methane and methane has a much higher potential to warm the atmosphere; up to 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide. It is often reported that CSG is cleaner than coal and oil based fuels but that is dependent on ensuring leakage from the wells and other infrastructure does not occur. According to an article in the Sydney Morning Herald any possible environmental benefits from using unconventional gas over other fossil fuels may be negated with small leakages of just 1-2% of methane. This information was provided by Professor Peter Rayner from the University of Melbourne. Also, in 2015 a huge leak from a gas storage site near Los Angeles in the United States of America vented approximately 100,000 tonnes of methane over 16 weeks. (<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/sleeper-issue-of-leaking-coal-seam-gasfields-may-blow-hole-in-emissions-goals-20160622-gpph1q.html>) Comprehensive studies have not been undertaken in Australia to measure methane leaks from all sources within a gas project. The CSIRO study in 2014 only focused on the coal seam heads and not the vast infrastructure of seams and pipelines. In reality it is not known how much methane is leaking from Australia's existing coal seam gas fields. Furthermore the long-term post production emissions from wells decommissioned is unknown.

In keeping with sustainable living and reducing greenhouse gases and climate change we need to further develop renewable energy sources within Australia. The current term of referring to CSG as the transition energy between existing fossil fuels and future renewable energy is much more 'hype' than truth. In reality renewable energy harvesting equipment is already available and Australia has access to very high quality renewable energy resources and a huge harvesting territory in relation to our domestic energy needs. We need to encourage investment and infrastructure in the renewable energy industry. The Australian Energy Resource Assessment report, Second Edition, was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Industry and jointly undertaken by Geoscience Australia and the Bureau of Resources and Energy Economics and provides some valuable information to understanding Australia's energy resources. A significant point made in this report is that Australia's potential renewable resource base is very large. We have some of the best solar and wind energy resources in the world. Our wave energy potential is world-class and our geothermal energy has significant potential. The following is from the Australian Energy Resource Assessment report, 'It is clear that if Australia is to transition to a lower emission economy, a long term structural adjustment to the Australian energy sector will be required.' It is also interesting that many claims have been made that there will be shortfall in available energy resources for the domestic market. However this report does not support those claims. The report states that Australia has significant conventional gas resources and at current production levels there is enough conventional gas for a further 51 years. Also noted in this report is that Australia is a net energy exporter, with 80% of total energy production being exported.

On a local level we have just endured the worst drought on record causing us great financial, physical and emotional strain. The science on climate change is concrete. Droughts and fires will be more frequent. We must take action against climate change. Hard decisions and actions need to be made to ensure farming is still viable for future generations. There is no industry more essential to the world than food production.

The proposed development will also increase the risk of fires in the Pilliga. The proposed gas project poses numerous areas of concern in regards to increased fire risks. The first is from extra vehicular and human traffic. These risks can be from numerous sources including vehicle exhausts or from objects left at work sites or from cigarettes. Secondly, is the risk of a fire starting from a gas flare. Another consideration is the chance of exacerbating fires from gas explosions. Bushfires in the Pilliga

forest can be devastating and difficult to control. This area is already prone to frequent bushfires. It is interesting that this fact was even noted in the Coroner's Inquiry into the fire at Wambelong Camp Ground, Warrumbungles National Park, New South Wales January 2013, (File number 2013/00052575) 'Unlike the neighbouring Pilliga Scrub, until January 2013, fires in the Warrumbungles National Park had been historically been small and less frequent' (page 13 Fire history). With the increased bushfire risk that this proposed development will cause there will also be increased risks to the attending firefighters, to the workers in the forest and to the surrounding farmlands and the pastures, crops, livestock, buildings, homes and to the safety of the farmers and their families and to the wider community. It will also impact on the native wildlife, including the threatened and endangered species of the Pilliga. After so many catastrophic fires around Australia over the past few years we must acknowledge the devastating impacts of fires and not put at risk lives and communities. As I have mentioned before our property borders the Pilliga Forest. A fire in the Pilliga could be catastrophic for us. As such we have implemented practices on our farm to prepare for inevitable fires that will occur. We maintain fire breaks, we have purchased firefighting equipment including our own truck and have completed training with the RFS. We do not take the risk of fire lightly. We have experienced loss from a fire in the Pilliga. We lost fencing and property and had several hundred acres of grazing land burned. Also, we are volunteers with the Rural Fire Service, Wynella Brigade and have firsthand experience with dealing with fires in the Pilliga and have decided that the dangers are so great that we will no longer put our lives at risk by entering the Pilliga Scrub. Our Deputy Captain, David Watt, has been vocal about not putting his crew in danger by entering the Pilliga Forest. Our resources will focus on defending our farm and that of our neighbours and local community.

The Narrabri Gas Project proposes to industrialize the Pilliga State Forest. The clearing of the trees and associated understory growth and the building of infrastructure such as the gas wells, pipe lines, gas processing and water treatment facilities and roads will seriously compromise the integrity of this state forest. By definition a state forest is a form of public land for recreation, biodiversity, cultural heritage, forest products like timber, water catchment protection, research and education. The Pilliga State Forest is unique in that it is the largest continuous woodland remnant in the state with some unique fauna and home to a number of endangered and declining species of birds and other wildlife. It is therefore vital to leave the Pilliga unscarred by development so it can continue as a wildlife habitat.

Finally it is a misconception that this area can be sacrificed to gas mining as the quality of the land is poor. Right now in this area there are plenty of highly productive farms producing food and fibre for Australia and the world. For instance in 2019, the second driest year in recorded history (2018 was the driest) our farm alone provided 306950 kg of beef. Our prime beef went to domestic supermarkets and butchers. Don't risk what we already have in a sound agricultural area with friendly towns with titles like the little town with the big heart or the sportiest town in Australia or the koala capital of the world. Please do not put our agricultural industries at risk and cause social, environmental and economic upheaval in this area.

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