

Nina Harrison

From: IPCN Enquiries Mailbox
Subject: IPC submission - Narrabri hearings

Hello. My name is Scott Sledge and I am President of the Nimbin Environment Centre. We are incorporated in NSW and part of the network of concerned citizens under the umbrella of the North Coast Environment Council (NCEC) and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC). I acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and pay my respects to all elders, past and present.

Nimbin EC is part of North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) and the Better Planning Network and has strong links to the Tweed Water Alliance and most significantly the Northern Rivers Guardians which has more than 600 activist members. We operate a shopfront staffed entirely by volunteers on the main street of Nimbin and support the Students Strike for Climate and other environmental causes.

I was born in the USA and migrated to Australia during the Whitlam years. We stopped the war in Viet Nam. I have children and grandchildren whose welfare is my greatest motivator to preserve and protect the wonderful world that we have should leave in good condition for their future. I have worked globally in archaeology and I am a NSW landholder.

I have been fascinated and inspired by these IPC hearings. You have heard a wealth of facts and statistics that I trust you to consider carefully and so will not repeat any of them. One speaker tried to debunk environmental concerns as mis-informed and he said that none of the objectors have any first-hand knowledge. That is obviously untrue as many objectors have testified their experience. I, for example, have been to the Queensland gas fields and witnessed the construction of the gas pipeline all the way from SE sector through to Curtis Island at Gladstone. I know many landholders who have been adversely affected. I suggest you pay special attention to Dayne Pratzky when he speaks later today as he was hounded out of the Tara region because he objected to the pollution of land, air and water there. I have been to the Narrabri/Boggabri region and the Pillaga Forests at the time when the water treatment plant was established at Leewood. I have spoken with many residents of that area. I attended various information sessions and was part of peaceful protests at Scenic Rim, Shannon Brook, Glenugie, Doubtful Creek, Lismore, Casino, Sydney, Brisbane and Bentley. We continue to advocate for a sustainable future. I stood with thousands of citizens of all types opposed to damaging gas developments and I want to remind you that the people will rise up again as we did at Bentley (and won) despite increasing government restrictions on the right to protest.

I have attended business meetings with gas companies, including several Metagasco AGMs in Sydney. I am a shareholder of Rainbow Power Company and lobby on behalf of clean renewable energy. I was deceived for a time by claims that gas is a "clean transitional fuel." That is nothing but propaganda : gas is an additional loading of fossil fuel pollution in a world rapidly heading towards climate change devastation.

We all have witnessed many extreme weather events related to our world-wide warmer, drier climate. The recent wildfires should convince all but the most extreme sceptic that we need to change our ways. The "Greed is good" mantra needs to be reviewed in light of widespread land-clearing and wildlife habitat

destruction. Seems to me that the best thing we can do at this point in history is to limit the effects of climate change. That means reducing emissions and protecting trees. It means we can not allow more fossil fuel developments.

SANTOS says it won't fracture the geology, but it has already fractured our society.

I have heard the proposal put by the Dept described as weasel words" and I hope that you will not be swayed by promises of wealth and prosperity and seductive assurances, such as the idea of "adaptive management" which is that when something goes wrong SANTOS will fix it. We have all heard that a woman cannot be just a little bit pregnant. The underground water sources such as the GAB cannot be cleaned once polluted. SANTOS and their propagandists tell us there is no risk of significant damage. If you believe that I can sell you just about anything .

It is like the urgent young man who assures a fair maiden that he will pull out in time despite she has fallen pregnant many times in the past. I hear the project proponents say that they have learned from the mistakes of the past, so you should not consider the damage to people and environments in Queensland and overseas. They say it won't happen here. Really? These people are addicted to fossil fuel profits and will not share them as promised. Will we be so naïve as to believe they won't frack? Will they pull out in time ? How will they clean up aquifers and compensate for polluting the GAB?

I hope you will take seriously the devastation caused by clearing massive tracts of bush for drill sites and pipelines. When I saw these in SE Qld it looked like a war zone. And in fact it is: a war by greedy white men against Nature. The cost in wrecked homes for people and wildlife is enormous and if we continue there will be little left for future generations. Who cares? I do. All of us who have children and grandchildren must care: an attack on our environment is an attack on our future. How does that stack up against the trinkets afforded by jobs in this destructive industry? There are more jobs in a sustainable world and renewable energy is the way forward.

And what about "generational equity"? You will be asked to believe that we can't pay back the debts we are incurring in response to present pandemic, etc without economic development. Who will pay for the new gas pipelines?The pipelines (Phase2) will have to be approved if this project is approved. But I ask you to consider whether the fossil fuel industry operates without government subsidies and when was the last time they cleaned up their mess? mostly they walk away, leaving a polluted landscape and say that they don't have to rehabilitate sites because their activities are only paused and "mothballed." Will they will come bac? No, usually the clean up is another taxpayer costs. Privatise the profits, socialise the risks.

I have seen what CSG does to communities and to the health of residents near these developments. It is far from benign. If anything, it can be best described as the most stupid actions by the most greedy of men. I suppose that you Commissioners are appointed because you can be relied upon to approve whatever the government wants. I have had experience with the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC). In this case I appeal to you as wise men not to continue down the dinosaur's path, but to reject this dangerous proposal and become heroes to the people our government is supposed to represent. I believe that you are expected to give "conditional approval," because the rights of the public to a merits appeal will be extinguished by this Public Hearing process. The problems of gas mining can't be fixed. Once approved it's a done deal. Reject the Proposal altogether. Do that for your own pride, show your integrity, and for our mutual prospects for a healthy world to hand on to my grandchildren and our future generations. Thank you for listening: I hope you have heard. So much depends on what you decide.

