

Comment to the Independent Planning Commission

NARRABRI GAS PROJECT

Submitted by myself as an individual, informed by almost sixty years of involvement in environmental and community advocacy for ecologically sustainable management of nature and natural resources.

Rather than attempt to re-hash the many solid inputs before the Commission through written submission, verbal presentations and in response to questioning, I wish to add my voice of concern regarding the Narrabri Gas Project. I note the many concerned and informed presentations made through open hearing process, the work of the Commissioners in asking penetrating and useful questions. I also note that a number of recent public reports that have recently emerged, including the interim report from Graeme Samuel's review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (**EPBC**) which highlights deficiencies in current legislation and implementation.

I have visited the Pilliga area a number of times, including as a then member of the National Parks & Wildlife Advisory Council, and have viewed first hand some of the preliminary works, seen the clearings and the flaring, and the on-ground pollution spills.

This is truly a proposal of significance to NSW; a proposal that threatens the integrity of the last remaining extensive tract of natural landscape in central NSW as well as impinging on the long term health and viability of the many farmers in the region. Mobilisation of subterranean fossil petrochemicals for fuel is recognised as a major contributor to climate change, that should be phased out rather than expanded.

The Narrabri Gas Project has been promoted as assisting the transition from coal to renewables, and as a means of reducing gas prices to the consumer: however this does not accord with the best scientific advice from Climate Change professionals. Nor does it resonate well with me, as a city dweller who uses gas for stove-top cooking while recognising this is a use that needs to be phased out and mean time should be priced accordingly - though not through price distortions arising from past political decisions aimed at promoting gas export. Furthermore, since the NGP was first initiated a lot of new information has emerged. The growth of renewables is also leading to change in overall energy management, as seen in the AEMO report released in recent days.

The impacts of the NGP on water resources are insufficiently understood, with real risk of damage to the complex hydrological aquifers, through pollution, cross contamination, and even collapse. These impacts have the potential to forever compromise subterranean and surface waters affecting both the continued viability of existing natural habitat and surrounding agricultural lands and settlements. There is limited confidence that under the current water management governance arrangements there is the capability and the will to set rules -let alone enforce their compliance- to adequately manage.

I re-iterate:

The Pilliga region is the largest remaining area of predominantly native habitat and the wildlife t supports in central NSW, of importance biologically and culturally not only to the state but to Australia and the world. The region is underpinned by a complex system of aquifer channels, and recharge areas as well surface water courses and wetlands.

I ask the Commission to evaluate the adverse implications and risks for all time given the impossibility of adequately mitigating impacts, even if conditions imposed are enforced, including:

- emissions released during fracking process, including via 'flaring';
- fractured/polluted aquifers;
- loss of connectivity due to roading, pipelines, fencing – recognising that subsequent rehabilitation may be too late even if achievable in terms of barriers to movement of biota already threatened by existing fragmentation and habitat modification;
- extinction of species/subspecies

In my view no amount of public rhetoric on the desirability of supporting local economic activity through this gas project and of increasing short/long term employment is worth the risk of irreparable damage to this unique region. Furthermore, expansion of gas fuel use, a climate contributing emitter, is contrary to the best advice of climate scientists.

Accordingly I register my objection to the project.

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