

Independent Planning Commission

Hearing for the Santos Narrabri Gas project

20th July 2020

My name is Dian Bedggood, I live in Coonabarabran.

I acknowledge that this land is Gamellori country, and would like to pay my respects to all Elders past, present and future

I oppose this project on so many levels, but decided to highlight the destruction of communities in the path of this mining project.

I would like to address the social impacts of mining for communities, long term. its been a “given” since the first gold rush, that the boom and bust culture of the previous century is embedded in a our collective unconsciousness. Mining has become a curse of lazy thinking.

I would like to quote Eva Cox in a paper she wrote in May 2017 , titled “What makes Communities Healthy” as a benchmark for a vibrant society.

“Most things that affect our health don't originate in own bodies and are not under our immediate control.

what helps your health more is to be a citizen of a nation that has working rules against poisoning the water or the air, where inequalities are smoothed out by wealth redistribution,where guns are kept under control,, and where you can get access to health care without having to sell a child or a kidney. Politics Matter.

Community groups are the immune system of Australian society, breaking down the toxins and preserving the health of the polity.

The research shows that active community groups build trust between citizens_ trust that support public health, eases the path of commerce, lowers the crime rate, and makes traditional politics possible.

Trust builds health, anger diminishes it, Everyday community groups give a heart and a hand and a face to a society that otherwise have no connection to the trials and triumphs of our every day lives.”

I chose to live here, for many reasons, one was the diversity of this community, the scientific population of Siding Springs and the National Parks, the local first nations people and the farming sector round the town , a greater mix gives it a resilience to its health.

Other reasons were clean air ,clean water and to grow food. I struggle to explain the vital connections in Coonabarabran that is not perfect, but nevertheless manage to care for its population in many subtle and overt ways e.g. the recent 2013 Wambelong fires.

My concerns about the impacts of the Narrabri gas project is that the probable divisions and destruction of this community and I cite as an example the town of Miles, Queensland

I was at the Crossing Theatre when a past president of that chamber of commerce spoke , he laid out the rapid changes to Miles when the gas companies moved in, the rise in real estate prices, the moving away of the older population and renters on low incomes, a younger generation moving in, some getting jobs, others not, some businesses benefitting others that borrowed to fund projects lost money, the notable outcome was that the older population that moved away were the backbone of community groups, sporting clubs , Fly in flyout workers boosted the pubs consumption, crime rates encreased, policing required more staff, and according to Dr Hanabeth Luke of the Southern Cross University in her papers reported that women felt less safe.

Unfortunately the gas ran out sooner than estimated, businesses were bankrupted, each week more recorded in the local paper, depressing reading, Real estate prices dived,the town has changed again, to the moving in of many families on low incomes, depression rates are high,

Many other Queensland outback towns in the path of CSG extraction have suffered similar fates, Acland being one of the most devastated.

Miles is struggling to regain its community again, Chinchilla is a dead town.

This scenerio is not what Coonabarabran or surrounding townships want or need,

People who live in the country towns are an uncomplaining stoic lot. they have endured a horrendous fire in January 2013, followed by a severe drought which has been devastating.

i am amazed at the level of health care and other lack of services they put up with. I am convinced that social capital needs to be considered, not much information in the Report, just expected low impact. this shows to me a disregard of the value of a healthy community,

Has the NSW Government factored into this project the support required and costs involved in mental health alone as a fall out of the impact of local communities?

The report hardly adresses the impact on communities, and i find the Santos contributions to local communities as in Their report offensive... akin to John Batman in 1835 offering the local Victorian tribes trinkets, mirrors and hatchers for their land. what a deal.

In conclusion, I draw from Eva Cox and her presentation in in 2007 Communities in Control, her key points are positive, in that she asks us to imagine a society we want, “who gives us an image of the future we want?” I like the idea of imagining a future society that I would like to leave our grandchildren, community oriented, we need an elusive light on the hill to be able to move on, with dignity and belonging, trust is important.”

The panel may have concluded from the number of negative submissions, that this community has lost trust in the Government,

I see this as a major breakdown in our society where people do not trust and are disengaged from the Government, this is a powerful indicator of a Government that appears not to respond to its citizens basic needs.