

**From:** [Wendy Spencer](#)  
**To:** [IPCN Enquiries Mailbox](#)  
**Subject:** Submission re Narrabri Gas Project  
**Date:** Sunday, 9 August 2020 2:48:01 PM  
**Attachments:** [DEGSubmissiontoIPC\\_3August2020.pdf](#)

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Please find attached the submission to the IPC from Dharriwaa Elders Group. I submitted it via your online form however there was no feedback that it was successfully submitted, so I am sending this email to make sure that it is received.

Please advise that the submission has been received for the Narrabri Gas Project Inquiry.

thanking you

Wendy Spencer

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Wendy Spencer  
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I pay my respects to the custodians and Elders of the Gamilaraay, Ngayiimbaa, Wayilwan and Yuwaalaraay nations in the Walgett region where I work.

If you receive this email outside your working hours please feel no pressure to respond until your return to work.

# Reject the Narrabri Gas Project



*Above: Bohena Creek Spill site August 2016. Photo Dharriwaa Elders Group.*

A submission to  
the NSW Independent Planning Commission  
from Walgett's

**Dharriwaa Elders Group**

3 August 2020

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## **About Walgett's Dharriwaa Elders Group**

The Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG) takes a leading interest in the protection and maintenance of Aboriginal Cultural Values ("ACVs") in Walgett landscapes. DEG was born 20 November 2000 after Elders had worked together on projects since 1998. The Group took its name from one of its sacred sites –the RAMSAR-listed Narran Lakes -Dharriwaa (common meeting place) and its full members are Aboriginal people over 60 who live in Walgett. With the aid of partners, governments, donors and volunteers, the organisation has worked to support Aboriginal Elders to resume leadership roles in the community; keep active and healthy; promote local Aboriginal cultural knowledge and identity; and develop the Walgett Aboriginal community.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group values its relationships and collaborations with scientists and other researchers so that together, we can assist governments and the Australian nation to better understand and manage valuable natural and knowledge assets.

Today Dharriwaa Elders Group ("DEG") has built a multi-faculty, holistic, community-led partnership with University of NSW ("UNSW") called Yuwaya Ngarrali<sup>1</sup> to progress Elders' long held vision for systemic change. 'Yuwaya Ngarrali-<sup>2</sup>' aims to improve the wellbeing, social, physical and built environment and life pathways of Aboriginal people in Walgett through collaboration on evidence-based initiatives, research and building local community capabilities and control.

## **Reject the Narrabri Gas Project**

Walgett's Dharriwaa Elders Group's message to you is that the Independent Planning Commission must reject the dangerous proposal to expand CSG mining in the Pilliga Forest. The existing gas wells must be shut down and rehabilitated.

Our representatives have seen where the spill at Bohena Creek has not healed, and how Santos has been fined, for polluting aquifers. We've asked where the waste brine will go, and have received no answer<sup>3</sup>. We've read how CSG wastewater contains dangerous endocrine-disrupting and other extremely concerning chemicals and so fear for the health of our community that already suffers a high burden of chronic disease. The methane emissions from the wells and the increased carbon emissions from burning the gas will worsen the world's Climate Emergency. We in Walgett, have borne many dire impacts from the Climate Emergency – water and food insecurity, the loss of our rivers, over-extraction of groundwaters, too many dust storms and violent weather events.

## **Overwhelming evidence for rejecting the Narrabri Gas Project**

The IPC has been provided with overwhelming evidence that CSG mining is further risking our health and environment, the Namoi River, the groundwater and their dependent ecosystems that we rely on in Walgett. Dharriwaa Elders Group asks that you listen to the facts being presented to you by many very serious, ordinary people who have been dedicating their lives to fight this threat. You must not ignore them, or the risks they and the many experts who have joined them to give evidence to the IPC, are alarmed about. Their dedication and persistence should have been ringing alarm bells for a long time now so it is very hard to understand why the NSW Government has endorsed the Narrabri Gas Project. Walgett Elders pay their respects to the Gamilaraay, Gomeroi, Gomeroi brothers and sisters of the Walgett Elders who have

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<sup>1</sup> "vision"

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/index.php/yuwayangarrali>

<sup>3</sup> The project must not be approved without a comprehensive waste management plan

been involved in this struggle – some who have passed away in the process, and pay respects to the North West Alliance of grassroots groups organised during this process - and the bigger groups who have helped- Lock the Gate, Wilderness Society, the Great Artesian Basin Protection Group, the Knitting Nannas, to name a few. We thank you all for your dedication in this struggle for a better NSW and take this opportunity to send love and regards to Peter Thompson and Meg Leathart.

**The Precautionary Principle requires that the Narrabri CSG Project must not proceed.**

If the Great Artesian Basin, the Namoi River and the Namoi Alluvial Basins are polluted by this activity – the IPC and the NSW Government will be responsible for knowingly contributing to our already overburdened chronic disease. They will be responsible for denying our community water to drink, water to grow our food, rivers that provide our community’s food and wellbeing. What gives anyone the right to think they can do that? Are you going to expose the taxpayer to litigation risk and massive clean-up costs? There are places, water, landscapes and habitats that we value that cannot be replaced or “cleaned up” after they are destroyed.

**No benefits to our community from the Narrabri CSG Project.**

Dharriwaa Elders Group doesn’t believe that CSG mining will bring significant jobs to Aboriginal people in the region. Those who lie to communities with high unemployment, about mythical jobs for our local unemployed, enrage us. Those who are destroying the health of Gamilaraay country from multiple gas wells, quarries and broadacre crops are destroyers of the public estate for the private short-term gain of a few who mostly do not live here. The Dharriwaa Elders Group in Walgett sees no benefits for our community from the project, only harms.

Energy prices are one of the main drivers of poverty and disadvantage for the Walgett community. No-one has convinced us of the economic benefits to NSW communities of CSG. There will be no benefit from the Narrabri Gas Project except for those who do not act in our interests.

**IPC reject this project. We need to Close the Gap.**

There is another way - If the NSW Government prioritises wellbeing. A responsible government and a responsible IPC would say “No” to dangerous, time-wasting proposals like this, and instead, would encourage the development of local renewable energy proposals that generate safe, affordable energy within a series of local energy networks. A local, sustainable energy network would support the creation of long-term local jobs by supplying affordable energy to start-up enterprises like a local waste factory that Dharriwaa Elders Group is working towards establishing. Income that would have been spent on expensive energy would be devoted to employing and feeding families. Government services currently focussed on our disadvantage, will pivot to support the economic and social development of our community. We will move closer towards Closing the Gap! The IPC, when it rejects the Narrabri Gas Project, can claim a higher priority – its contribution to supporting Closing the Gap in North West NSW.

**The Narrabri Gas Project is too risky.**

We believe that the many dangers of CSG extraction have been presented during the 2020 IPC hearings and will be particularly dangerous to our community and others nearby. We ask that you act with integrity to reject this dangerous project. Walgett’s Dharriwaa Elders Group will remember IPC commissioners’ actions and will hold you to account.