

August 10, 2020

Office of Independent Planning Commission NSW
Level 3, 201 Elizabeth Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Re NSW CSG: Narrabri Coal Seam Gas Project

Dear Commissioners: Mr Stephen O'Connor (chair), Mr John Hann, Professor Snow Barlow,
+ Counsel Assisting: Mr Richard Beasley, SC,

Thank you all for the opportunity to make a submission on this extremely important matter. I wish to pay my respects to the people of the Gomeroi + Gamilaraay people's on whose land this project is proposed. I write to you from Gidjabal land of the Bunjalung Nation of northern NSW.

As someone born + raised on the beautiful Liverpool Plains in Gunnedah in the 1950s + having the good fortune to have a deeply civically minded father who devoted himself to the social + economic well-being of the north west of NSW, this is a significantly personal issue for me. As I mentioned in my verbal submission to the Hearings, I still remember the enormous pride of learning, as a primary student, that my home was the 'biggest wheat receival centre in the Commonwealth'! Having had the privilege of traveling to Narrabri for three days of the hearings, I had the valuable opportunity to hear from the wide range of speakers, many of them fourth + fifth generation farmers, speak of the uniquely high quality agricultural land + the utter reliance on uncontaminated water, in turn dependent on the health of the Great Artesian Basin. During these hearings I was also shocked to learn that many farmers + businesses have had their plans stymied over the past ten years of uncertainty over a possible CSG industry, + have recently learnt that Insurance companies will not insure land over which there is a CSG claim! Like most business people, it is a fairly common expectation to be able to insure one's business/ livelihood: an incapacity to allow insurance hardly squares with the insistence of minimal risk.

As I listened to the presentation of Santos CEO, Mr Kevin Gallagher, + his smooth assurances of the employment opportunities + financial benefits of his company getting the go ahead, there was no acknowledgment of the relatively short time frame of this employment + the extremely high cost to existing livelihoods from farming + associated industries, entirely dependent on clean, reliable water sources, + ground free of leached toxins. That Santos has been considering this project for many years, yet were not able to present a convincing case for dealing with vast quantities of toxic salt waste is a profound travesty of ecological planning requirements. Indeed, to hear that the NSW Chief Scientist has had 16 requirements for approval, of which, years later, only two have been achieved, makes it appear to be a deeply corrupt process if this proposal is to be granted.

We hear in the media much of the pressures on our gas supply + the need to 'bring down costs', yet on closer enquiry there is clearly a deal of misinformation being pedalled, given the high costs of extraction from these proposed seams, the lag time in it coming into production, the falling prices of gas, the relative lower costs of renewables, + the very real risk of damage or contamination of our precious aquifers.

In this driest inhabited continent in the world, with the memory of the utterly cataclysmic fires over the past summer, to say nothing of the likely threat to our iconic, beloved + on the edge of extinction koalas, the strong, ongoing opposition of the Indigenous people who have protected this special area of the Pilliga forest for 60,000 years of inhabitation, this proposed project appears utter vandalism against the earth + future generations.

We are at a profound turning point in our world, ecologically, socially, economically + metaphysically as the impacts of climate change begin to be experienced in a vast range of contexts, as I am sure you deeply learned men are well aware.

I suspect it is also unusual to have this extraordinary outpouring of concern from such a dynamic range of perspectives + erudite study: cosmologists speaking on behalf of the 'dark skies', hydrologists, Elders, Councillors, scientists, farmers, concerned citizens all. I can only imagine it

has been a fascinating + exhausting process to sit with these wide ranging submissions + bringing your learning to the facts + presentations in a truly impartial way.

A recent interim report from the Independent Review of Australia's Environment Protection + Biodiversity Conservation Act concluded our ecosystems are in a rapid state of decline. Indeed our own Minister for the Environment, Mr Matt Kean, recently spoke (with Fran Kelly on Radio National's AM program: 27/7/20) of loss + fragmentation of habitat as the single biggest contributor to koala extinction. We have recently heard that the fires sweeping so much of Australia has led to the loss of three billion native animals: 3 billion. Given the koala is our most treasured + iconic native animal, why would we even consider a project that requires continuous gas flares, even in high fire conditions!!, + further threatens the largest woodland forest + intact koala habitat in the west of NSW?

We are profoundly blessed in this country to have inherited the legacy of the Aboriginal Tjurkurpa, or Dreaming, in which the past, present + future continuously interact, co-creating the world. We are in a deeply troubling time on our planet. To approve this project is to play Russian roulette with our future: a fractured water table, excessive potential for fire, loss of habitat, toxic salt waste + salinity. For a handful of gold + short term jobs?? Pandora does not go back into her box. The earth is strewn with 'unintended consequences'. I urge you to deeply consider the Precautionary Principle in your deliberations.

Commissioners, as you reflect on the profound, diverse + erudite submissions that have been presented at the many long days of the hearings, + the many thousands of written submissions, I implore you to consider the profound implications for the generations of human + creatures to come.

In the words of an earlier submission, by a fourth generational farming family near Narrabri, please do not allow: '10 million years of stored groundwater to be destroyed by a politician's pen!'

Thank you for this opportunity.

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