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**To:** [IPCN Enquiries Mailbox](#)  
**Subject:** Narrabri Gas Project - Objection  
**Date:** Monday, 10 August 2020 3:56:27 PM

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## **NARRABRI GAS PROJECT – OBJECTION**

**10<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

This is the submission of Richard Laird, objecting to the Narrabri Gas Project.

As a lifelong resident of the Narrabri area, I wish to express my strongest objection to the Santos Narrabri gas project and join with the majority of residents of this region to request the Independent Planning Commission to reject it.

The IPC has heard about social impact assessment research conducted by the gas industry, suggesting a higher level of support than actually exists.

I will tell you otherwise. The small coterie of pro-gas elements in Narrabri do not represent the majority of the population. The small group called Yes2Gas does not represent a large number of residents. Their voice is small, and drowns out the majority because they control the local newspaper the Narrabri Courier. This paper is known derogatively in Narrabri as the “*Santos Times*”, due to the bias it shows in showcasing Santos all the time, while concealing information opposed to Santos’ interests.

The so-called social acceptance survey that has been presented to you, has not been conducted in an unbiased way. The key question about social acceptance had 5 response choices.

Out of five choices, only one choice is a rejection, with four out of five choices “tolerate” “OK” “Approve” and “embrace”. There is no “don’t know”. These statistics are biased. I hope that the IPC has enough resources and staff to properly assess the statistics to sift out the facts from deliberate lies and concocted fake survey interpretation.

Many communities in the North West which designated themselves “Gasfield Free” will attest that a small minority of lesser informed people have faith that the Narrabri Gas Project can be controlled and prevented from a repetition of the damage that has been perpetrated in Queensland.

The Gasfield Free survey in Maules Creek/Wave Hill and Tarriaro involved community

members door-knocking almost every one of the properties in this region. The result is unmistakable. 87% of people rejected the Narrabri Gas Project, and any other coal seam gas operator that might seek to take over Santos. This percentage is consistent with many other communities around the state.

I believe this reflects the overall sentiment of the NSW population.

One local resident who was working for Whitehaven coal signed the gasfield free survey, saying that even though he works for the coal mine he would not allow his family to live near the gas field. So even coal miners think coal seam gas is too dangerous.

One of our biggest concerns, although this is only one of a long list of grave fears that we hold if this project is allowed to proceed, is for Groundwater. We know a lot about this in Maules Creek, as we have had three major NRAR investigations about aquifer interference by Whitehaven Coal. Your predecessor the Planning Assessment Commission ignored our evidence, ignored our expert reports which said that Whitehaven had severely underestimated its impacts on Groundwater, industrial noise, etc. Instead the PAC preferred to rely on the proponents' evidence and the department's assurances that they would put together a reliable compliance framework.

Much has been said about the so-called strict controls that the New South Wales Department of planning will enforce. However, we have direct experience of the compliance system of major projects and we can assure you that any confidence you may have that conditions will be faithfully or strictly enforced is a fallacy.

The recommended conditions contain multiple loopholes which will enable Santos to evade compliance. Every time we see the words “generally consistent with” and “to the Secretary’s satisfaction” strikes fear in us as we know that these are nothing more than get out of gaol cards for the proponent. Such has been our lived experience dealing with the Boggabri and Maules Creek coal mines, and the toxic cultures that these companies bring into our community.

Lurge you to reject the Draft Recommended Conditions. They are not worth the paper they are written on.

I am busy running a large and productive farm, which has been my life’s endeavour and I hope will also be my son’s. However trying to farm in the vicinity of coalmines and gas fields is debilitating in many ways. We know very well that once approved, the community affected by pollution, the takeover of our landscapes by industrial companies with few or no links to our community, and so many other impacts, will be ignored by the regulators – I would even say vilified for complaining about the dust noise, blasting fumes, vibrations,

feral animals, the list goes on.

Please do not abandon the people of Narrabri. We will not be protected by the regulators or the proposed system of compliance.

I am a longtime member of the RFS, and I do not believe for one minute that the secretive Modelling that Santos has presented (reportedly) to the NSW RFS and IPC to disprove the risks of flaring in the Pilliga is reliable. This modelling was discussed by David Kitto, someone regarded with some degree of loathing in this region due to his conduct in relation to affected communities for nearly ten years. He agreed “never say never”.

Kitto also told the Commissioners that willy-willys are uncommon in the region. This shows a complete ignorance about our region. Willie willies are known to frequently occur especially at some times of the year and they occur throughout the region including in the Pilliga. Concerning fire risk, I do not believe that any evidence to my knowledge has been put to the IPC about the risk of pipelines, pipeline explosions, pipeline leaks, leaks from Highpoint and Lowpoint valves, etc and the methane load that such fugitive emissions might create to contribute to an out-of-control fire in the Pilliga.

We do not trust David Kitto, on the basis of his track record of deceit towards our Maules Creek community, based on the first-hand experience of Maules Creek residents.

Not everyone will speak up however, as the rampant buy outs of rural property are accompanied by confidentiality agreements and therefore many locals are unable to speak, they are not even able to freely make complaints about pollution and other community impacts.

Mr Beasley SC stated that the IPC is not allowed to consider future developments and cumulative impacts of Phase 2 of Santos’ plans as they are speculative.

If this is so, then surely the IPC must also disregard so many other speculative statements that have been made by Santos, including speculation about the soda ash 'beneficial re-use' at a Coppermine, and also the ammonium nitrate explosives or fertiliser plant with Perdaman Industries.

We in Maules Creek are being struck with orange fumes from nitrous oxide and we cannot accept more blasting, more pollution, none of which is regulated adequately by the EPA.

For our community's health, our future, and a chance for our children's future not to live in a gasfield and suffer the effects of climate disruption, please reject this project.

Sincerely,

Rick Laird