

## **NARRABRI GAS PROJECT - Objection**

I am objecting to the approval of the Narrabri Gas project on behalf of myself but also my children, who cannot write a submission, but whose future will be impacted by this decision.

I object too for future generations, as the current political and economic processes fail to adequately take them into account. I object based on the intergenerational inequity that the approval of this, or any additional fossil fuel project, represents.

The threat of global warming, driving climate change, is acknowledged at every level of government and across international agreements. As we rely on science to drive policy decisions, it has become clear that we need to act urgently to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and the greenhouse gas emissions they generate as quickly as possible and leave remaining stocks of fossil fuels in the ground.<sup>1</sup>

### **Agreements, Commitments & Responsibilities**

With every approval of new or expanded fossil fuel projects our commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement, and the NSW's target of net zero emissions by 2050, is compromised. Paris Agreement targets are not currently being met, nor are they sufficient to achieve the aims of keeping global warming below 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees.

United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) annual Emissions Gap Report 2019 articulates that even if all current unconditional commitments under the Paris Agreement are implemented, temperatures are expected to rise by 3.2°C above pre-industrial levels this century.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of the report, expected emissions from already planned projects were on track to be over twice what is allowable in the carbon budget to achieve the Paris Climate Agreement aims. *"Governments are planning to produce about 50% more fossil fuels by 2030 than would be consistent with a 2°C pathway and 120% more than would be consistent with a 1.5°C pathway"*. The report concludes that emissions must halve by 2030.

2030 is only part way into the 25 year planned life of the Narrabri Gas Project, which would add emissions every year of its operation.

Australia is now the world's biggest exporter of fossil fuels, above Russia and Saudi Arabia, and while the emissions from the coal and gas we export do not count toward our actual commitments this is a technicality and it is a moral failing that we do not take responsibility for the impact these emissions are having globally.<sup>3</sup>

Any expansion of fossil gas is at odds with the Paris Agreement but more than that, it is at odds with our responsibility to the world and to future generations.

### **Intergenerational Justice**

As part of intergenerational justice, we have a responsibility, indeed an obligation, to leave future generations a clean and healthy atmosphere and a living world in which they can survive and thrive<sup>4</sup>. We are not currently meeting these obligations.

With every additional emission, we make limiting global warming to safe levels harder.

The Paris Climate Agreement aim for the 1.5 degrees was set because many of the impacts of a warmed planet will be exponentially worse at 2°C or more than at 1.5°C. At global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, over 70% of coral reefs will likely die, but at 2°C the potential is that virtually all reefs will be lost. Insects, vital for pollination of crops and plants, are likely to lose half their habitat at 1.5°C but this

---

1 <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/70/1/8/5610806>

2 <https://productiongap.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Production-Gap-Report-2019.pdf>

3 <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2020/07/09/australia-export-fossil-fuels/>

4 [https://psyche.co/ideas/future-generations-deserve-good-ancestors-will-you-be-one?fbclid=IwAR17u99kugcaqnLG7vysp-eOj571d\\_jX4iM6cdJ3A0Z\\_2OHXjmeuvXjFqg](https://psyche.co/ideas/future-generations-deserve-good-ancestors-will-you-be-one?fbclid=IwAR17u99kugcaqnLG7vysp-eOj571d_jX4iM6cdJ3A0Z_2OHXjmeuvXjFqg)

becomes almost twice as likely at 2°C and the frequency and intensity of droughts, storms and extreme weather events are increasingly likely above 1.5°C. There is growing evidence that we have missed our opportunity to remain at 1.5°C but every emission contributes to additional warming.<sup>5 6</sup>

Even if we stopped all human greenhouse gas emissions immediately, we are still on a path to a warmer planet. The global warming effect of greenhouse gases is not instant, there is a delay in temperature increases as the climate catches up with the emissions already in the atmosphere. This lag can be decades long.<sup>7</sup> What this means is that the emissions currently in the atmosphere will already lead to global temperatures above what they are today.

*“Delaying action will require more drastic measures to achieve a desired mitigation target than early action”<sup>8</sup>*

All of this this places impossible burdens on future generations; costly mitigation and draw down measures, increased natural disasters, food and water insecurity, financial instability, the potential for mass human migration on scales never seen before and worsening societal and global conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

Warming effects are not linear. As the planet warms climate tipping points are activated. The shrinking of the arctic icesheet, for example, leads to the ocean absorbing more heat, reducing the ice sheet, accelerating more warming. Research published at the end of 2019 by Emeritus Professor Will Steffen and colleagues<sup>10</sup> warns that many of the climate tipping points that regulate the state of the planet have already been activated, and others will be activated at lower levels of warming than previously thought. These tipping points can trigger abrupt carbon release back into the atmosphere, such as the release of carbon dioxide and methane.

The emissions we commit to today will not impact future generations in the same way emissions have impacted us but in exponential and reinforcing ways.

Of concern is not just the financial and physical burden on young people but also the psychological one. In the face of an unstable climate the richness of life’s opportunities are diminished. Choices we have taken for granted, such as where to live, buying and insuring a home and whether or not to have a family are becoming much harder. Anxiety levels in young people are increasing and the capacity for young people to emotionally invest in their future is being affected.<sup>11 12</sup>

### **Gas is not a Transition Fuel**

The argument for gas as a necessary ‘transition’ or bridging fuel from coal-fired power to renewable energy is not valid. It is true that at the point of energy production gas produces 30-50% less co2 than coal, however at all other stages of gas production and transportation fossil gas is emissions intensive, leaking methane into the atmosphere.

Fugitive methane emissions of just 3% across the gas production system would wipe out any of the emissions benefit of burning fossil gas over coal for electricity<sup>13</sup>. Recent research has shown that methane in the atmosphere from fossil fuel sources has been underestimated by as much as 25-40%.<sup>14</sup> Methane has around 86 times the warming potential of co2 over a 20-year period, this is **the critical** period that will make the difference between containing climate change and losing the battle.<sup>15</sup>

---

5 <https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/emissions-gap-report/2019/https://reneweconomy.com.au/gaslighting-australia-how-gas-industry-is-driving-up-emissions-18543/>

6 <https://reneweconomy.com.au/gaslighting-australia-how-gas-industry-is-driving-up-emissions-18543/>

7 [https://theconversation.com/what-would-happen-to-the-climate-if-we-stopped-emitting-greenhouse-gases-today-35011?fbclid=IwAR3k8zHjRhzLpUjLp3TGj3ShzqcHRGYqcWKGFFySmW0zj\\_YGzrBAeZoxIQ8](https://theconversation.com/what-would-happen-to-the-climate-if-we-stopped-emitting-greenhouse-gases-today-35011?fbclid=IwAR3k8zHjRhzLpUjLp3TGj3ShzqcHRGYqcWKGFFySmW0zj_YGzrBAeZoxIQ8)

8 [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp0809/09rp28](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp0809/09rp28)

9 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html>

10 [https://voiceofaction.org/collapse-of-civilisation-is-the-most-likely-outcome-top-climate-scientists/?fbclid=IwAR0\\_gO6DMIXTGEhyx\\_Zuhrm2pXN5GdCkNiyik\\_mbljXk2yOmsKQ1DlaQI](https://voiceofaction.org/collapse-of-civilisation-is-the-most-likely-outcome-top-climate-scientists/?fbclid=IwAR0_gO6DMIXTGEhyx_Zuhrm2pXN5GdCkNiyik_mbljXk2yOmsKQ1DlaQI)

11 <https://youthsense.com.au/employers/gen-z-believe-human-made-climate-change/>

12 [https://www.vice.com/en\\_au/article/vb54ad/how-young-people-are-dealing-with-the-anxiety-of-a-looming-climate-apocalypse](https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/vb54ad/how-young-people-are-dealing-with-the-anxiety-of-a-looming-climate-apocalypse)

13 <https://reneweconomy.com.au/gaslighting-on-emissions-ieefa-says-burning-Ing-worse-than-coal-for-climate-19615/>

14 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/methane-emissions-from-fossil-fuels-severely-underestimated>

15 <https://theconversation.com/scott-morrison-gas-transition-plan-is-a-dangerous-road-to-nowhere-130951>

As Tim Forcey mentioned to the hearing, the GISERA research on the fugitive methane emissions from CSG gas wells in Australia is inadequate to address concerns over the methane potential of CSG in Australia as it was conducted on such a small sample of wells, which were specifically selected by the industry.<sup>16</sup>

Gas as a 'transition fuel' from a cost perspective is also no longer supported. Renewable energy, including storage, is now the cheapest form of energy generation.<sup>17, 18</sup> Further investment in gas production and infrastructure represents a financial risk; *"If the world implements the Paris agreement, demand for gas-fired electricity will likely significantly drop off by 2030. Technology trends are already pointing in that direction. This creates a major risk that gas assets will become redundant."*<sup>19</sup>

The Australian Energy Market Operators recently released integrated system plan (ISP) outlined a very limited role for gas in the future of the National Energy Market, especially as it was increasingly not competitive with renewable energy and storage.<sup>20</sup>

### **A Better Way Forward**

It would be cynical to assume that, because the Narrabri gas project is specifically mentioned, along with other projects, in the January 2020 Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW and Commonwealth governments on expanding gas supply in NSW, the approval of the Narrabri gas project is inevitable.

But I remain optimistic because the MOU **also states** that

- should the projects **not** proceed the governments will conduct a gas market review and
- that the New South Wales Government, working with the Commonwealth Government will explore options to free up gas demand through electrification, fuel-switching, and energy efficiency.

**THIS** needs to be the outcome of this approval process

A rejection of this project leading to a comprehensive review of the NSW gas market (and the NEM)

- Its expected longevity and the high potential for stranded assets in the face of climate change and global moves away from fossil fuels
- An independent and comprehensive review of fugitive emissions from CSG over the lifetime of wells, including decommissioning, and the subsequent impacts on climate change.
- Coupled with NSW and federal government initiatives to drive down gas demand rather than increase gas supply. Including options to accelerate the uptake of hydrogen for processes that cannot be electrified.

### **In Conclusion**

The expansion of the fossil fuel industry in any way puts at risk the Paris Agreement and global efforts to mitigate climate change by holding global temperatures to safe levels. It puts at risk the opportunity of future generations to have a secure climate and the stability of society itself.

There is no transition taking place until coal and gas projects, that lock in decades more emissions, are no longer approved.

The time for transitioning was over the last 30 years. It has now passed.

The climate cannot afford further delays transitioning to zero emission energy generation.

A rejection of this project is the economic, just and environmentally sound thing to do for current and future generations.

Siobhain O'Leary  
Leumeah NSW

---

16 [https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-15/csiro-fracking-research-does-not-pass-pub-test-expert-says/12454942?fbclid=IwAR2iw5CueltCsGvpmwDbPC-P-PwGhDIXPs460LZL4sT1LkfjG8zYGE-K\\_g](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-15/csiro-fracking-research-does-not-pass-pub-test-expert-says/12454942?fbclid=IwAR2iw5CueltCsGvpmwDbPC-P-PwGhDIXPs460LZL4sT1LkfjG8zYGE-K_g)

17 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-08/atlassian-mike-cannon-brookes-renewable-energy-best-opportunity/12432484>

18 <https://reneweconomy.com.au/the-future-of-solar-power-from-unbelievably-cheap-to-insanely-cheap-77615/>

19 <https://theconversation.com/scott-morrison-gas-transition-plan-is-a-dangerous-road-to-nowhere-13095>

20 [https://www.smh.com.au/national/new-grid-report-forecasts-rapid-transition-away-from-coal-fired-power-20200729-p55gny.html?fbclid=IwAR3XOf20scqqrAdjQmYbfoDQ7Ro\\_0LN5fYB7HUtbiXN\\_1Kdy72nLp5XDo](https://www.smh.com.au/national/new-grid-report-forecasts-rapid-transition-away-from-coal-fired-power-20200729-p55gny.html?fbclid=IwAR3XOf20scqqrAdjQmYbfoDQ7Ro_0LN5fYB7HUtbiXN_1Kdy72nLp5XDo)