

Submission of Objection to the Narrabri Gas Project
State Significant Development SSD 6367
Sue Abbott, Harriet's grandmother
On behalf of Harriet and every single child in the world

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

I recognise the traditional owners of the land, seas, and rivers of Australia, and I pay my respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders, past, present and those to come. I recognise that this land was never ceded.

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Sue Abbott and I am a resident of Scone.
2. I am also a councillor on the Upper Hunter Shire Council but I write this submission as Harriet's grandmother on behalf of Harriet and every single child in the world.
3. I object to the Narrabri Gas Project, and I urge the Independent Planning Commission to reject Santos' 'ecocidal' proposal.¹
4. My submission focuses on climate change and the dire consequences all life, including the human species, faces.

CLIMATE CHANGE

5. With respect to climate change we are facing an existential threat that could annihilate most people on earth in a matter of years.² Only the strongest possible emergency emissions reductions, together with the drawing down of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, can give us any real chance. According to Professor Wil Steffen, "*Even if the Paris Accord target of 1.5 degree Celsius to 2.0 degree Celsius rise in temperature is met, we cannot exclude the risk that a cascade of feedbacks could push the Earth System irreversibly onto a 'Hothouse Earth' pathway.*"³

¹ Ecocide Law, *The Proposed Amendment to the Rome Statute* <https://ecocidelaw.com/the-law/what-is-ecocide/> at 09/08/2020.

² Nafeez Ahmed, *Theoretical Physicists Say 90% Chance of Societal Collapse Within Several Decades* (Vice, July 2020) https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/akzn5a/theoretical-physicists-say-90-chance-of-societal-collapse-within-several-decades at 09/08/2020.

³ Jane Morton, *Don't mention the emergency: making the case for emergency climate action*, Darebin Climate Action Now 2nd ed, February 2020, p.2.

6. The scale of climate change is unprecedented. We need to move into emergency mode as we would with a cyclone, as we did with the unprecedented 2019-2020 bushfires, as we are doing with Covid-19.
7. The persuasive 2019 *Gloucester Resources Limited and the Minister for Planning*⁴ case which I will refer to as “Rocky Hill”, makes the case that projects such as the Narrabri Gas Project and others likely to cause ‘ecocidal’ havoc need not be approved.
8. When the Chief Judge of the New South Wales Land and Environment Court delivered judgment in Rocky Hill it was the first time an Australian court had refused a coal mine (or any development) on the basis of its climate impact.
9. The court concluded that “the greenhouse gas emissions of the coal mine would increase global total concentrations of greenhouse gases at a time when what is now urgently needed, in order to meet generally agreed climate targets, is a rapid and deep decrease in greenhouse gas emission.”⁵
10. Rocky Hill demonstrates that climate change must be in the minds of decision makers when assessing the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions on the climate, environment and people, and that decision makers are obligated to make decisions having regard to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. In a nutshell “most of the world’s existing fossil fuel reserves – coal, oil and gas – must be left in the ground, unburnt, if the Paris Accord climate targets are to be met ... the Narrabri Gas Project must not be allowed.”⁶
11. The Department’s recommended conditions cannot condition away the fact that “emission of greenhouse gases impacts the environment,”⁷ nor that the Narrabri Gas Project is inconsistent with the carbon budget approach we need to take towards climate stabilisation, nor that the Great Artesian Basin, one of the seven hydrological wonders of the world, is at risk of being destroyed, nor that fragmenting the largest temperate woodland in New South Wales, home to unique wildlife would see

⁴ *Gloucester Resources Limited and the Minister for Planning* [2019] NSWLEC 7.

⁵ *Gloucester Resources Limited and the Minister for Planning* [2019] NSWLEC 7: at 699.

⁶ *Gloucester Resources Limited and the Minister for Planning* [2019] NSWLEC 7: at 447.

⁷ *Gloucester Resources Limited and the Minister for Planning* [2019] NSWLEC 7: at 431.

Australia inter alia continue with our world record of the highest rate of mammalian extinction⁸ and failure to protect the environment.⁹

CONCLUSION

12. Our children are objecting to the burdens of fossil fuel projects; burdens that are being distributed to their generation and to future generations¹⁰ – they are not as confident as the Department that the benefits for fossil fuel projects outweigh the hideous costs.
13. Children across the world have been eschewing their education. Before the pandemic they were striking on Fridays and taking to the streets to protest against their leaders' wilful disregard of catastrophic climate change.¹¹ Now they are doing this in Digital Town Halls. They are also seeking redress from the courts.¹²
14. Our children are fed up with the lip service we pay to intergenerational equity, distributive equity, distributive inequity, distributive justice, the precautionary principle, ecologically sustainable development.
15. What they want is urgent action from all levels of government, not approvals of fossil fuel projects.
16. I object to the Narrabri Gas Project and I urge the Independent Planning Commission to reject this proposal.

⁸ Andy Sheppard & Linda Broadhurst, *Invasive species are Australia's number-one extinction threat* (The Conversation, May 2019) <https://theconversation.com/invasive-species-are-australias-number-one-extinction-threat-116809> at 09/08/2020.

⁹ Stephanie Dalzell, *Auditor-General's review of EPBC Act finds severe deficiencies in the Environment Department's processes* (ABC News, June 2020) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-25/auditor-general-severe-deficiencies-environmental-protection/12393780> at 09/08/2020.

¹⁰ *Gloucester Resources Limited and the Minister for Planning* [2019] NSWLEC 7: at 416.

¹¹ Damian Carrington, *School Climate Strikes: 1.4 million people took part, say campaigners* (The Guardian, March 2019) <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/19/school-climate-strikes-more-than-1-million-took-part-say-campaigners-greta-thunberg> at 09/08/2020.

¹² Michael Slezak and Rahni Sadler, *Australian Government sued by 23-year-old Melbourne student over financial risks of climate change* (ABC News, July 2020) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-22/student-sues-australian-government-over-climate-change/12480612> at 09/08/2020.