



MR S. O'CONNOR: Okay. Good morning and welcome. Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Kamilaroi people, and I would like to pay my respects to their elders past, present, and emerging. Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the proposed Narrabri Gas  
5 Project in the Narrabri local government area. My name is Steve O'Connor. I'm the chair of this commission panel. Joining me are my fellow commissioners John Hann on my right and Professor Snow Barlow on my left. Casey Joshua from the office of the commission is also in attendance. In the interests of openness and transparency, and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded and a  
10 full transcript will be produced and made available on the commission's website.

The meeting is one part of the commission's decision-making process. It is taking place at the preliminary stage of this process and will form one of several sources of information on which the commission will base its decision. It is important for the  
15 commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues when they are raised, if it's appropriate. If you are asked a question and not in a position to answer, please feel free to take those questions on notice and provide whatever additional information in writing to us that you can, which we will then place on our website. To ensure the accuracy of the transcript, I request that all those present today please  
20 introduce themselves each time they speak before speaking, and that will assist in the transcribing and please do not speak over the top of each other.

So we can begin, and I might just start with going around the table and everyone introducing themselves to just help the transcript with providing voices and names.  
25 So Steve O'Connor, chair of the panel.

MR J. HANN: John Hann.

30 PROF S. BARLOW: Snow Barlow, Commissioner.

MS C. REDDING: Councillor Cathy Redding, mayor of Narrabri Shire.

MR C. STAINES: Cameron Staines, deputy mayor of Narrabri Shire.

35 MR D. BOYCE: I'm Daniel Boyce. I'm the executive manager of planning and environment, Narrabri Shire.

MR O'CONNOR: Thank you. As you're aware, we developed an agenda, you know, we may well have additional questions and there's opportunity for you to ask  
40 questions of us at the end. But first lined up is the opening statement, so can I hand over you to, Cathy.

MS REDDING: Absolutely. Absolutely. But firstly, can I just say thank you again for meeting with Narrabri Shire Council. We're very grateful for another  
45 opportunity to provide feedback on major projects in our shire, and it's good to see Commissioner Hann again. I believe this is the third time in almost as many weeks

that we have been given the opportunity to address the commissioners. Having been involved in community leadership for several years now, may I say that it's been quite refreshing to have this level of engagement from decision-makers within government. In many cases, the voices of rural people are often forgotten during major development, and, given the opportunities that technology presents, we hope that we – to continue these productive discussions with metropolitan-based planning authorities into the future.

As I have noticed in past hearings with the commissioners, Narrabri Shire Council firmly advocates for the independent and impartial assessment of any state significant development, and we fully support the role of the planning commission to ensure that this occurs. Our approach has always been evidence-based with a focus on getting the best overall outcome for ratepayers and residents in our local government area. We want our community to share in the benefits and prosperity that are on offer, and we want to support projects that are in a strategic, long-term interest of both New South Wales and Australia, and we think that the gas project may allow us to do both.

However, having said that, I would like to make it clear that any proponent or stakeholder that wishes to question our approach that we will object to any project that we believe is not in the overall interests of our ratepayers and residents. I believe we have demonstrated that quite forthrightly in recent times, and any major project must deliver tangible social and economic benefits without significantly impacting our way of life, culture, or environment. In this case, we acknowledge that there are a significant number of issues that needed to be addressed before we could take an overall position either for or against. This has been noted extensively on the record, beginning with our comprehensive response to the EIS in 2017 and follow that by detailed correspondence over a three-year period on our positions regarding various matters relating to this project.

There are some residual issues that we would like to discuss with you which Daniel will touch on shortly. However, having carefully considered all the information over a three-year period, council has ultimately arrived a position of support for this project. I would now like to hand over to Councillor Staines, who just has a few comments that he would also like to make, but thank you very much, commissioners.

MR STAINES: Thank you. Cameron Staines. I am a born and bred Narrabri local and have seen the way Santos have gone about their business in my community over the last 10 years. What I can say from my experience is that they seem to me to be committed to our community. It seems to me over the last 10 years, they have proven that they can work constructively with local landholders. That gives me confidence in – that they are here for the long haul and that they are in ..... community's responsibilities and take it very seriously. As deputy mayor, I'm proud of the way the council has approached the gas project EIS process.

We have spent almost three years and made a few submissions to the government on all aspects of the project. We have argued for a thorough assessment and the strict

environmental controls to be applied to the gas project. Towards the end of last year, when we had reduced our list to the issues right down, I felt comfortable putting forward a motion to our other councillors that we support the gas project. I'm glad to say that as a council, the majority have voted in favour of adopting that position. I  
5 support this project. I think it's good for my community, but I want it done properly and I want it done safely. I want the right safeguards in place to protect our community for our generations to come. If this gas project doesn't work in the Pilliga, it's fair to say it won't work anywhere in New South Wales. Thank you.

10 MR O'CONNOR: Thank you, council. Anything further in terms of opening?

MS REDDING: No.

MR BOYCE: No, not at this stage. Thank you, Commissioner.

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MR O'CONNOR: Okay. So as you know, we have a number of topics that we would like to get council's response on. The first one's fairly general, but it just relates to council's overall response to the department's assessment report and its various recommendations, which, as you know, is quite a detailed report that has  
20 been around for a few weeks now, so we'd be interested to hear what council's views are.

MR BOYCE: Thanks, commissioner. Daniel Boyce here. We've got some observations that we've made of the assessment report which I'm quite happy to  
25 follow up today in writing, but there's two matters of particular importance that we'd like to talk about. The first is the financial insurance – assurance of the project. The commissioners would be aware, having reviewed council's submissions over the last couple of years, that we've essentially been going by the recommendations of the chief scientist and that report of September 2014. I'm particularly referencing  
30 recommendation 15 and recommendation 9 of the chief scientist that relates to the safeguards to ensure that the state holds sufficient financial assurance in the event of any unforeseen issues with the gas project.

I've reviewed the transcripts of the commission's meetings with the department and  
35 the proponent and, of course, the assessment report, and at this stage, it's – it's unclear to us exactly how that framework of security deposits, insurance, and the Legacy Mines Program will work, so we'd like some more information on that, if we could. We note the department's statements that the risks for this project are very, very low. However, as the chief scientist stated, there are effectively no guarantees.  
40 So we need some more information in relation to exactly how that – that framework, that three-layered policy I believe the chief scientist referred to will work. We note that the Legacy Mines Program currently, according to the website, has 2.3 billion in security deposits; however, obviously, this could be subject to a change in government policy, etcetera, so we really need – or the community is really looking  
45 for a financial and regulatory safety net for this project to be undertaken. Any questions from the commission?

MR O'CONNOR: No, that's good. There was a second issue, I think. Yes.

MR BOYCE: So the second issue or residual issue that council had following its – its numerous submission was the monitoring of – of gas lines. So we understand,  
5 again from the chief scientist's report, that the Well Integrity Code of Practice and the plug and abandonment process does meet wells' best practice. However, we – we did note that the chief psychiatrist had acknowledged that there's no long-term studies in terms of abandoned wells, so council advocated for ongoing monitoring until such time as those studies had occurred and satisfied the chief scientist.

10 So as a general principle, we support the recommendations from the department that there needs to be a comprehensive suite of monitoring mechanisms – well, I think what we think is – is critical is that these need to be accessible and they need to be transparent - and I'm just quoting the chief scientist's report here at page 13, which  
15 describes the following attributes, among others, for a monitoring program. So accessible by all – sorry. I'm quoting here:

*Accessible by all under open data provisions, can be searched in real time, can accept citizen data input and is spatially enabled.*

20 We think that's the benchmark.

MR HANN: This is number 10 – recommendation 10.

25 MR BOYCE: It is; it's on page 13.

MR HANN: Yes.

30 MR O'CONNOR: Page 13.

MR HANN: Yes. We've got it. Thanks. Yep. Got it.

MR BOYCE: So they're the two – they're the two key issues for us. We will follow up today's meeting with some other commentary on the assessment report.  
35 We've raised some issues in relation to other projects in terms of the way that the department's compensatory water conditions operate. We have some concerns with those, so we'll express those concerns again. But I'm happy to take any questions, Commissioners, of any of those two – two important issues that I've raised.

40 MR O'CONNOR: Okay, thank you, Daniel. John, do you have any more questions? Snow?

PROF BARLOW: I didn't think any question – is it appropriate – Snow Barlow – is it appropriate to elaborate on these waters issues that you've raised before?  
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MR BOYCE: Look, I can do. Thanks, Commissioner. Daniel Boyce here. So one of the concerns that we've raised with another extractive industry project is that the

compensatory water conditions that the department regularly applies to its recommended conditions of consent – whilst placing the burden on the proponent to prove that it is not responsible for any drawdown of privately-owned bores, it seemed to us that the proponent, through engaging experts, etcetera, is likely to probably advocate for the fact that it is not responsible and there's a disproportionate amount of resources available, then, for a farmer or the owner of a private bore to – to argue against that, and – and also, we have some concerns with the process whereby the planning secretary can adjudicate on this and, all the time, potentially a privately-owned bore owner is – is potentially without water. So we've got some concerns with the way that operates. Quite happy to put that in writing, but that's on the record in – in relation to another project that we've engaged with the commission on.

PROF BARLOW: Thank you. Snow Barlow. Just to follow that up, is there a protocol, you know, for the landholder to, you know, document the decline in water availability so that – I'm just thinking about this process, that – to take it out of the anecdotal to something that, you know, it's collected by whoever the bores is, but at least you – you have a – they would have a record of a declining level, which is presumably what the – the – the argument would be about.

MR BOYCE: Absolutely. I'm not aware of any formal process, and I guess that's – that's why we've expressed some concerns, because it seems to us that it would be – it would be difficult for a – you know, a family-owned farm to – to potentially navigate that process, and of course, if an expert engaged by the proponent forms the view that the proponent is not responsible for the drawdown or the impact, then –

PROF BARLOW: Yes.

MR BOYCE: Then it stands to reason the family-owned farm then needs to engage its own experts and potentially its own lawyers to – to put an alternative view to the planning secretary, so we have – we have some concerns about how that would operate.

PROF BARLOW: Yes. Thank you.

MR O'CONNOR: Thank you. I've heard that issue raised before, so thanks for bringing it up. The second topic we had questions around – and it isn't quite expressed correctly there, so let me just explain. From reading the various background documents related to this project, we understand that council was arguing for some sort of road maintenance agreement that Santos should enter into with council, so council has the funds to maintain roads that will be impacted by the project, if it's approved. My understanding is Santos didn't agree to enter into such an agreement, but quite – presumably quite separately, there was the VPA issue, and I note the VPA issue has some provision for funding for roads at council's discretion. I'm just wondering if council is still pressing that issue, that it needs a road maintenance agreement, or is it now satisfied that the VPA's been signed off that it's – that issue is adequately addressed.

MR BOYCE: We're satisfied that it has been - - -

MS REDDING: Yes.

5 MR BOYCE: - - - addressed by way of the VPA.

MR O'CONNOR: Good. The next topic relates to the salt that, if the project's approved, that will need to be disposed of. There's a number of options that are being explored about beneficial reuse, but the fallback position is that it gets taken to the landfill, and I think I read somewhere that council wasn't prepared to accept the landfill at – at council's landfill operation. There's a number of other landfills that have been identified within a 100-kilometre radius that could accept the landfill, but we'd just like to hear a bit more about that if we can.

15 MR BOYCE: Yes. Daniel Boyce here. So the current status for Narrabri landfill is that we don't feel we have the capacity to accept the volumes that are predicted. We are currently undergoing a process of trying to extend the life of the Narrabri landfill, but that's obviously got its own complexities. So it's council's position at this time that we would not accept the waste at – at our facility.

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MR O'CONNOR: Okay.

MR HANN: Would that change?

25 MR BOYCE: Unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. So as I said, we're going into quite a – a detailed process at the moment for constructing a new waste cell, and we've got some quite – quite significant challenges there, so we don't see that changing anytime in the future.

30 MR HANN: Okay.

MR O'CONNOR: What – what stage is council at in terms of trying to get an extended life for its landfill? Have you prepared an EIS or - - -

35 MR BOYCE: So – so we're looking at an arrangement for a new cell that sits atop existing cells, but long-term, we are looking at preparing an EIS for a quite significant increase in ..... critical landfill. But at this stage, we're looking at more of a, sort of, five to 10 year horizon. Obviously, we'd like to extend that out significantly.

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MR O'CONNOR: Have you got any questions there, Snow?

PROF BARLOW: No.

45 MR O'CONNOR: That's fine. Good. Thank you. Next relates to the various monitoring requirements proposed in the draft conditions. I know council did raise some issues around being satisfied about how the monitoring is undertaken and who

undertakes it, etcetera, so we'd just like to know what councils views are relation to those draft conditions.

5 MR BOYCE: Daniel Boyce here. So again, we're – we're satisfied with the proposed conditions in terms of ongoing monitoring, but again, I think what – as a general principle, and being guided by the chief scientist's report, it's critical for us that that's real time and that it's accessible for all members of the community to have confidence in that – and – and obviously overseen by the appropriate regulatory authority in the EPA.

10 MR HANN: John Hann here. Sorry.

MR O'CONNOR: Go ahead, John. You go first.

15 MR HANN: The EPA is proposed to be the overarching regulatory authority. Have you had any discussion with them about how this might work to your satisfaction? That's - - -

20 MR BOYCE: No, we haven't.

PROF BARLOW: Snow Barlow here. We know that in the chief scientist's report, there was that statement which you read out regarding the data being spatially identified and regarding the data being accessible, but also, there seemed to be a comment about the possibility of citizen input into that data. What do you mean there's – you know, what I'm thinking about is – have you pursued – as to me, there is a connection between what you've just spoken about with regard to private drawdown on private bores, and whatever the data is around the Santos bores. And – is there are any provision at present to your knowledge that there's any proposal to include, if you like, area groundwater data in that EPA monitoring of the Santos project?

30 MR BOYCE: Not to my knowledge. No. I'm not sure of what – what exactly it would like and what the plans are, but, obviously, that's a discussion we would really welcome with the EPA in terms of how that would operate, and I think one of the other points I would make on monitoring is that it may well be that the community's expectations may change over time, so there needs to be a certain degree of flexibility in looking at the conditions that allow review and allow input from the community and also the council.

40 PROF BARLOW: Yes. Snow Barlow. I agree, but I think if we're going to, you know, if there's going to be a monitoring project, which I think that we're all in agreement, that it should be an area monitoring program and not just specifically a Santos one.

45 MR BOYCE: I would agree with that.

PROF BARLOW: Yes.

MR O'CONNOR: Any other questions?

PROF BARLOW: No, no.

5 MR O'CONNOR: Okay. The last of the things that we've raised, although we do  
have a few other questions that we want to add following this, relates to the two  
options outlined in the EIS and the response to submissions report for the delivery of  
power for the operations Santos hopes to undertake on the site, and, as you're no  
10 doubt aware, the two options are that they construct their own power station at  
Leewood site, which would be powered by gas that they would bring to that site.  
The alternative is to power it from the existing power station that Santos operates.  
The name escapes me just at the moment.

MR HANN: Wilga. Wilga Park.

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MR O'CONNOR: Wilga Park. Thank you. And Wilga Park is integrated into the  
grid, so would effectively be taking power from the grid. Different greenhouse gas  
emissions assessments are provided for the two options. We'd like to know what  
council view is about those two options.

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MR BOYCE: I think at this stage – sorry, Daniel Boyce here. At this stage, our  
preference is to get a bit more information from the proponent. Initially, I have a  
question of whether – either option would require additional land clearing. I know  
the commission has requested further details from the proponent in your letter of the  
25 29<sup>th</sup> of June, having - when we have the opportunity to review that response, we can  
probably provide some more comments to you on that.

MR HANN: Okay. But that would be the – John Hann – primary issue would be  
land clearing.

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MR BOYCE: Absolutely. It – it seemed to me, having reviewed the assessment  
report, that the options had different aspects to recommend them. One had more  
direct emissions and one had more indirect emissions. So for us, it's more about  
local impact.

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MR HANN: Okay.

MR BOYCE: Thank you.

40 PROF BARLOW: And – Snow Barlow here. That local impact is largely about  
what would have to be a high transmission line down to the gas pressurisation hub,  
which would .....

MR BOYCE: Absolutely. So land clearing and obviously impact of associated  
45 infrastructure on sensitive receptors in the area.

PROF BARLOW: Yes.

MR O'CONNOR: Very good. So in terms of the follow-up questions, I might kick off. I just would like to know council's views at – at – in relation to the workers accommodation. We understand there is currently a workers accommodation complex that Santos own and have established, and then looking at the potential to  
5 significantly increase the capacity to accommodate workers if this project's approved on – on that existing site. What's council's views? I guess we're keen to know whether council is happy with the – the concept of the workers' camp on the site, whether you believe the site's suitable to be expanded, whether there's other sites you'd rather see that happen or – or council's got its own views about how those  
10 workers might be accommodated.

MS REDDING: Yes. We have discussed this within council just recently, and I believe the site that's – that they've got set up out there will – it will increase to accommodate - - -  
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MR HANN: This is – John Hann. And it's Westport you .....

MS REDDING: Yes. Sorry. This is Cathy Redding. Yes. That's – that's out at Westport, and I do believe that they are looking at – at putting workers out there, but  
20 I – I also believe there has been a discussion with – like, if the project is proved, the workers that will be coming – for infrastructure to get it up and running. There has been some talk about them staying in our already established Civeo complex.

MR O'CONNOR: Is that the one just out of Boggabri?  
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MS REDDING: Well – well, no. We have – we also have - - -

MR O'CONNOR: Or you've got – there's another one in Narrabri, because that's – there's a reference to one in Narrabri.  
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MS REDDING: We do have one at Narrabri.

MR O'CONNOR: And there's one at Boggabri.

MS REDDING: Yes.  
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MR O'CONNOR: ..... okay.

PROF BARLOW: Is it the same company? Is it a Civeo?  
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MS REDDING: Yes.

MR O'CONNOR: Okay.

MS REDDING: Same company.  
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PROF BARLOW: Okay. And - - -

MS REDDING: Yes.

PROF BARLOW: - - - Snow Barlow here, I apologise. And, you know, is the capacity in the – available in the Civeo complex here – or could be available?

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MS REDDING: Absolutely.

PROF BARLOW: Yes.

10 MS REDDING: Yes. And they have capacity for around 600 here at Narrabri and around 800 at Boggabri, and there's certainly capacity here at the Narrabri site.

MR O'CONNOR: You said readily accessible. Could we do a drive past at some stage later .....

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MR BOYCE: Yes.

MS REDDING: Absolutely. Yes.

20 PROF BARLOW: If you provide us the address.

MS REDDING: Because it – it – it - - -

PROF BARLOW: We might - - -

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MS REDDING: Yes. It's situated right on the – the out – just on the outskirts of town - - -

MR O'CONNOR: Okay. Yes.

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MS REDDING: - - - which also gives the ability for the people – workers staying there to access the facilities within the town.

MR O'CONNOR: The towns, within Narrabri, yes. No, that's great.

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PROF BARLOW: Snow Barlow here. So geographically, where is it? Is it in South Narrabri or is it in West Narrabri or – I'm just thinking of the transports.

MS REDDING: So it's southeast, just near – just southeast on the way to the airport.

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PROF BARLOW: Yes, okay. Okay.

45 MR STAINES: Cameron Staines. It's about 2 ks south from the Airport Road, but – but the situation too is if the gas project is paused again, and if it coincides with the Inland Rail, that's where we're going to have accommodation problems. So - - -

MR HANN: Timing on – John Hann – timing on that, Cameron?

MR STAINES: The timing with the Inland Rail, with – it's happening now, the Moree to North Star.

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MR HANN: Yes.

MR STAINES: It's – contractors get – the major contractors get notified September, so January, February, the work will start – starting there. But the significant project will be the Narrabri to Narromine rail line, where a big influx of – of accommodation is needed. So that would be a three to four-year time period, but at the moment, you know, if the Santos project gets stalled again, we will be having major concerns. We'll be having two big significant projects happening at the same time.

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MR HANN: Yeah, okay.

PROF BARLOW: Snow Barlow here. What's the route of the Narrabri to Narromine Inland Rail? Does it – which way does it go: through Karnaku to Barrabin or - - -

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MR STAINES: Exactly. Yes. Cameron Staines here. It's going through the – the Pilliga itself. It actually bypasses the Leewood facility as it goes – heads south towards Narromine, the – Gilgandra, that way. The – sorry, the Gilgandra to Narromine. So that process is – well, the EIS is just about - - -

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MS REDDING: Yes.

MR STAINES: It's on the – yes. So three to – construction will be in three years where the Narrabri to North Star, which is north of here, is – is starting in January, which is not a big – because it's a greenfield, it's already there. It's not a big project where you need a big demand of employees and – and accommodation. But when the – the Narrabri – Narromine starts, it's a very big project. Very big project. So - - -

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PROF BARLOW: Snow Barlow here. The corridor that will have to be established through the Pilliga to build that rail line, does that have the capacity to have, you know, a higher – I'm really thinking of power - higher transmission line, although it's not – although Bibblewindi is a little to the east, but the substantive part of the way is basically going down the Newell Highway as well. So is there any synergies between those two projects?

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MR BOYCE: Daniel Boyce here. So we have in – in our discussions with Inland Rail, we've often advocated for them to expand their corridor, to essentially future-proof for – whether it's road infrastructure or – or as you suggest, the power infrastructure. They're certainly very focused on delivering the rail project, so we haven't found that they have been particularly receptive to looking at complementary

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benefits. We – we specifically raised the issue of potentially expanding the corridor to facilitate a future bypass for the town, but that – again, they weren't particularly receptive to that. So I think, you know, as a principle, I think it's – it's absolutely what we should be doing. However, they're obviously focused on dealing with the rail project as the – as the highest priority.

PROF BARLOW: Snow Barlow here. Yes. Have there been any, you know, discussions between Santos and the Inland Rail that you're aware of?

10 MR BOYCE: Daniel Boyce here. Not to my knowledge.

MS REDDING: No. Cathy Redding here. Not to my knowledge either. I'm sure there have been discussions, but that – that would only be as far as where the Inland Rail route is going. I don't – I'm not aware of any other discussions with power or infrastructure or anything going down that way.

MR BOYCE: Daniel Boyce here. So just to conclude on the topic of temporary workers accommodation, so council does historically have a position of supporting temporary workers accommodation to essentially overcome peak construction. We also, as Councillor Staines touched on, we do see a little bit of a conflagration of major projects happening as well, so as a general principal, we're supportive of workers accommodation to overcome peak construction. Having said that, council has very recently advocated on another extractive industry project that these projects must deliver local jobs and – and are an opportunity to – to grow the economy, grow the population, which is what we're seeking to do. So in the longer term, we see that the workers accommodation becomes less important when we get into the operational phase of this project.

MR O'CONNOR: So – Steve O'Connor. Do I understand that, then, council would be supportive of the Westport accommodation precinct being expanded, but, given there appears to be capacity in the other existing workers accommodation – or both complexes, both in Narrabri near Boggabri, that you'd also like to see those options explored of utilising those existing facilities

35 MR BOYCE: I think that's a fair statement.

MS REDDING: Yes.

MR BOYCE: Daniel Boyce here. So yes, we'd like to see capacity – and expand capacity and the existing facilities utilised. I'm not familiar with that particular facility. That's a bit before my time, and I can – I can review that development application and provide some more feedback on that specific site for you.

MR O'CONNOR: That'd be very useful. Thank you.

MS REDDING: Yes. Cathy Redding here. Council's ultimate – ultimate view on – on any of our state significant projects is local – local jobs, and that is the end goal that we would really like to see on any of the projects.

5 MR O'CONNOR: No further questions?

MR HANN: I just have one – John Hann.

MR O'CONNOR: Yes.

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MR HANN: It comes back to the Westport accommodation site. We note there doesn't appear to be any consideration of traffic ..... the site. Now, if there's 200 to be housed there – so we're talking light vehicles, but nevertheless. Say you've got potentially 100 or more movements a day, perhaps, out of the Newell Highway, do you – do you have any – have you considered that at all? I know that's not within your – you know.

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MS REDDING: Yes.

20 MR HANN: The Newell Highway is a state highway but, nevertheless, it's in your LDA. Any thoughts or comments on that?

MR BOYCE: Daniel Boyce here. Again, not being familiar with that development application, I'd – I'd have to review the original consent. I suspect it would be a local or regional development, so it's – it's likely that council will be the consent authority for that.

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MR HANN: Yes.

30 MR BOYCE: So absolutely, that would be a consideration for us. We're quite happy to review our records and come back to you with some more information.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: ..... that might be useful for us, I think .....

35 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Certainly would.

MR O'CONNOR: All right. Okay. Thank you. We might just have some questions from the other commissioners now. John, do you want - - -

40 MR HANN: No. That – that was the only one question outstanding from which to .....

PROF BARLOW: Thank you, Steve. Snow Barlow here. I have a couple of questions. It's clearly not part of the EIS or the state assessment report. But there had been reports in the press and there are reports locally of a potential fertiliser plant here that might utilise some of the Santos gas. What are your views on that?

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MS REDDING: Well, council's views on that is we'd had various meetings with the proponents of the fertiliser plant. At present, a lot of our planning for our industrial park – we are looking and including that plant in those plans. Council, like any development, we would be keen to – to continue our discussions with them as an anchor tenant out to our new industrial park. That would be fabulous – and the job creation. And the whole – that's the whole view of our industrial park, is to take advantage of the Inland Rail line but not just be another logistics hub. We want to develop it into industry where they have access to – to the Inland Rail line, and, particularly if the gas goes ahead, to have access to the gas, because that then opens up a whole different - - -

PROF BARLOW: Yes.

MS REDDING: - - - lot of industry, the likes of what we probably have never seen around here.

PROF BARLOW: Snow Barlow here again. Are there – have there been discussions with Santos and – regarding that supply of the gas to actually Narrabri, given the – where the pressurisation plant is.

MS REDDING: Yes.

PROF BARLOW: And the connection to a pipeline will probably inevitably be going south. So is there any – have there been any discussions about a northern connection that might supply you with gas even though the project is so close?

MS REDDING: There have been – there have been some high-level – well, not really high-level discussions, but just – there have been some discussions, you know, about, “Well, maybe we could get it – get the gas into – into Narrabri, supply the town of Narrabri with – Narrabri with gas.” We – we have had some – some very positive discussions about getting the gas to our industrial estate. Absolutely. And you know, even during these discussions where we've mentioned maybe supplying gas to – to the town, Santos have not, you know, have not walked away from it. They haven't immediately said, “No, that's not going to happen,” you know. The – the response is normally, you know, “That's something that we could look at in the future.”

Yes. And I think probably the most important thing for us as council at the moment would be getting our industrial park up and running, and then from there, look at further options.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Cathy, could you just – or Daniel, give us a quick summary of where the industrial state is at in terms of when you say the priority is to get it up and running, just – is it still a plan, is stage 1 being released? Just tell us a bit more.

MR BOYCE: Sure. Daniel Boyce here. So just to quickly touch on what the mayor mentioned – so we have had some discussions with Santos as part of the VPA process about supplying gas to the inland port as our industrial park has been branded. So they were positive discussions and there's, I think, an agreement in  
5 principle that Santos will look to facilitate the supply of gas to that – to the inland port. In terms of the stage that it is at, we have approached the planning process with the inland port in very similar way to the special activation precincts that the commissioners will be familiar with around the state, and that is to say that we have completed quite a broad range of strategic planning studies – you know, air hazard,  
10 noise flooding, biodiversity, etcetera – to ensure that we're actually going through a robust master planning process. We have a draft master plan currently being prepared and we have a draft planning proposal to rezone the land that will be going to council in the next couple of months, which is going through to community consultation in that – in that space at the moment.

15 So we're certainly, I think, very advanced in terms of what we understand the potential for the site to be. There was a strategic business case done some 12 or 18 months ago where the – the council looked at the opportunities in terms of the inland rail essentially being on our doorstep, and also looked at a scenario of what the  
20 opportunities would be if the gas project was approved and, obviously, the – the cost benefit results with a – with a gas scenario are considerably improved.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Very good. I think that gives us a good summary of where things are at. Thank you.

25 MR STAINES: Cameron Staines. It is essentially for the gas project, in my belief, to go ahead – is for that reason that – bring the ..... to bring jobs, growth and then that'll open up doorways and attract other – we've got a big vision of decentralising the city people – the city industry and coming to this inland port where we've got  
30 competitive utilities with water, land and power. With the Santos gas project going on, we can supply the gas energy so that it's a – it's a new – to bring Narrabri back into the 20th Century and the give – to job growth and the essential items that this – it's kind of like a must-have to have. Like, you got the IC – inland port will always go ahead, but with the gas we can go, you know, the – to extreme boundaries of what  
35 we can do.

MR O'CONNOR: No, that sounds good. I mean, it's probably throwing COVID-free as well.

40 MR STAINES: Yes.

MR O'CONNOR: Plus all those other benefits.

45 PROF BARLOW: Thank you. On another matter – and this is probably not that important a matter – but do you have any views about the disposal of the fresh water that will emanate from the project – in other words, whether – obviously be applied

to land, probably, and whether, you know, they do it themselves or make it available to local farmers who wish to, you know, enhance their irrigation enterprises.

5 MS REDDING: Cathy Redding here. Yes, at the moment I believe Santos do have their own irrigation land out there - - -

PROF BARLOW: They do.

10 MS REDDING: - - - which they – which they reuse the fresh water - - -

PROF BARLOW: Yes.

15 MS REDDING: - - - on that. I don't believe there have been any other discussions with supplying other landholders as yet. Whether council could facilitate in something like that or whether that may be a discussion between Santos and the landholder – but it's certainly – it's certainly a possibility that could be looked at particularly the – with – if the amount of fresh water coming out of the site is in excess of what they can use. So that certainly could be something that could be explored.

20 MR BOYCE: Daniel Boyce here. I think, just to add to what the mayor has said, council recognises how important agriculture is to our shire. Whilst we are supportive of extractive industries in certain circumstances, where we see a net benefit for the community, council acknowledges that agriculture does and will  
25 continue to form the backbone of our local economy. So I think anything that could be done to support local farming enterprises would be look at very favourably from a council perspective. I think, you know, Santos would be – or the proponent would be the first to admit they're not farmers. So anything that they could do to  
30 potentially assist local farming enterprises would be looked on very favourably.

PROF BARLOW: Thank you, mayor, and thank you, Daniel.

MS REDDING: Yes.

35 PROF BARLOW: I think it is important to explore potential synergisms with industries, which, at the end of the day, have to co-exist. It's a - - -

40 MS REDDING: Yes, yes, Cathy Redding here. Look, I agree 100 per cent and having dealt with a few state significant projects and the proponents, I have to put on record that as far as corporate citizens go, Santos have been excellent. They've been very accommodating to any question that we have – that we put to them. They have no hesitation in bringing experts to come and talk to us. They've mixed very well in the community, extremely well, and – yes. As a corporate citizen, they are regarded quite highly within our community.

45

MR O'CONNOR: Thank you Cathy. I just have one last question. It arises out of something that Snow was just asking about, and it's that connection – ultimately, if this project's approved, they're going to produce gas, but it's got to go somewhere.

5 MS REDDING: Somewhere

MR O'CONNOR: And there's – they've delayed the eventual construction of a pipeline for – to a separate assessment process. Does council have a preference, where – there are two outlined in the EIS – two opportunities, one being connection  
10 to the already approved – I think it's the the Hunter Queensland pipeline - - -

MS REDDING: Hunter.

MR O'CONNOR: - - - which is yet to be constructed, and the other is a much  
15 longer connection to an east west pipeline. Does council have any views, not that it's part of this commission's ambit, but we'd just like to know if council has some views.

MR BOYCE: Yes, we do. I think we'll take that one on notice, if it please,  
20 Commissioner, because we would like – we've got some fairly strong views on that, and we'd like to make sure we put that on the record.

MR O'CONNOR: Okay. .

25 MR BOYCE: Thank you.

MR O'CONNOR: Great. Well, I might draw this - - -

MR HANN: Can I just ask – sorry.  
30

MR O'CONNOR: Sorry, John.

MR HANN: Yes. No, I was just – following on the useful discussion just earlier  
35 around, I guess, the applicant and so on, I've got two questions, really. One relates – have you visited any of the applicant's facilities elsewhere, such as Queensland?

MS REDDING: I have had – sorry, Cathy Redding here. I have had – had the opportunity a number of years ago to visit their Roma site.

40 MR HANN: Right.

MS REDDING: I was very impressed by their operations in Roma and even particularly their use of their clean water. But it was – yes. It was very good to go  
45 and see even their operations centre in Roma, how they monitor and control everything.

MR HANN: Right.

MS REDDING: Extremely, extremely interesting and I was very pleased that I went. I was very impressed, actually, with what I saw down there.

5 MR HANN: Okay. No. Thank you, Cathy. Related to that, I suppose, overall is – look, as elected members – local members, what’s your view on the level and the effectiveness of, ultimately, the overall stakeholder communication ..... obviously, a very significant proposal. Just – if you could give us your views on how effective it’s been.

10 MS REDDING: Well, Cathy Redding here. My view on that is the level of engagement has been exceptional as a corporate citizen and as a – you know, a major, state-significant development like this, they’re very – they’re very open. They’re very accommodating and even during discussions such as, you know, the VPA discussion, which is the first that’s ever happened to a gas company – even  
15 during those it was – it only went on for a matter of weeks, you know, and they listened to what council’s concerns were and they took it on board and it was a bit of backwards and forwards, but they were very open in those discussions. And just listening to what our concerns was, ultimately, led us to a decision on the VPA which – within a matter of a very short time. And their relationship within the community  
20 is the same. Like, they have an office here. Anyone knows that they can go in and they can ask them any question and I believe, you know, even like – with a project like this, of course, you’ve got – have people who oppose it.

25 MR HANN: Sure.

MS REDDING: But even the ones that oppose it, they’re very accommodating with them. Anything they want to know, Santos produce it.

30 MR HANN: All right. Thank you. Thank you, Cathy.

MS REDDING: Yes.

MR HANN: Thank you.

35 MR STAINES: Cameron Staines. Just following on from Madam Mayor, as you know, as a corporate – people always want to go and – and they sponsor things to get themselves in there, but they actually go that step further and engage with the community. They make sure they employ locals and that’s on their case too. Their –  
40 one of their policies that – is to employ as much locals as they can, but they promote it and they’re proud of the fact that they’re employing and they live here – the bosses live here. They live in the actual Narrabri town, so when it comes to community engagement and showing pretty much, what’s the word - - -

45 PROF BARLOW: Empathy.

MS REDDING: Empathy.

MR STAINES: Thank you. Yes, they do. They showcase it and they do a good job of it.

MS REDDING: They do.

5

PROF BARLOW: Steve, can I just ask a question .....

MR O'CONNOR: Sure.

10 PROF BARLOW: Snow Barlow here. It was emphasised to us yesterday that, where possible, they did purchase supplies locally; is that correct?

MS REDDING: Absolutely. Absolutely. They purchase locally wherever they possibly can and they will even go into the stores and place the order. If it's not  
15 available, they're willing to wait. You know, they'll place the order and wait for it to come in and they're fully supportive of purchasing locally and employing locally.

MR O'CONNOR: Thank you. That's probably a good note for us to finish on. We do appreciate you making your time available this morning. We always give a high  
20 priority to wanting to meet with council. As I said earlier, this is the first time in many months that the IPC has met face to face with council, but we saw that as an important part of our decision-making process to hear first-hand from council and what their views are. So thank you very much for your time. The transcribing can  
25 cease. We've finished the meeting.

**RECORDING CONCLUDED**

**[11.03 am]**