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15th October, 2008

Mr Scott Jeffries
Director – Major Project Assessment
NSW Director of Planning
23-33 Bridge Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir

Subject: Queensland Hunter Gas Pipeline Project – Environmental Assessment

We do not object to the construction of the pipeline, and can see that there would be benefits to the region.

We would like to draw your attention to the criteria that the proponents had to adhere to in relation to the pipeline route selection. We believe that the environmental assessment carried out does not take into account a number of factors that should be considered for such projects.

According to the environmental assessment the Travelling Stock Routes (TSR's) were excluded from consideration based on the Department of Environment and Climate Change decision that they are remnant areas of native vegetation. This decision was made by the department in early 2006 at a planning focus meeting apparently. Initial routes considering using the TSR's were basically rejected by the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

In community consultation material supplied from the above focus meeting the environmental assessment mentioned that "wherever possible any material impacts should be avoided within TSR's in order to preserve these areas intact native vegetation and high biodiversity". To the best of our knowledge this decision was made without any scientific basis.

The TSR from Narrabri to Moree is mainly open grassland and a pipeline can be installed, with only two locations where timber would need to be removed. There has been no assessment made on what would be the long term detriment to the current vegetation on the TSR's that the pipeline may have. The fact that does not seem to have been considered is the poor condition and biodiversity of the TSR's. Work done by landholders in the Edgeroi and Bellata area has found that grasslands rejuvenate after disturbance and actually have better biodiversity than 'undisturbed remnants'.

When choosing the route the issues considered: included the number of landholders, major construction constraints and areas of conservation significance. Therefore because of the routes determination protocols, there has been no community consultation or environmental assessment; it appears that the route of the pipeline has already been determined. With the current route a large number of landholders will be affected and need to be compensated. This seems unnecessary when there is a viable alternative.

There appears to have been no determination made on the 'recovery ability' of grassland affected on the Travelling Stock Route. The pipeline route in its present form appears to crisscross rivers to avoid using the TSRs. This to us is a sure sign that common sense and a proper environmental assessment is not being followed.

Yours Sincerely

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Peter Albert' and the signature on the right is 'Jane Albert'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peter and Jane Albert