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## Online Submission from stephen fletcher of clarence valley astronomical society (object)

**Stephen Fletcher** <[arrowdodgerfletch@hotmail.com](mailto:arrowdodgerfletch@hotmail.com)>

Apr 3

To: Stephen O'Donoghue

To whom it may concern,

The members of the Clarence Valley Astronomical Society, who are passionate about saving our pristine dark skies, reject completely Santos refusal to enclose there gas flares.

This submission has been written to draw attention to the unacceptable impacts of Santos current plan with light pollution from their upcoming 850 gaswells and flares near Siding Spring Observatory. It is a simple solution, as recommended by the NSW EPA to enclose all flares, not just for emissions and cleaner burning, but also to reduce the amount of unnecessary light pollution from giant flames lighting the night sky.

Siding Spring Observatory is Australia's only unique science research facility using the largest optical telescopes for astrophysics and astronomy. First established in Coonabarabran NSW, on the Warrumbungle Ranges in the 1960's it was built here because of the dark skies in this region. While there is historic value of this site from telescopes established over 50 years ago, this observatory hosts the largest optical telescopes from national and international universities and research entities. Not only hosting the largest, this site hosts the second, third, fourth, fifth largest telescopes etc in Australia, playing a key role in science research across the Southern Hemisphere. Over 50 telescopes are listed across the site being used by over 30 universities, institutions and private businesses using cutting edge technology, with some of the most advanced telescopes being used is astrophysical research. Future plans include another 50 telescopes to be built on site within the next decade. All this is reliant on keeping the dark sky dark! If this area was to lose the dark sky, this observatory would not be replicated again in Australia, but moved elsewhere in the Southern Hemisphere.

From 2013 onwards light emissions from the Santos gasfield exploration have increased to the point that, just the Bibblewindi large flare and unmanned facility alone, creates more light pollution than the entire town of nearby Coonabarabran with over 3500 people residing there. Santos have listed plans to triple the amount of pilot flares and double the amount of large flares including constructing 50 metre high flare stacks, with an average 30 metre high flame above it. Nowhere do they list the EPAs recommended practice to enclose flares, as has been done in NSW areas such as Gloucester. Enclosing flares is the only acceptable mitigation to protect the scientific community from the unnecessary light pollution they plan to emit. Siding Spring Observatory already has to deal with light pollution from existing mining and regional towns. Even Sydney itself, from over 400kms away can affect research from its light glow.

Santos are a lot closer than this. Every bit of extra light pollution is making it more difficult to continue the leading scientific research, and while each pollute in different levels, most consider they aren't doing any damage. But it's the combination with the existing light sources, adding a cumulative effect which is becoming worse as more pollution is created.

In summary, this is a simple fix in this case, as while Santos building infrastructure is willing to comply with shielded lights for buildings, they need to go a step further and enclose all current and future flares as the NSW EPA recommend. It is the only acceptable solution.

Thankyou, Steve Fletcher, secretary Clarence Valley Astronomical Society.

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**Stephen Fletcher** <[arrowdodgerfletch@hotmail.com](mailto:arrowdodgerfletch@hotmail.com)>

Apr 3

To: Stephen O'Donoghue

Confidentiality Requested: no Submitted by a Planner: no Disclosable Political Donation: no

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