



Maules Creek Branch of the Country Women's Association of NSW

Who is Maules Creek CWA?

Our Branch of the Country Women's Association of NSW was initially formed in 1923. We are local women with a wide network. We are concerned about the present and future health and well being of our community and environment. We believe our community is at risk now and into the future from unsustainable developments.

As country women we are primarily concerned with preserving and fostering the sustainability of rural communities.

We are very concerned about the impacts of climate change drivers – their emissions and their activities on NSW communities and all the communities in the world. In this instance we are concerned about rural community resilience and health, culture and heritage, creating environmentally sustainable futures, biodiversity health, rural Australia's water needs, particularly the Great Artesian Basin, specifically our rivers and groundwater and the recharge zones in the North West.

We are also concerned that in light of the world's very recent consensus that fossil fuels must stay in the ground, that all individual Government decisions going forward will be seen as market signals. We believe that all signals going forward from NSW Planning and Environment must reflect the people and natural system's call for real climate actions.

Department of Planning and Environment must demonstrate REAL CLIMATE ACTION and put vulnerable communities, food security and natural systems environments first as the world transitions to renewable energy.

Date: 14 May 2017

NSW Department Of Planning and Environment

Executive Director, Resource Assessments Department of Planning and Environment

GPO Box 39

Sydney NSW 2001

This is a submission to the Narrabri Gas Project EIS.

We object to this project.

The Narrabri Gas project Environmental Impact Statement does not convince us that this is an acceptable development for near neighbours, our Shire or the North West of NSW- either socially, health-wise, environmentally or economically.

We live with imposed State Significant fossil-fuel projects and our community is currently under a PEL. We understand this gas project is a further step in a fossil-fuel linked industrialization process. At Maules Creek, as predicted in numerous peer reviewed community submissions prior to the approval of three mining projects- there are costs and few if any net benefits to local communities or environments from such land use changes.

Our Branch – while we enjoy consulting with the government; in this space, our preferred interests are now in renewable energy projects. These renewable projects have the potential to not harm the environment and accelerate our transition to a carbon-free economy.

It is our experience that the Project Approval- if granted will become a “living document”- one that leaves itself open to endless modifications and changes that can only be instigated by the proponent- also known as approval creep.

We ask that you do not do this to another near neighbour community and further entrench our Shire and region in industrialization through fossil-fuel extraction companies.

We are aware that over 3 million ha of the North-West has been declared gas-field free. We have listened to community concerns and engaged in the Narrabri Gas Project debate particularly in relation to health impacts, well-being associated with communities hosting gas projects and on protection of shared resources- particularly water, air and biodiversity.

The company in this EIS or the government through its regulatory framework, have not made the case and cannot independently prove this project to be safe to the environment, water aquifers or human health- physical or mental.

We support the Gamilaraay Traditional Custodians of the Pilliga region and surrounding rural farming communities in opposing this project. Securing our food production areas and food supplies is vital. We oppose the project on behalf of biodiversity and the prime importance of the natural systems.

The government must use its knowledge and tools to ensure ecological, sustainable development to further draw out that an economy only exists inside a social system, and this social system sits inside the natural system. Those who live in farming communities know that we can't live without functioning natural systems. Sterilized land is dead, unproductive land, extracting billions of litres of toxic ground water, producing salt with no safe disposal plan. Leaving a project open to fracking via approval creep. As has been witnessed at Bibblewindi in the Pilliga.

Our understanding of the requirements of decision makers under the Planning Act is this:

The PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

The precautionary principle is a decision-making mechanism that emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s with an emphasis on anticipating and predicting harm from planned activities that involve serious or irreversible damage to the environment. In Australia the definition given in the intergovernmental agreement on the environment in 1992 by all heads of government in Australia, has been employed in New South Wales environmental and planning legislation.

The *Environmental and Planning Assessment Act 1979* states that the determining authority has a duty to consider environmental impact. Section 111 provides that:

*“For the purpose of attaining the objects of this Act relating to the protection and enhancement of the environment, a determining authority in its consideration of an activity shall, notwithstanding any other provisions of this Act or the provisions of any other Act or of any instrument made under this or any other Act, examine and take into account **to the fullest extent possible all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment by reason of that activity.**”* [Emphasis added]

Schedule 2 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000* further defines the responsibility of the Secretary, Department of Planning and other consent authorities or determining authorities including in the case of state significant projects, the Minister for Planning:

(4) The principles of ecologically sustainable development are as follows:

*(a) the **precautionary principle**, namely, that if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:*

(i) careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment, and

(ii) an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options,

*(b) **inter-generational equity**, namely, that the present generation should*

ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations,

*(c) **conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity**, namely, that conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration.*

In assessing this project through the requirement of ecological sustainable development - the precautionary principle, intergenerational equity and conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity- we ask that the Narrabri Gas Project EIS be rejected.

Yours Sincerely



Libby Laird

Agricultural and Environment Officer

Maules Creek Branch of the Country Women's Association of NSW



Leone Buckman

President

Maules Creek Branch of the Country Women's Association of NSW