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To Department of Planning

## NARRABRI LATERAL PIPELINE Submission

Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle (CCBR) is an independent community group in inner west Sydney with almost 1000 supporters. For 20 years, we have campaigned to promote local and national action to reduce fossil fuel use, increase the adoption of renewable energy, and head off catastrophic global warming.

This year, consultations with our community have shown that one of the most common concerns raised is the need to end land clearing and native forest logging. For our supporters, this is because of the greenhouse gas emissions impacts of **not** preserving native vegetation, as well as the loss of treasured biodiversity. Our supporters are also very aware of the importance of preserving water resources, including for agricultural production, as average temperatures rise.

In short, even though we are an urban community, our respect for the natural spaces and resources of NSW is strong, and we would like our voices to be taken seriously in this consultation as they are relevant to this proposal. As keen observers of energy developments, we also argue there are better solutions than Narrabri Gas,

### Recommendation

That the Pipeline be rejected because the economic benefits claimed do not account for the negative externalities it will cause: especially to biodiversity and to greenhouse gas contributions, considering not only this pipeline component but the Narrabri Gas Project as a whole..

If the proposal is not rejected outright, the proponent should be required to submit an amended Environmental Impact Statement which recognises these externalities, and such a statement should be open to public scrutiny.

### Key points

- Narrabri Lateral is an enabler of an unpopular, polluting project
- Pipeline will cause damage to farmland and forest
- The economic value to Australian consumers is questionable
- Australia's future gas problem is an export, not a supply, problem
- We can do better than opening new gas fields like Narrabri.

Our more detailed explanation of these points follows.

Submission prepared by AM and DB on behalf of CCBR Committee  
11 December 2025

## **Narrabri Lateral is an enabler of an unpopular, polluting project**

CCBR is well aware that this Pipeline is a missing link between Santos' Narrabri Gas Project and the as-yet-unbuilt Queensland-Hunter Gas Pipeline. CCBR has steadfastly opposed Narrabri Gas since at least 2020, on grounds of increased greenhouse gas emissions (including from fugitive methane), increased fire risk, possible aquifer contamination and biodiversity loss.

At the end of this submission, you will see some comments made by our supporters at the time of the Independent Planning Commission hearing into the Narrabri Gas Project. This hearing attracted a record number of objections, far outweighing those in support. Many of the CCBR supporter comments are relevant to the current project even though the Pipeline would disrupt a smaller area than Narrabri Gas itself.

Santos is keen in its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to claim the economic "benefits" if the gasfield is opened. However, it does not give adequate weight to the harms of greenhouse gas contributions, nor those from loss of biodiversity and water impacts.

We urge the Department of Planning to recognise these negative impacts, even though some are hard to quantify, and also the incremental nature of continued approval of projects which both cause local environmental and broader climate damage, which can itself impact the local area ( see for example this year's Denman decision in the NSW Court of Appeal) <sup>1</sup>.

## **Pipeline will cause damage to farmland and forest**

The Narrabri Lateral would cross the Pilliga East forest and twelve farms on its way from the Narrabri Gas project to meet with the Queensland-Hunter Gas Pipeline.

To traverse the Forest, the Pipeline would cut a 30 metre wide pathway. Cleared corridors like these are disruptive for the precious wildlife of the area, which includes threatened species such as the Pilliga Mouse, Corben's Long-eared Bat and the Eastern Pygmy Possum. Australia's rates of extinction are already a source of shame - ignoring the importance of species habitat and connectivity is a disgrace.

Members of CCBR have visited the Narrabri area and spoken to farmers: we understand the Narrabri Lateral would cut across twelve farms, disturbing agricultural land, including cropping land. These farms are important to NSW food and fibre production. The farmers deserve to be heard, as do those resisting the Queensland-Hunter Gas Pipeline.

## **The economic value to NSW consumers is questionable**

The project enjoys political support, with one reason given that increased supply will help bring down the local price of gas. This is far from certain, as Narrabri Gas would be particularly expensive to produce<sup>2</sup>. If it is then foisted on the domestic market, it does little to bring down prices – it simply frees cheaper gas for export.

We point out that a significant contributor to a possible future shortage is greed by the GLNG joint venture, led by Santos, which overcommitted to gas exports, requiring it to suck supply from the domestic market.

We do not support rewarding Santos by granting permission for the Narrabri Lateral, which may benefit Santos shareholders, but not NSW residents as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> Reported widely including in

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/jul/24/significant-legal-breakthrough-as-nsw-court-blocks-coal-mine-expansion-over-emissions>

<sup>2</sup> See "Narrabri not the best solution for Australia's Eastern gas supply"

<https://ieefa.org/resources/narrabri-not-best-solution-eastern-australias-gas-supply>

## Australia's future gas problem is an export, not a supply, problem

We are aware of arguments that more Australian gas is needed to support industry and back up our electricity grid. We do not see that as a reason to encourage further dependence on gas, noting that, as a fossil fuel, gas is also a climate pollutant that should be phased out over time, not increased.

From an economic point of view, our reliance on gas has exposed ordinary consumers to frightening energy price rises because its price is tied to the international market.

We agree with the Federal Energy Minister Chris Bowen when he says that “Australian gas should be available to Australian users at reasonable prices.”

Most of Australia’s gas is exported. We do not need more gas production for domestic use, we need policy which diverts gas from export markets. This would alleviate need to open new basins.

## We can do better than opening new gas fields

As we write, the Federal government is considering a gas reservation policy. Independent Federal MP Nicolette Boele, an energy specialist before her election, has proposed to “only allow uncontracted gas to be exported after it has been offered to the domestic market at a reasonable price”. While this makes sense, we support an important complimentary measure.

The ACTU has proposed taxing export gas, which has several advantages:

- It disincentivises gas exports, making gas for the Australian market a better option for current producers
- This in turn puts downward pressure on gas and consequently electricity prices for NSW residents and industries
- A 25% tax would produce an extra \$17 billion in revenue for Australians<sup>3</sup>
- Taxing fossil fuel companies, not ordinary Australians, for the climate damage their products cause, is only fair.

In short, there are other, better solutions to gas shortages and cost blowouts than expediting the Narrabri Gas Project – for the benefit of Santos, not NSW residents – by approving the Narrabri Lateral Pipeline.

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<sup>3</sup> As reported by Ian Verrender, ABC  
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-09/time-to-fix-gas-policy-to-ease-inflation-cost-of-living-pressure/106116030>

## Comments made by supporters about the Narrabri Gas Project in 2020

As well as the impacts on climate, and the risks associated with water, waste and fire, CCBR supporters were also concerned about local impacts on the natural environment and on indigenous and farming communities.

### ... on water

"Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth, so to gamble with our water by extracting gas within the Great Artesian Basin seems to be an extraordinary folly. Underground aquifers support life across inland Australia. Is it sensible or appropriate to risk this essential resource on a project that increases the output of greenhouse gases?"

"CSG projects have a history of spills. The Pilliga Forest is a critical recharge area for the Great Artesian Basin."

"The extraction processes will draw huge quantities of water. Operations on this scale will have negative impacts lasting for generations."

### ... on Indigenous consultation

"The long-term concerns of the Gomeroi people, whose cultural land is so affected by the Narrabri gas project, have not been given any weight."

### ... on land and biodiversity

"The gas field lies under the Pilliga Forest as well as on private land. It's not just the land where you dig the wells that matters - it's the effect of cutting up the forest with roads connecting them. We feel strongly that destroying such a precious area for such small gains is unconscionable."

"If the Narrabri Project follows the model of the CSG wells in Queensland, the area of operation will be very large, will lay waste the native vegetation, and be dangerous for the water table."

"I have visited the Pilliga, seen the koalas there, and am very distressed to think that their habitat will be damaged by putting wells and connecting roads through this precious place."

"To allow the gas project to damage our land and climate during the comparatively short life of this project is very short-sighted. Farming land would be ruined forever."

"Cutting up 95,000 hectares of the area with more access roads, wells and connecting lines will inevitably damage the Pilliga Forest."

### ... on local community

"The local people of the Narrabri Shire strenuously object to the Santos environmental impact statement and have made it clear that this industry is neither wanted nor welcome in their community. Narrabri is an area where there are farmers of various kinds, graziers and cotton growers, who will be heavily affected by the project and have been fighting for over a decade for their livelihoods. Research indicates that 97% of landowners are against this project, particularly as the area provides land for growing food for the rest of the country. We should respect our farmers and acknowledge that our farmlands deserve protection."

"The project area is very close to the centre of town which will then become wedged between the Narrabri Gas Project and the Maules Creek coal mine. In turn, this will put enormous negative pressure on the community. We know already that coal mining in the Hunter Valley has had a devastating impact on the local landscape, native animals, and on human health. We fear that the same will happen in this region."