

12 December 2025

Re: Narrabri Lateral Pipeline

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing as a Narrabri businessowner & life-long resident. Santos have been working in our shire for many years now and I only have praise for their professionalism, input into our community and respect for the environment. The employment capacity of the Pipeline Project will be a massive boost to the Narrabri Shire and surrounding communities. The last decade we have seen some extremes in seasons for our many ag based businesses and farmers, this brings about an unsteadiness, as we are at the mercy of weather. Projects like this will not only secure more jobs, it will create opportunities for local businesses to grow.

With Gas Pipeline in our Shire we will have a balance, and local businesses will have another income stream. Playing a critical role in sustaining the economic health and resilience of our region. This will allow for future opportunity, sustainability throughout existing businesses and give the next generation an option for employment in the bush. Further development within the region is exciting for this current generation of business owners, it gives us vision to grow and offers further employment opportunities within our organisations.

The alternative is we keep following the slow decline and watch regional towns die. If regional areas die, the suburban centres will be massively affected as a result. There is no denying Narrabri has been on a slow decline for many years. We have lost major retailers, local businesses, pubs, clubs and entertainment venues. All of these businesses were once supported by the agricultural sector and tourism. Both of these income streams can literally be turned off with drought (again), not sure who would survive another one – many businesses, if they're still here, have still not made full recovery after drought followed by Covid.

Agriculture has been through some tough times in the last 10 years; however, the industry still has a bright future for farmers. Science and technology are responsible for this progression. Cotton is one of our major employment avenues, providing support and revenue to many local businesses within the region. Due to science and technology the plant now uses 48 percent less water, 34 percent less land and 97 percent fewer insecticides. The introduction of a round bale picker, GPS systems and cloud-based telemetry control have all had a massive impact on local jobs. This type of technology is only in the early stages of development, within the next 10 years there will be very few jobs required throughout this process.

I have many concerns where this will all end up without diversification. Continued investment and stability in operations like these are essential if we are to build long-term economic and social resilience in the bush.

The Narrabri Lateral Pipeline can't happen quick enough, as we need more options. Regional areas in Australia have a massive impact on the rest of the country and the world. We need to keep them alive; we need to keep the local retailers and communities turning over. Without the regional centres we don't have a place for people to live, eat work and play. The above reasons highlight why I believe there is no alternative, there is no future for the next generations without diversification. Santos have proven they are capable, reasonable and will support the surrounding communities.

Major suppliers from imports to manufacturing have a very close eye on this project. They have seen a substantial downturn on products supplied into the regional areas. They too are pushing us local businesses to find other avenues for their products. The Narrabri Lateral Pipeline is a perfect example of how the regional areas can give these larger suppliers the turnover required to keep the relationships strong. Alternatively, we lose buying power and commitment from these companies which will be the detriment of many businesses in our region.

If we allow these projects to move forward, we will see huge growth within the regional areas, this growth will allow these small towns to become small cities. Once you create an inland city it will feed off itself, once you have the population, opportunities will follow. It will allow our health care to improve, our schools to grow, retail shops will open, hospitality will be thriving and tourism will return. There will be more room in our populated cities and our population will be further spread throughout the country.

Please consider my view and the view of many other businesses in regional areas. When regional Australia is strong, all of Australia benefits.

Regards

Justin Smith
Managing Director
JA Smith Solutions