

8th December 2013

Mr Sam Haddad
Director-General
NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure
23-33 Bridge Street
Sydney NSW 2000

RE: Application number SSD 13_6038

Dear Sir,

I am writing to voice my serious concerns about the expansion of the Dewhurst coal seam gas exploration pilot project, concerns which belong in your assessment of this project.

Shining now before us, a growing number of people can see an alternative to the path upon which we seem fixed. We see an end to the despair and apathy which says we can't change how our world works. A transformation is being achieved through a growing understanding of the ways in which we can address the practical realities of living, without recourse to damaging technologies which will forever poison our world.

Anything other than stopping Santos fracking in the Pillaga is a cynical rejection of all that the sustainability movement has achieved. We have proven time and time again that there are clean, renewable alternatives to fossil fuels that are cheaper and will foster a more secure Australian economy.ⁱ The Australia Institute has provided ample research on not only the damage to the economy caused by a mining sectorⁱⁱ, the but also on the threats to our water and land caused by coal and coal seam gas extractionⁱⁱⁱ and the policy steps necessary to protect us from those threats^{iv}.

There is no longer any credence to the argument that Australia needs coal seam gas in the Pillaga. The continuing promulgation of this myth can only be driven by powerful corporate bodies whose influence makes a mockery of this process.

Apart from the environmental impacts of coal seam gas extraction, apart from the very real economic impacts of an industry which prevents other areas of the economy from flourishing (not just now but forever), there is one other serious concern which I need to voice.

Through my work over the last four years in sustainability advocacy and community outreach, I have become aware of a growing number of ordinary people who are ready to take action to prevent the rape of our land for a resource that will return almost no benefits to the community and which simply props up a system which is recklessly destructive. I fear that allowing the rampant growth of fracking for coal seam gas – not just in the Pillaga but everywhere – is cultivating the conditions for serious civil disobedience and social unrest.

All this, while there exists the framework, the technology and the willingness to embrace the sustainable alternatives that exist.

Please, I'm begging you: don't approve this. It is insanity. There are other possibilities which are ready for us to employ. Santos doesn't have the right to poison our future. It doesn't have the right to place its corporate objectives above the wishes of the Australian people. And neither does it any longer have the justification for doing so when the negative impacts of this expansion will far outweigh the putative benefits.

Social change is coming, whether we like it or not. Peak oil, overpopulation, peak-phosphorous, ocean acidification, changing weather patterns and weakening global economies are poised to set that change in motion with the effects they will have on basic resources like food and water. We have the ability now to insulate ourselves from the worst impacts of those realities through making intelligent, forward thinking decisions about how we power our economy and how we use our land.

What a glorious position to be in! To actually have the alternatives available, and the necessary resources and political will to put those alternatives into practice. Dear Director-General, please be part of that transformation of our society. Please grasp the shining alternative which we in the sustainability movement are offering, for the sake of all of us now, and all of those still to come, the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.

Let that life be cherished.

ⁱ Beyond Zero Emissions Zero Carbon Plan, <http://bze.org.au/zero-carbon-australia-2020>

ⁱⁱ Too Much of A Good Thing? The macroeconomic case for slowing down the mining boom. <http://www.tai.org.au/node/1835>

Still Beating Around the Bush <http://www.tai.org.au/node/1948>

ⁱⁱⁱ Is Fracking Good for your Health? <http://www.tai.org.au/content/fracking-good-your-health>

^{iv} Coal and Gas Mining in Australia, <http://www.tai.org.au/content/coal-and-gas-mining-australia>