

We are all aware that the Pilliga Forest is an important recharge zone for The Great Artesian Basin. Australia is one of the driest continents on the planet. Any development that has the potential to harm our most precious resource, water, should not be allowed to go ahead. Once our underground water becomes contaminated it cannot be rehabilitated and it is far too precious to risk losing. As I understand it, Santos have failed to conduct baseline water testing, as required by the Director General. This shows a complete disregard for the environment and community in which they hope to operate.

We so often hear how it is important to conduct exploration so we know if the mining of the resource is viable. With coal seam gas it is very different to other resource extraction, with the exploration wells being the same as a fully operational coal seam gas well, which offer the same environmental impacts as production wells.

The cumulative water modelling used by Santos fails to assess the impacts that drilling will have on ground water into the future. This is totally unacceptable. There must be thorough sampling and testing done across the whole of the exploration area to gain an understanding of groundwater flows and any potential impacts drawdown or contamination will present.

We cannot put the waters of The Great Artesian Basin at risk.

Due to the potential health and environmental risks, the required baseline atmospheric methane data collection needs to be undertaken. To ensure the safety of the community an independent Health Impact Assessment should be undertaken prior to any exploration taking place and the cumulative impacts of other resource development in the area should all be taken into consideration.

Part of the Director General's requirements for Santos is for them to state "the likely interactions between the development and existing, approved and proposed gas exploration and production". As a resident of the Liverpool Plains residing in the Spring Ridge area that will be directly impacted by any development of the Glasserton Project, this needs to be addressed. Santos need to be open and transparent about their plans. Santos do not have a social licence to operate in our area. Many communities have been surveyed across the Liverpool Plains, with results showing that 90 + % of residents do not want coal seam gas development. The fact that a camp has been set up in protest in the Pilliga is proof that the community does not accept this development. We do not undertake these actions for fun - we do them because we care deeply for our water, land and community.

After the horrific start to our fire season, it is totally unacceptable that Santos would be allowed to operate in such a vulnerable area with such a huge risk of fire from flaring. This flaring cannot be shut down in the event of catastrophic fire conditions and it is unacceptable and irresponsible to expect our Fire Fighters to be exposed to such risks.