

SECRETARY, PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT NSW
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I live in the Warrumbungle Mountains. What attracted me to live here was the natural beauty and cleanliness of the air, soil and water. My family and I enjoy close contact with native species of plants and animals and we do our best to protect them knowing how at-risk biodiversity is in NSW. Millions of years ago the Warrumbungle volcano broke through Pilliga sandstone. The Pilliga is very close to where I live.

I have many objections to the SANTOS Narrabri CSG project proposed for the Pilliga.

1. I am concerned by the corrupt process whereby a large corporation contracts and pays an organisation to write an Environmental Impact Statement that concerns a project that the said corporation wishes to have proceed. Surely the body writing the EIS must of necessity be impartial and not in the pocket of the corporation that is set to benefit from the development? To me this immediately makes the document invalid.
2. There is no 'best practice' as far as Coal Seam Gas exploration and production is concerned. I am convinced from reading about other places in Australia and the world that have CSG wells, that drilling hundreds of wells in an area destroys catchments, destroys the integrity of underground systems be they hydrological or geological, destroys air quality, destroys peoples' health and livelihoods. In our particular circumstance it will destroy this important Great Artesian Basin recharge area and will destroy hectares of habitat important for already at-risk species of native plants and animals.
The EIS claims the project is not in the recharge area but this is in error. The EIS claims an area of 1000 ha will be impacted. This does not include roads, pipelines and infrastructure. The EIS is not honest.
3. Wells fail. They leak above and below ground. They leak methane – a greenhouse gas far more potent than carbon dioxide. To suggest this won't happen is false. They will leak toxic water into pristine waterways where dependant ecosystems have evolved in a stable environment. The EIS risk assessment is only for 25 years. What happens after then? Who pays to correct crumbling well infrastructure then? And is this even possible?
4. Wastes from CSG production are poisonous salts and waters. After treatment, there are still the poisons to be dealt with. The EIS does not tell us how these poisons will be dealt with. The treated water is to go into Bohena Creek – one of those pristine waterways where even minor changes in water chemistry and temperature can have huge impacts on the dependant lifeforms. The salts? Well they will just pile up somewhere. The EIS doesn't say where.

5. My home was threatened by the Wambelong bushfire in 2013. Last season we had the St Ivan's fire about 100kms away. Both these fires were so intense as to make their own weather. Having 850 open flames in a fire prone forest is too ridiculous to contemplate.
6. This kind of industry is boom and bust. There is evidence from the Queensland gas fields that community cohesion is ripped apart as workers are either sucked from existing agricultural industries or brought in as fly-in-fly-out workers who contribute little if anything to rural communities. And the boom doesn't last.
7. If I was paid as much as the company that produced the EIS for SANTOS, I could devote hours to constructing a far more thorough evidence based document siting all my objections to this atrocity of a development proposal. My document would include how there is no gas crisis; how the precautionary principle seems to have been forgotten about when looking to make developments sustainable; how the data supplied in the EIS is superficial and inaccurate; and how local citizenry have not given a social licence to SANTOS to proceed. But I suggest you add up all the hours people have spent writing their objections and multiply that by an hourly rate and I guarantee they will add up to be worth more than what the EIS writing company was paid.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meg Leathart', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Meg Leathart
19/5/2017