

Union sides with people and the planet over profits

December 12, 2020

Federation supports the campaign against the 850-well coal seam gasfield approved for development and operation in the Pilliga State Forest and on grazing land south-west of Narrabri.

The project has been pushed by a fossil fuel industry bent on making short-term profits at the expense of people and the planet.

If built, the Santos NSW (Eastern) Pty Ltd project is expected to release more than 1 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year, which would be totally incompatible with Australia's obligations under the Paris Climate Agreement and any chance of a robust and responsible national response to the climate crisis.

When the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment was assessing the project earlier this year, it received almost 23,000 public objections (98 per cent of submissions) and referred the project to the NSW Independent Planning Commission for determination.



Effects on groundwater, biodiversity, climate change from greenhouse gas emissions, bushfire risk, health, Aboriginal cultural heritage and waste management were among the issues raised during the Commission's seven-day electronic public hearing and more than 11,000 written submissions.

The NSW Independent Planning Commission gave phased approval "with strict conditions" in September and federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley gave the [final environmental approval](#) in November.

Santos will take the next 12-18 months to decide whether it will invest in the development, so opponents are using the time available to raise awareness and build community opposition.

Federation is in solidarity with the Gamilaroi Elders and community who are leading the resistance against the project on their lands.

[Gamil Means No protests](#) were held in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Canberra on 3 December over the lack of consultation and respect for processes such as including the traditional owners in decision making. Young members of the Gomeroi/Gamilaroi/Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay Nation say cultural heritage laws don't do enough to protect their culture.

In September this year, [Federation joined](#) online and school-based actions in support of the #fundourfuturenotgas campaign by the student climate strikers.

Federation calls on the Berejiklian Government to abandon its support for the Narrabri project. It is entirely inconsistent with, and will ultimately undermine, the meaningful work being done with the [introduction of new renewable energy zones](#) across NSW.

Federation encourages NSW Labor to step up its opposition to Santos's plans in the Pilliga, particularly now that their [federal Labor colleagues have indicated they support the project](#).

Many groups oppose the approved project. [Australia Institute](#) climate and energy director Richie Merzian said: "The Federal Government's decision to approve the Narrabri gas project not only endangers water and the environment but will permanently lock NSW manufacturers into high gas prices."

[Nature Conservation Council](#) chief executive Chris Gambian said: "This is a terrible project at a terrible time. It will cause carbon emissions in a world that urgently needs to decarbonise.

"It is hard to think of a more iconic environmental battle in our times than the campaign to protect the Pilliga."

[The Climate Council](#) said the Federal Government has "cemented its position as a climate change laggard and driver of environmental destruction".

Senior campaigner of anti-mining group Lock the Gate Carmel Flint told [The Guardian](#) that Santos gained its approval without specifying the exact location of the wells, so the precise effects on the temperate woodland and threatened species are unclear.

The Australian Student Environment Network (ASEN), ASEN NSW, Uni Students for Climate Justice and Workers for Climate Action will host a [rally for climate jobs and justice](#) on Saturday, 12 December, at Sydney Town Hall from noon.