

YOUR SAY



POST
60 Maitland Street,
Narrabri, NSW, 2390



EMAIL
editorial@nwcourier.com.au



PHONE
Office 6792 1011
Fax 6792 3476



SMS
0488 EDITOR
(0488 334 867)



TWEET
@NarrabriCourier
#Narrabri



FACEBOOK
Facebook.com/NarrabriCourier

Chamber president responds to Wilderness Society

Below, a response from Narrabri Chamber of Commerce president Mr Russell Stewart to an opinion piece published in *The Australian* newspaper by Wilderness Society writer Lyndon Schneider last week:

As a member of the Narrabri community, I am frustrated to read Lyndon Schneider of the Wilderness Society purporting to be speaking on behalf of Narrabri when he is neither from Narrabri nor represents the overwhelming sentiment of the broader community. Like every community in Australia, the people who live in Narrabri, in

northwestern NSW, have different views about coal-seam gas: many support it, some don't and others are yet to make up their mind. However, what we do agree on is the need for a strong and vibrant Narrabri community. Without a strong local economy, we all suffer. Many landholders, businesses and families welcome Santos in our community, just as we do any other responsible business. Alongside our agricultural industry, Santos is already making a strong economic contribution. Santos is an active part of our community and hires and invests locally, participates in local events and supports our schools and

businesses. For the Wilderness Society to claim that our community is against the project is simply incorrect. Just last Tuesday at the monthly Chamber of Commerce meeting, there was strong support for Santos. We are confident from our research that Santos – an Australian company with a strong track record around the country – has the capacity to operate safely and should be allowed to proceed with the proper government approvals and oversight in place. This is the overwhelming view of the local Chamber of Commerce. Indeed, contrary to the impression Schneider gave, NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer Mary O'Kane said in her report that the CSG development posed no greater risk than other industries and that the risks could be managed. In the past three years, since Santos has been in Narrabri, it has taken the time to listen to the community and answer our questions and explain how it is

managing the project. The chamber runs fortnightly community forums on the issue of CSG and these have drawn hundreds of people from our community. Overwhelmingly, those who attend the forums leave satisfied that the risk to the groundwater and the local environment is so negligible as to be of no concern. Those attending our CSG forums have included local businesspeople, townspeople, irrigation farmers, dry land farmers and farmers with CSG wells already on their properties on the edge of the Pilliga scrub exploration areas. Our exit polls suggest 99 per cent of attendees are happy with the CSG development. Our Narrabri and District Chamber of Commerce has a solid working relationship with the entire community, regardless of each individual's opinion of CSG. It is only in this way that our bush communities can survive the regular and extended harsh times we experience together, including

the long-term drought we are still in. Those of us who were born and raised in the bush take great pride in the fact we are people of our word and our handshake is binding. It greatly disappoints us to see sweeping statements as made by Schneider to an unsuspecting public, who rely on quality publications for their information. The last thing our community needs now is the ill-informed opinion of an individual we haven't even heard of before, and who doesn't live in or contribute to this close bush community. We invite Schneider to attend one of our forums – perhaps he should hear the local perspective before he purports to represent it. Our community appreciates the benefits Santos has already brought to Narrabri and looks forward to building a strong economic future together.

Russell Stewart
Narrabri and District Chamber of
Commerce President

