Media release

Tuesday 13, May 2014

**Independent Commission to make final decision on gas exploration at Narrabri**

The independent Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) will decide on two applications to expand existing gas exploration activities in northern NSW.

The Department of Planning and Environment referred the applications to the independent PAC today and provided its environment assessment report for the two applications.

Santos has applied to expand existing or previously approved exploration activities at Bibblewindi and Dewhurst, which are located between 25 and 44 kilometres from Narrabri.

At Bibblewindi, the company’s application is to drill two new exploration wells at the site of the existing 12-well exploration pilot.

The application at Dewhurst is to re-drill three existing exploration wells and drill two additional wells in the same area.

The applications are for short-term exploration activities only in areas where such activity was already taking place.

The Department’s detailed assessment concluded that the proposals would not significantly impact the water supply or environment and any potential impacts could be managed by imposing strict conditions.

The expansion of existing exploration also provides opportunity to alleviate gas supply shortages which could lead to significant energy price increases for consumers and businesses in NSW.

Given this and the imposition of strict conditions, the Department’s assessment concluded that the projects should proceed.

The Department has also referred a minor application that would allow the use of existing pipelines to transfer gas and water between wells and the Wilga Park Power Station and the company’s water holding facility at Leewood.

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