

Michelle Rowland
Federal Attorney General

Murray Watt
Minister for the Environment

Malarndirri McCarthy
Minister for Indigenous Affairs

May 20 2025

Dear Ministers,

We are writing in the wake of the Native Title Tribunal's decision to back multinational mining behemoth Santos in their plans to build an unnecessary yet destructive gas mine in the Pilliga Forest, against the wishes of the Gomeroi Traditional Owners.

The Gomeroi were swept from their Traditional Lands by aggressive colonial expansion in the 18th and 19th century. Generations were forced into the margins of Australian society to live in dire poverty. Gomeroi people had millions in wages stolen by mandate of official policy. They survived massacres. They had their children forcibly removed by the State.

Despite the violence and destruction of this history, the Gomeroi survive. The Pilliga Forest is of immense cultural significance to the Gomeroi. Again and again, the Gomeroi nation have patiently and in good faith explained to anyone and everyone why this land is so precious. Invaluable.

The vast majority of Gomeroi lands are now owned by powerful capital interests who have annihilated the native forests and grasslands, replacing them with industrial farming and mines at a staggering scale.

Despite the broadscale transformation of inland New South Wales, the Pilliga Forest still stands as the largest inland forest in the state, of extraordinary conservation value. The area sustains many native plants and animals that have disappeared from the surrounding landscape.

The Pilliga forms part of a stronghold for threatened woodland birds including the Glossy Black Cockatoo, Little Lorikeet and Turquoise Parrot, and protects a particularly important population of the iconic Barking Owl. The forest is home to threatened mammals, including the Koala, Black-striped Wallaby and the endemic Pilliga Mouse.

In partnership with the community, the New South Wales National Parks Service have restored five species to the Pilliga. Most of the species reintroduced have not been found in NSW National Parks for over a century, and include the Greater Bilby, the Bridled Nailtail Wallaby, the Brush Tailed Bettong, the Plains Mouse and the Shark Bay Bandicoot.

The plans by Santos to mine gas in the Pilliga should never have been approved by the Liberal Government. We know – all of us – that there is no amount of profit that could ever make the destruction of this last remnant of forest a legitimate decision for any Government to make.

We know – all of us – that we do not need the gas lying under the Pilliga. Australia is one of the world's biggest producers of gas. We have a distribution problem, not a supply problem.

We know that all of you are genuine in your commitment to reconciliation with Australia's First Nations peoples. We know that each of you are committed to righting the historical injustices that have inflicted such deep and lasting wounds on so many.

We watched on Saturday night as the Prime Minister swelled with pride and joy in acknowledging the First Nations peoples in his victory speech.

There are multiple policy and regulatory levers that the Federal Government could use to stop this destructive, unnecessary and deeply cynical project from going ahead.

We together represent many thousands of ordinary working people. Working people who care about the future of our country, but also about our shared past.

We implore you to use the power available to you to deliver justice to the Gomeroi, and to take this opportunity to stand on the right side of history.

Kind Regards,

Thomas Mayo
Assistant National Secretary
Maritime Union of Australia



Brad Pidgeon
NSW Secretary
AMWU



Patricia Fernandez
NSW Secretary
Australasian Meat Industry Employees
Union



Vince Caughley
NSW Division Secretary
National Tertiary Education Union



Michael Whaites
Acting Branch Secretary
ANMF NSW Branch



Maxine Sharkey
General Secretary
NSW Teachers Federation



Carol Matthews
NSW Secretary
Independent Education Union



Dr Nicholas Spooner
President
ASMOF NSW - The Doctors Union



Alan Hicks
NSW Secretary
Electrical Trades Union



Angus McFarlane
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ASU (Services Branch) NSW & ACT



Paul Keating
Sydney Branch Secretary
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