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Pipeline fight gets real



• Anne Kennedy (centre) presenting to a packed house at Coonamble Golf Club.

THE mood of a meeting of landholders whose holdings are within the 30km corridor proposed by the APA Group for their Western Slopes Gas Pipeline, was one of fierce determination to stand together to oppose the project.

Around 150 landowners from along the length of the proposed pipeline

attended the meeting on Tuesday 9 May, including from Warren, Tottenham, Nevertire, Burren Junction and Condobolin.

The pipeline is seen by many as an enabling piece of infrastructure for the Narrabri Gas Project, which local farmer Anne Kennedy describes as "the Trojan horse" for

further Santos plans to establish at least seven major gasfields across strategic agricultural land in the region.

"This will jeopardise the long term viability of the north west," she said in her introductory remarks.

"And we wear all the risk. The Coonamble town and district would not exist without our

precious groundwater. Why would our government even allow it?"

Legal adviser to the Great Artesian Basin Protection Group, Sydney solicitor Marylou Potts, provided detail on what she knows and the questions she has about the processes involved with APA Group gaining access to private land and the risks to the rights of landholders.

She also praised Minister Harwin for affording landholders the right to make a submission and also cited a case from the Southern Highlands which has resulted in landholders in NSW having much better protection from additional rights under the Mining Act 1992 (NSW).

On the wall of Coonamble Golf Club snaked a string of printed pages, hand marking out in detail the Lot and DP numbers of properties on the proposed route from the Pilliga to

Condobolin.

The route crosses 6 local government areas and appears to affect hundreds of properties.

The corridor contains a central line, with a 30metre wide easement which appears to pass through 344 individual properties along the 450km route.

The presentation covered landowners' rights for Procedural Fairness throughout the process of surveying and constructing the pipeline.

Ms Potts also outlined sources of information, including the government's proposed conditions on the Authority to Survey, and the options to ensure landholders and other stakeholders are properly informed and heard.

She also outlined substantial gaps in the Pipelines legislation in relation to protecting landholders.

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