

'Sacrifice Zone' heavy on drama, light on facts

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"We will do whatever it takes," an angry looking activist snarls to the camera. *(This "snarling activist" is a gentle young farmer and mother, who has been forced into fighting to save her children's health, and her vital food-producing farm - she is not an 'activist', she is desperate – having tried all the conventional avenues for years, of approaching her local member, and the govt. – all of whom completely ignored her).*

"I'd like to see some of them in jail," says a protest leader, presumably referring to company executives. *(I LOVE that the writer – obviously from the gas industry - naturally presumes that the crooks who should be in jail are mining company executives!! - when Drew was actually referring to politicians. But I guess they are both one and the same aren't they, they are joined at the hip in this corrupt business).*

So begins the trailer for the latest activist anti-gas movie, 'Sacrifice Zone'.

Judging by the movie trailer, self-righteous law-breaking by the protest movement has become a matter of pride – a badge of courage where law and order are irrelevant; conflict with police a part of the excitement. We watch as a young man proudly describes how his dad has taken to locking himself to trucks and machinery. *(No, it's **not** 'exciting' for we farmers, to have to put our busy lives on hold, to have to fight to protect our land - how can anyone imagine we would find this "exciting"?? - we are time-poor (and money-poor) very busy farmers, we HATE that we have to fight our own govt., just to try to save our land and water).*

To justify this self-congratulatory anti-social attitude, activists and 'Sacrifice Zone' movie producers go full throttle on the melodrama. The sound track is deep, rumbling and clearly intended to be unsettling. Images are crafted to create a sense of danger.

And of course, there are the ongoing exaggerations, misleading claims and crass invective. *(Could you please quote some of our "misleading claims" – and we will send you the evidence).*

NSW Greens MP Jeremy Buckingham is straight into the swing of it.

"They'll pump their crap into the woods," he snorts indignantly.

"They'll pump their crap into the water supply. And they'll pump their crap into YOU," he says with extra emphasis on the word "you".

It's all rubbish, but if it serves to frighten people into supporting him and his Party, apparently it is worth it. Credibility is of little concern. *(Again, if you would provide your name - which I notice is not provided with this industry propaganda - we will send you all the credible evidence you would ever wish to see).*

The movie has concluded filming and the producers are asking for donations to finish it. In the trailer introduction, a voice-over says the film will be "moving and scientifically rigorous". *(Yes, believe me – it is!).*

If the trailer is any guide, they ought to consider changing the title to 'Zero sacrifice, zero science'. The participants are all intent on trashing fossil fuels and those who produce them, but how many would be prepared to do without the myriad products created from fossil fuels, including those of great importance to agriculture, such as fertiliser? *(Oh give me a BREAK - you know full well that this gas industry is a total economic disaster. Already renewable energy is far cheaper to produce. Get your facts right).*

There is zero science in the trailer. There are plenty of claims, but each one is contestable; some are simply ludicrous. *(How can you say there is "zero science" in the trailer?? - how much 'science' can you put in a two-minute trailer?? Just wait till you watch the movie! All the science is there).*

"It's pollution and corruption from top to bottom," says a smug looking farmer protester. *(Yes, it IS pollution and corruption – and she is not 'smug looking' – she is the most highly respected Liverpool Plains farmer and grandmother - like all of us, forced to fight to save her valuable land and water).*

These people appear to be enjoying their time in front of the camera. *(Really? We don't have better things to do with our time and money?? I would personally love to be able to spend more time with my grandchildren, but I can't, as we are fighting for their future).*

They claim to have 98% of people behind them in their campaign against the proposed natural gas development at Narrabri.

Yet 500 Narrabri locals made submissions to Government and most were in favour of the development. And the town's total population is only about 4,000! *(Yes, the few Narrabri 'locals' who support the industry, are getting well paid by the industry - And just because you are making money from an industry, doesn't mean it's a good thing. People make money out of selling drugs - but it doesn't mean we should support this industry).*

At the top of the list of spurious claims in the film is that the proposed coal-seam gas development in what Narrabri locals call the 'Pilliga scrub' will destroy the local water supply and permanently damage the Great Artesian Basin (GAB). *(It is NOT a 'spurious claim' - it is backed by all the science, and all the top INDEPENDENT hydrogeologists. NOT highly-paid proponents, like Richard Creswell, who has been totally discredited).*

Water security and safety is undoubtedly an important issue. (Well that's the first comment you got right).

Its importance has been acknowledged in the extensive work put into ensuring the project can proceed without impacting groundwater. The 7,000-page environmental impact statement lodged by project proponent Santos with the NSW Government goes into this in a great deal of detail. *(Yes, paid proponents, paid to deliver a "desired outcome". The EIS has been proven to be wildly inaccurate, full of outright lies, and that is why there were a record 23,000 submissions objecting to it).*

A highly-respected former CSIRO hydrologist, Dr Richard Creswell, was hired to assess the proposed activity and give his expert opinion. His conclusion: there is no threat to the GAB. *(Please clarify for us how much he is being paid??)*

In fact, he notes that water will be drawn from the much deeper Gunnedah Basin and not from the GAB. Dr Creswell also notes that the two aquifers are not connected. *(Yes, as we say, it is drawn from the Gunnedah Basin, and it is the drilling through the GAB aquifers, and the subsequent corrosion and failure of those wells, that will cause the interconnectivity. Not to mention the de-pressurisation, the drawdown, and the subsidence. The damage will be irreparable. But we're not being paid to say this - we are merely telling the truth. Your "paid scientist" will say whatever you want).*

In doing so, he debunks two more of the activist claims made in the movie trailer – and in countless public statements over the past two years or more. *(As we said, just come clean with how much he is being paid - and lets have an open public debate - our genuine honest scientists, against the paid spin-doctors. Let's get the science out there, and let the public decide who is telling the truth).*

Dr Creswell scotches another common activist claim repeated in the trailer when he notes that the proposed Pilliga drilling area is *not* a significant recharge zone for the GAB. *(Wrong again - see above - CSIRO, Geoscience, and all the mapping, data and evidence proves that is IS the vital recharge zone. Again, let's have an open debate about this, and match the real scientists against the paid proponents).*

The trailer also inaccurately slams Santos for a “long history of spills and environmental disasters”. This is nonsense. Protesters have made countless claims of environmental “disasters” to the NSW Environmental Protection Authority over the past 18 months. **The EPA has investigated them all**, and in most cases has found them to be either exaggerated or completely wrong. *(Yes, it is very sad that the public have had to discover and report all the spills and contamination - This so-called “self monitoring” is a farce. There is no oversight, nothing would have ever been reported, except by the concerned farmers and public. And the EPA investigating itself?? Why are we cynical about that?)*

The planned pipeline which will connect the Pilliga with the East Coast gas network is also described in the trailer as “another disaster in the making”. Never mind that there are thousands of kilometres of gas pipeline built and safely operating around Australia, as they have done for decades.

The pipeline technology is neither new, nor complicated; and the builders, in this case APA Group, are capable and highly experienced. The terrain is relatively flat and most of the 450km pipeline will be buried underground. *(Again, give us your name, and we can send you all the evidence of enormous (and irreparable) damage caused by pipelines over the years. Not to mention APA want to go through these farmers’ best paddocks, which is easier for them, but will have an enormous impact on the farmers’ trying to run their businesses).*

Perhaps it is appropriate for the trailer to leave the last, inaccurate word to actor turned activist Michael Caton, whose ‘castle’, incidentally, is nowhere near Narrabri.

After the gasfields are gone, “...what will be left behind?” he asks rhetorically.

“We will be left with a worked out quarry,” he declares emphatically. Really? Mr Caton seems to have his industries confused. But that probably just puts him in step with the confused content of the rest of the trailer.

Michael Caton is not just an actor and activist, but also an expert on the GAB. The coal and gas industries have far more in common than either of them would like to admit!