

“War4water – the Central West Strikes Back”

On 21st June 1883, six Brigidine Sisters arrived (finally!!) in Coonamble from Mountrath in Ireland. Thus began a lively association with the people of the blacksoil plains, a relationship that still endures. *“Care of the Earth”* forms a vital part of our Brigidine commitment, as we support sustainable energy, clean water projects and many other such enterprises around our troubled planet.

Alarm bells are ringing as the Great Artesian Basin, covering 22% of Australia, is under threat with plans for Coal Seam Gas extraction, notably with the current Santos Pilliga/Narrabri Project. It seems that government and business are blind and deaf, as tampering with this precious resource will almost certainly pollute the underground water table. Environmental damage like this is irreversible. The artesian bores which give life to so many Central West towns may well be rendered useless, and given low rainfall these towns could die.

A drive around the Coonamble district reveals gate after gate with notices: “NO CSG HERE” / “CSG KEEP OUT”/ “CSG NOT WELCOME”. Not only crops but animals are threatened (as the farmers around Williamtown can attest). David Chadwick, at a recent rally, asked “Why would the driest inhabited continent in the world jeopardise its single greatest water reservoir? Others said “This is a ‘War4water’, for the Santos Narrabri/Pilliga CSG Project has such potential for destruction despite the gloss emanating from government and industry.

Some of us may like to add our voice to those of rural Australians, too often unheard by urban decision-makers. This would be a practical way to “Care for the Earth”.

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