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Warragamba Dam Assessment Team

Planning and Assessment Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
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**SUBJECT: Submission – Warragamba Dam Raising Project – SSI8441 –
Sarah Davies and Blaxland**

Dear Warragamba Dam Assessment Team,

I grew up in the Blue Mountains, and I am now living and raising my own family in the Blue Mountains. I am a supporter of a 'Big Australia', and I am excited about city planning visions that welcome more people into our communities to build strong and innovative economies. I understand the need for planning to be looking for housing solutions in Greater Sydney.

However, I oppose the raising of the dam wall as a solution for housing in Greater Sydney simply because there are alternative planning possibilities that don't trade off short-term housing benefits for long term economic, cultural and environmental costs. I urge you to consider the following these facts about the Blue Mountains national park and the nature of the EIS when assessing this project:

1. The cultural and environmental impact would devastate the local area - causing significant economic and social community harm

- The Commonwealth Government has estimated at least 1500 indigenous cultural heritage sites would be inundated by a raised dam wall
- Over 64 Km of wilderness rivers, 5700 hectares of National parts and 1300 hectares of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area would be inundated by the project.
- The Kowmun River, a declared 'Wold River' would be inundated by the project.

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- Habitat for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater, Koala colonies and Sydney's last Emu population would be drowned by a raised dam wall

2. The assessment undermines the legislation which is the foundation of environmental protection in NSW - approving this project would set a dangerous precedent for Australia's World Heritage and National Park protections

- Raising the dam wall would inundate and destroy areas that are protected by seven layers of legislative protection.
- Damage to natural and cultural values caused by the project would be a clear breach of Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention

3. The Environmental Impact Assessment itself has some well known and considerable flaws. Approving the project under this Assessment would be an absolute sham, and quite frankly make you look like the comedy 'Utopia'. But a lot less funny.

- No modelling of the stated flood and economic benefits of the dam wall raising are outlined in the assessment. The Former NSW SES Dep. Commissioner and flood expert, Chas Keys, has said the project is "flawed" and "should not be proceeded with"
- Only 7.5 metres of the 17 metre increase in dam height has been considered an 'impact area' in the environmental assessment - a clear attempt to reduce environmental offset costs.
- Severe fires during the Summer of 2019/20 devastated 81% of the Blue Mountains Heritage Area. No post-bushfire field surveys for threatened species have been undertaken - further muddying the methodology for the reports findings.
- The engineering firm (SMEC Engineering) who undertook the environmental and cultural assessments for the project have an extremely poor record of working with Indigenous people. It has previously been banned from working on World Bank projects in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
- Just 27% of the impact area was assessed for Aboriginal cultural heritage, with the author of the cultural heritage assessment spending just one day in the field.
- The time allocated to assessment was not fit for purpose: Just 3.5 hours was spent looking for Koalas during the assessment and a single day spent assessing the impacts to aquatic life, including the threatened platypus.

We are desperately looking for some leadership here. We are looking to the government to lead with a long-term vision that recognises the inter-dependence of environmental protection and strong, innovative local economies.

Approving the raising of the dam wall has short term gains for housing, at the significant long term cost of my local communities' economy and cultural identity, as well as threatening the legitimacy of environmental protections of all national parks across Australia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Davies', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sarah Laurel Davies