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MEDIA RELEASE: Infrastructure NSW attempts to shed its responsibility for dam cultural assessment

15 August 2019

Infrastructure NSW (INSW) has attempted to shed responsibility for major flaws in its Draft Cultural Heritage Assessment for the Warragamba Dam wall raising project, after being invited by Blue Mountains and Wollondilly Councils to attend a Traditional Owner Community Consultation this Friday to discuss the matter.

In email correspondence with event organisers, the Government body refused to confirm their attendance, and instead shed responsibility for the embattled Assessment to WaterNSW. Infrastructure NSW said in an email:

“WaterNSW, as the dam owner and operator, is responsible for preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and detailed design for the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall.”

This is despite INSW having budgetary responsibility for the project, and [their website](#) stating:

“Infrastructure NSW is overseeing and coordinating the delivery of the... Warragamba Dam Raising proposal - EIS and detailed concept design”

Traditional Owner, Kazan Brown, said she was disappointed that the NSW Government would be playing such childish games with the future of her people’s culture.

“There has already been over \$25 million of taxpayers money poured into this dam project and no one in the government will take responsibility for the [shoddy work](#) that the money is being spent on.

“Ultimately the buck stops with Infrastructure NSW. Maree Abood, as the chief bureaucrat running the dam project, simply needs to step-up and listen to our voice on Friday night.

The GIVE A DAM community campaign has sent over 550 personalised emails to Maree Abood and WaterNSW, requesting she attend Friday’s meeting to hear from Traditional Owners.

The Traditional Owner Community Consultation will be held at 7pm this Friday (August 16) at the Falconbridge Community Hall, 9-9A Home Street, Falconbridge NSW. All media is invited.

The email chain referenced above between Infrastructure NSW and the GIVE A DAM Campaign is attached below.

Media contacts:

Harry Burkitt: 0490 010 909

Aunty Sharyn Halls: 0428 270 594

Kazan Brown: 0424 789 140



Harry Burkitt <harry@colongwilderness.org.au>

RE: Shadow Minister steps in

Harry Burkitt <harry@colongwilderness.org.au>

Wed, Aug 14, 2019 at 12:27 PM

To: Media <media@infrastructure.nsw.gov.au>, Maree Abood <maree.abood@infrastructure.nsw.gov.au>

Cc: Matthew Deeth <matthew.deeth@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au>, Mark Greenhill <mgreenhill@bmcc.nsw.gov.au>, Peter Hannam <phannam@fairfaxmedia.com.au>, Dominica Sanda <dsanda@aap.com.au>, Lorena Allam <lorena.allam@theguardian.com>, Kathleen Calderwood <calderwood.kathleen@abc.net.au>

Dear Robert & Maree,

cc. Mark Greenhill (Blue Mountains City Council Mayor)
cc. Matt Deeth (Wollondilly Shire Council Mayor)
cc. Peter Hannam (Sydney Morning Herald)
cc. Dominica Sanda (Australian Associated Press)
cc. Lorena Allum (The Guardian)
cc. Kathleen Calderwood (ABC)

Thanks for your email.

Given that you have stated in your email that **"Infrastructure NSW is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the delivery of the whole Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy... [including] the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall"**, you clearly have overarching responsibility for the infrastructure project. You therefore need to attend (with or without WaterNSW) the consultation on Friday to hear from Traditional Owners whom your Flood Risk Management Strategy will directly impact.

We look forward to seeing Maree in Faulconbridge on Friday night.

Cheers,
Harry Burkitt.

On Wed, Aug 14, 2019 at 11:35 AM Media <media@infrastructure.nsw.gov.au> wrote:

Hi Harry,

There has been no change to Infrastructure NSW's role in this project. Infrastructure NSW is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the delivery of the whole Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy. The strategy includes a number of different measures, one of which is the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall.

As stated yesterday, WaterNSW, as the dam owner and operator, is responsible for preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and detailed design for the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall. This includes preparing the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment.

Infrastructure NSW will continue to work closely with WaterNSW during this time in its overarching role.

We would like to highlight the below which can be attributed to a WaterNSW spokesperson.

- The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report for the Warragamba Dam Raising proposal has not yet been completed or released.
- In line with the agreed methodology, a consultation draft of the assessment report has been issued confidentially to Registered Aboriginal Parties for their review and feedback. This is a key step in the process of preparing the assessment report to inform the EIS for the proposal.
- The consultation draft contains culturally sensitive information, including locations and details of sites. This information belongs to the Traditional Owners.
- WaterNSW does not have the consent of the 22 Registered Aboriginal Parties to share the consultation draft report or its contents publicly.
- The Registered Aboriginal Parties have been provided with 42 days to review and comment on the draft report. Given the length and detail in the report, a longer period than the mandatory 28 days was allowed for this process.
- Representatives of the Registered Aboriginal Parties and a team of specialist archaeologist undertook site surveys over an 12-month period to inform the Draft report. Feedback on the draft report is currently being sought from Traditional Owners.
- A briefing was held with Traditional Owners in July 2019 to discuss the draft report and to provide an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarifications in relation to the report.
- During the consultation period, the 22 Registered Aboriginal Parties were invited to a consultation session, offered face-to-face meetings, phone support and assistance with recording verbal submissions to support this consultation phase.
- When feedback from Registered Aboriginal Parties has been received and incorporated, the draft report will be finalised.
- The final report will inform the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage chapter of the EIS for the Warragamba Dam Raising Proposal.
- The Traditional Owners will determine where it is appropriate for culturally sensitive information to be protected, and what details should be removed from the public-facing final version of the report.
- The final report will be released during the EIS public exhibition period and community consultation sessions will be held.
- At this time the community will have the opportunity to review the report, ask questions and provide comment on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment.
- Other chapters of the EIS, including the biodiversity chapter, are also important to fully understand the broader potential impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The invitation to the event on Friday has been forwarded to WaterNSW, who would be best placed to respond to any questions relating to the detail of the proposal and the consultation process.

Kind regards,

Robert

From: Harry Burkitt [mailto:harry@colongwilderness.org.au]

Sent: Tuesday, 13 August 2019 7:38 PM

To: Media <media@infrastructure.nsw.gov.au>; Maree Abood <maree.abood@infrastructure.nsw.gov.au>

Cc: Matthew Deeth <matthew.deeth@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au>; Mark Greenhill

<mgreenhill@bmcc.nsw.gov.au>; Peter Hannam <phannam@fairfaxmedia.com.au>; Dominica Sanda <dsanda@aap.com.au>; Lorena Allam <lorena.allam@theguardian.com>; Kathleen Calderwood <calderwood.kathleen@abc.net.au>

Subject: Re: Shadow Minister steps in

Dear Robert & Maree,

cc. Mark Greenhill (Blue Mountains City Council Mayor)

cc. Matt Deeth (Wollondilly Shire Council)

cc. Peter Hannam (Sydney Morning Herald)

cc. Dominica Sanda (Australian Associated Press)

cc. Lorena Allum (The Guardian)

cc. Kathleen Calderwood (ABC)

It would appear from your email to me this afternoon that Infrastructure NSW is now distancing itself from the Warragamba Dam Raising project and the Draft Cultural Assessment. I quote from your email:

"WaterNSW, as the dam owner and operator, is responsible for preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and detailed design for the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall."

And your website states:

"Infrastructure NSW is overseeing and coordinating the delivery of the... Warragamba Dam Raising proposal – EIS and detailed concept design"

Has there been a change in authority for this process? If so, when was the decision made? Who is now responsible for the Draft Cultural Heritage Report and the submission process? If this process is being incorrectly or inappropriately conducted, which Minister is responsible for fixing it?

Will Infrastructure NSW be attending the Traditional Owner Consultation on Friday to clarify these matters?

Cheers,

Harry Burkitt

GIVE A DAM Campaign Manager
Colong Foundation for Wilderness

m: 0490 010 909 e: harry@colongwilderness.org.au



I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we work, the Gadigal People, and the traditional owners of the land we campaign to save, the Gundungurra People.

On Tue, Aug 13, 2019 at 1:35 PM Media <media@infrastructure.nsw.gov.au> wrote:

Hi Harry,

We would appreciate it if you could please correct your record which refers to an Infrastructure NSW employee. WaterNSW, as the dam owner and operator, is responsible for preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and detailed design for the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall. This includes preparing the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment.

Earlier today, the below which you may attributed to a WaterNSW spokesperson was distributed to media:

- The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report for the Warragamba Dam Raising proposal has not yet been completed or released.
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- At this time the community will have the opportunity to review the report, ask questions and provide comment on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment.
- Other chapters of the EIS, including the biodiversity chapter, are also important to fully understand the broader potential impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Regards,

Robert

From: Harry Burkitt, GIVE A DAM [mailto:hello@giveadam.org.au]

Sent: Tuesday, 13 August 2019 12:42 PM

To: Maree Abood <maree.abood@infrastructure.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Shadow Minister steps in



Hi Maree,

The NSW Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, David Harris, has added his voice to the campaign. He has called out the absurdity of Infrastructure NSW giving Indigenous groups such a short time-frame to understand and respond to a 2000 page Draft Cultural Assessment on the dam's impacts. Watch him condemn this shoddy process here...



You can help Traditional Owners by writing to the dam's project director, Maree Abood, and asking her to [come and listen to the concerns of Gundungurra Traditional Owners this Friday about why they need more time.](#)

TELL MAREE TO LISTEN!

Infrastructure NSW now faces a litmus test. If they are genuine in their desire to consult

Traditional Owners and the wider community about the dam project, they will come and hear the concerns of the people this [Friday at the Faulconbridge Community Centre from 7pm](#). Make sure [you let them know](#) you want them there.

RSVP FOR FRIDAY

Harry Burkitt | GIVE A DAM



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