

## Hunter Waterkeeper Incorporated submission to the Planning Assessment Committee

### Discovery of new species of Legless Lizard at Mt Pleasant

We write in response to the discovery of a new species of Legless Lizard at the site of the Mt Pleasant Optimisation Project (SSD 10418)

#### Guidelines for assessing conservation status

In their submission to the NSW Government Independent Planning Commission (IPC), The Commonwealth Threatened Species Scientific Committee, in accordance with the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), noted the following guidelines [www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/seap-manual-appendix-1.pdf](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/seap-manual-appendix-1.pdf) when assessing the conservation status of native species;

- a) imminent likelihood of a reduction in numbers
- b) geographic distribution
- c) any suggested decline of the number of mature individuals
- d) an estimate of total number of mature individuals, and
- e) the probability of extinction in the wild

It is noted too that the EPBC does not have any provision for an emergency listing.

#### Hunter Waterkeeper Inc (HWI) concerns

Hunter Waterkeeper submits that the Mount Pleasant Optimisation Project will result in an imminent likelihood of a reduction in numbers of the lizard, a decline in the number of mature individuals, resulting in the probability of extinction of this lizard in the wild.

#### State of the Environment report

The State of the Environment report provides an independent, comprehensive, and evidence-based assessment of the state of Australia's environment.

The latest report (2021) stated that "Environmental degradation is now considered a threat to humanity, which could bring about societal collapses with long-lasting and severe consequences"

Of relevance to the Optimisation Project is that according to the report the number of species listed as 'threatened' has increased 8% since 2016.

#### Strongly opposed

The HWI remains strongly opposed to the Optimisation Project. We believe the discovery of this new species of Legless Lizard represents merely the tip of a rapidly melting iceberg, in terms of impact on our environment.

Addressing the National Press Club in her first major speech since becoming Environment Minister, Tanya Plibersek said the government would adopt a new target to protect 30 per cent of Australia's land areas by 2030.

The discovery of this Lizard further demonstrates the environmental importance of the Mt Pleasant Optimisation Project site, why the site should be protected, and why further extension of mining activities on this site should not be approved.