

**INQUIRY INTO WATER NSW AMENDMENT
(WARRAGAMBA DAM) BILL 2018**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 3 October 2018

Partially
Confidential

I wish to lodge the strongest Objection to any Raising of Warragamba Dam wall. I personally enjoyed hiking along much of the Kowmung River pristine landscape as a young person and oppose this opportunity and ecology to be lost for future generations. These are the key concerns: Large areas of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWhA) would be inundated by sediment-laden flood waters upstream of the raised dam wall. The Government has stated that inundation will occur in the World Heritage Area for five weeks at a time. Based on WaterNSW published flood levels, up to 4,700 hectares of the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Parks and 65 kilometres of wilderness streams would be inundated by the 14-metre dam wall raising. The areas to be inundated (within the World Heritage Area) are of Outstanding Universal Value. It is the most protected natural area in Australia, with six layers of state, federal and international protection afforded to it. Two key species that would be inundated, and likely pushed to extinction by the proposal, are the largest wild population of nationally threatened Camden White Gum, and a breeding site for the critically endangered Regent honeyeater. Numerous Indigenous cultural heritage sites belonging to the Gundungurra people are located within the regions of the GBMWhA to be inundated by the dam wall raising. These sites are both rare and unique, given the destruction of many Gundungurra cultural sites from the original construction of Warragamba dam in 1960. The consultation process with traditional owners over the proposal has been disingenuous to date. The dam raising is being driven by developer interests on the Hawkesbury-Nepean flood plain. The NSW Government has said it plans to allow an additional 134,000 people to reside on western Sydney flood plains over the next 30 years. Valley-wide flood management solutions, adherable to international best-practice, are being dismissed by the NSW Government. Such options have been identified by a range of flood and water quality experts, and do not include raising the Warragamba Dam wall. This is discussed further on page. Background The raising of Warragamba Dam wall was rejected in 1995 by the Carr Labor Government on environmental and economic grounds. Instead, the Carr Government built the Warragamba auxiliary spillway at a cost of \$100 million to ensure dam safety in the largest of floods. The government also invested in downstream flood evacuation infrastructure. In June 2016, Former Liberal Premier, Mike Baird, announced that Warragamba Dam wall would be raised. The cost of the project is said to be \$690 million. The proposal allegedly retains the current full storage level (FSL), with a raise to the dam wall creating an additional 14 metre airspace in the dam to capture flood waters. The raised dam wall would hold an additional two Sydney Harbours of water (1000GL) behind the dam. The design would likely permit additional flood storage space to be used for water supply at a later date by closure of dam release structures. The Federal Environment Minister delegated environmental assessment of the project to WaterNSW (project proponent) under the NSW-Commonwealth bilateral agreement on four matters of national environmental significance. These matters are World Heritage, National Heritage, threatened species and communities, and listed migratory bird species. As of October 2017, the SEARS and an EPBC Controlled Action had been issued by the relevant State and Federal environment departments. The NSW Government has said construction will commence in the 2019/2020 period after the EIS is completed. The project would not be open for public scrutiny through the Independent Planning Commission or otherwise, as it is State Significant Infrastructure proposal by the proponent (WaterNSW), a Government agency. Hon. Stuart Ayres (NSW Minister for Western Sydney) has taken responsibility for the project, although NSW Planning, Environment and Water Ministers will also need to be involved. For this proposal to proceed, legislation is required to permit the flooding of National Parks that is currently forbidden under NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act Amendments to the Water NSW Act 2014 are currently before NSW Parliament to override this national park protection. An improper flood management solution Structural flood mitigation measures are no longer considered international best practice Both Assoc. Prof Jamie Pittock of ANU (flood policy expert) and Assoc. Prof Stuart Khan of UNSW (water supply expert) are vocal critics of the dam wall raising and have identified a range of alternative solutions for flood plain communities. While having marginal impacts on downstream flood peaks, the slow release of captured flood water from the dam would result in significantly increased flood durations for downstream communities. Raising Warragamba Dam wall is unlikely to result in significant reductions indownstream flood peaks given that on average nearly half of all modern flood waters have originated from catchment areas not above Warragamba Dam, and the volumes of large floods that issue from the Warragamba catchment are much greater than the capacity of the proposed dam enlargement. As such, floods will always need to be managed on the flood plain, irrespective of the height of Warragamba Dam wall. Building upstream flood mitigation dams encourages development on low-lying flood plains, as was seen in the case of the Brisbane River. Such a tendency has been expressed by the NSW Government in documentation regarding the project. How can we better manage floods for downstream communities? Invest in evacuation infrastructure in the Hawksbury-Nepean Valley that has been identified by consultant Molino Stewart's North-West Sector Flood Evacuation Analysis. Getting people out before floods is the

only flood management measure that guarantees the protection of human life. Adopt international best practice flood plain development controls to ensure future communities are not put at inappropriate risk. Assoc. Prof Jamie Pittock has examined how to apply such development controls in the national context, while Drew Bewsher has studied how to best employ development controls specifically to the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. Give floods 'room to move' on the flood plain by using flood levees and diversion structures, as put forward by Assoc. Prof Jamie Pittock. Manage the existing capacity of Warragamba Dam by lowering its current full storage level to provide additional airspace for floods. The UTS Institute of Sustainable Futures have undertaken extensive economic and engineering feasibility research into this option (using the desalination plant to make up drinking water shortfall). Several other water specialists have also identified this as an alternative flood mitigation measures. I thoroughly and strongly recommend these

Objections and Opposition to this legislation. yours sincerely