

**Submission
No 4**

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE
WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL**

Name: Mr Martin Fallding

Date Received: 14 August 2019

12 August 2019

Secretary
Legislative Council Select Committee on the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall
Parliament House
Macquarie St, Sydney 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission – Inquiry into the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall

I wish to make a submission to the Inquiry into the NSW Government's proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall.

As a former tourism representative on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Advisory Committee, I strongly object to this proposal. Having regard to Australia's world heritage convention obligations, the proposal should not even be under consideration.

Raising Warragamba Dam wall will cause significant damage to the world heritage area and its values, and bring comparatively little flood risk benefit for flood mitigation and management. The economic and environmental cost of the proposal is significant and far exceeds any social benefits. In fact, the proposal increases the risk of catastrophic flood damage to Western Sydney in extreme or unforeseen events.

Specific comments in relation to the Inquiry terms of reference are as follows:

1. World heritage values – the world heritage values of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area will be degraded by the proposal, and significantly affect a key core part of this area. It appears contrary to international legal obligations.
2. Threatened species – Important threatened species habitat, such as that for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater will be severely impacted by the proposal.
3. Flood risk – While some periodic minor flooding in Western Sydney can potentially be mitigated by the proposal, it will continue and encourage the practice of allowing increased development on flood prone land. This is contrary to sound practice and is against the public interest. In major flood events, increased flood storage in Warragamba Dam will have little impact and not prevent severe flooding, and unlikely to impact on social dislocation and economic loss. More effective land use planning is a much better solution. In fact, raising the Warragamba Dam Wall is likely to increase risks in extreme or unforeseen events and is unacceptable and unnecessary.
4. Social inequity – the project is primarily beneficial to property developers and private interests involved in developing flood liable land. It is not of widespread community benefit, and impacts adversely on sections of the community who value the protection of valued community assets such as national parks, Aboriginal heritage, and protection of biodiversity from extinction. With increasing unpredictability in determining flood risks into the future with climate change, it is likely that communities living on flood prone land will suffer risks from extreme events or engineering failures which are not anticipated in the planning of the dam wall raising project, and which the proposed infrastructure cannot prevent.

5. Economic costs and benefits – the investment in raising the dam wall would be much more effectively spent on other projects with lower risk and higher return. In addition, the economic impact of degradation of world heritage values, and the impacts on tourism and international perception are of significance, and cannot be underestimated.
6. Aboriginal heritage – the importance of protecting Aboriginal heritage values in the area are extremely high. These sites and areas are of world heritage significance and should be protected, even though the world heritage listing currently does not recognise these.
7. Inadequate consideration of alternative options – planning processes for project have failed to consider all reasonable options, especially alternative land use planning measures and land development locations. The proposal is not necessary because better and more robust alternatives for flood mitigation exist, primarily through measures applied on the impact site and immediate locality.
8. Disconnected land use planning and flood management – the problem that the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall responds to is inadequate land use planning for flood risk and management. This should be addressed before high cost, high risk and high impact developments such as that proposed for Warragamba Dam are contemplated.

I request that these matters be taken into account in the Inquiry and its report.

Thanks for your consideration of this submission.

Yours sincerely

Martin Falding