

**Submission  
No 41**

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

**Name:** Mr Paul Knight

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# Legislative Council Select Committee on the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall

## Submission

My name is Paul Knight, and I live at . I have had extensive experience bushwalking in the Greater Blue Mountains National Park (GBMNP).

I particularly wish to comment on a number of aspects of the Terms of Reference. My numbering reflects that used in the terms of reference.

(a)

Raising the dam wall for flood mitigation does not prevent any future government from changing the law, or possibly even and administrative change, to use the full storage capacity for water storage. This would completely negate any benefit the dam might provide for flood mitigation. This would be a cheap solution to providing water for an irresponsible government trying to avoid electorally damaging water restrictions.

(b)

Raising the dam wall will not “flood-proof” currently flood prone land. With climate change driving more extreme weather events, and given that the Warragamba catchment is only part of the total Nepean catchment, it would be irresponsible to claim a higher dam wall would provide security against flooding downstream. Since this claim is justifying plans to increase the population on the floodplain, we would be looking at increasing risks to life and property.

In recent decades, possibly due to climate change, weather patterns have altered such that rainfall in the Sydney area has become more coastal, and the Warragamba catchment receives less rainfall. This makes raising the dam wall less effective, since major rainfall events are more likely in the southern Nepean catchment. It also makes raising the dam wall less necessary, since the dam is rarely full.

(d)

The GBMNP received World Heritage status for many of its unique characteristics, including Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. The EIS has paid scant regard to this. I also believe the EIS is inadequate in addressing effects on and below the floodplain. Prior to the building of the many dams on the Nepean river system natural flooding was a major environmental force in the Nepean Hawkesbury system. This has already been reduced by the various dams. The proposal to raise the dam wall would further reduce natural downstream flows, and through medium term inundation simultaneously destroy riverine ecosystems in the GBMNP.

(e)

Flooding is a natural phenomenon and not a danger that can ever be averted. Management of the built environment is a human activity and good management strategies can reduce the hazard to those who, through poor planning decisions of previous governments, are at risk of flood. Engineering solutions for the floodplain do exist without the environmental damage of this proposal.

(i)

There is no going back once the wild rivers have been flooded. I have seen the destruction on the upper reaches of the Warragamba River, where temporary inundation occurs now. The natural vegetation is destroyed, replaced by weeds. The bed is silted. Feral animals graze. While I would

proudly show an overseas visitor the Kowmung River, just a few km further upstream, I'd be embarrassed for them to see the Warragamba River, and this proposal will destroy the Kowmung and other rivers. Destruction is forever. World Heritage Protection should be forever.

Paul Knight