

**Submission  
No 105**

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

**Name:** Ms Megan Benson

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## Warragamba Dam Wall Inquiry

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I object to the Warragamba Dam wall raising proposal.

I am a resident of \_\_\_\_\_, concerned about sustainable water supply to Sydney as well as my own catchment (that is presently threatened by impacts from long wall mining).

Our water security faces very real threats from the impacts of climate change - higher temperatures will diminish flows in catchments at the same time as consumer demand increases, as well, flood and storm intensity is likely to increase – and our infrastructure is not well equipped to cope with expected weather extremes.

Water NSW's Community update (Summer 2018/19) notes that Warragamba Dam was not designed or has ever been operated to manage floods. So, it is concerning that consideration of raising the dam wall for the purpose of flood mitigation lower down in the catchment is being touted as the best option to reduce flood risk to those residents. Sounds like guesswork and wishful thinking to me. The government must firstly decide if Warragamba dam is to service Sydney's water or to provide flood mitigation for flood plain residents. If government wants to do both, it has a responsibility to put alternative scenarios on the table, with full cost-benefit analyses.

Government agencies would know this option will only afford false hope to residents of the floodplain. Assoc. Prof Jamie Pittock's report (ANU Sept 2018) Managing flood risk in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley refers to "An average of 45% of floodwaters originate from catchment areas that are not upstream of Warragamba Dam (NSW SES 2015).

Historically, flood risk in the flood prone Hawkesbury-Nepean Floodplain has been intensified by poor, short sighted planning decisions that have seen to the expansion of housing developments on flood prone land. This flood risk is likely to worsen as more development plans are underway. I understand this is the case for Brisbane as well.

The proposal has widespread opposition:

- Mayor Deeth, on behalf of Wollondilly Shire Council has cited the impact of the proposal on National Parks, Cultural Sites and World Heritage areas
- UNESCO World Heritage Committee stated the proposal was "likely to have an impact on the outstanding universal values of the area"
- The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), advisory body to UNESCO, has claimed the proposal breaches Australia's responsibilities under the World Heritage Convention
- The Warragamba Dam public meeting held in August 2019, organized by both the Blue Mountains and Wollondilly Councils highlighted failures in the NSW government community consultation process
- Traditional Owners, not only object to the proposal, but want the culturally sensitive draft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment peer-reviewed before further consideration, noting that only 26% of the impacted area has been appropriately surveyed

Leaked documents have exposed frightening weaknesses in the proposal both for incorrectly identifying potential flood risk and only offering a possible, partial reduction of the probable flood risk (SMH Aug 6 'Leaked charts undercut case to lift Warragamba dam wall: opponents). Importantly, the proposal would permanently change the environmental attributes and cultural heritage of the 1,300 hectares affected by the predicted temporary inundation if the wall is built. Raising the dam wall isn't simply a matter of weighing up the known losses against the potential for mitigating flood risk. The problem is development in flood plains is risky no matter what. Some areas should not be developed because of the inherent natural and now man made (including threats from extreme weather events) risks in the landscape.

The proposal to raise the dam wall must go back to the drawing boards so that transparent consideration of other ways to address the potential flood risks of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Floodplain are open for public comment and endorsement. Government has a duty of care to

existing residents, our Indigenous People and our World Heritage environment to act in our best interests now.

As it stands, the proposal is a liability to the State of NSW and threatens our priceless landscape, heritage and safety of citizens. I am extremely worried that the government sees the proposal so as to allow further development on the flood plain.

Yours faithfully,

Megan Benson.