

Submission
No 174

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

Organisation: Healthy Rivers Dubbo

Date Received: 5 September 2019



Healthy Rivers Dubbo

E-mail:

Submission to NSW Parliament inquiry into the proposal to raise Warragamba Dam wall

5th September 2019

To: Mr Justin Field, MLC
Chair
Select Committee on the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall
Legislative Council
NSW Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY 2000
Submission via portal

Introduction

Healthy Rivers Dubbo (HRD) is a community grass roots group dedicated to providing a strong voice for our rivers and wetlands. As ambassadors for healthy rivers, wetlands and groundwater, we have been active in our community calling for transparency and accountability in all aspects of water management.

HRD pays our respects to the Traditional Owners, past, present and future, of the land we live on. We acknowledge that the land on which we live was never ceded.

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Parliament inquiry in to the proposal to raise Warragamba Dam wall.

Cultural Heritage of the southern Blue Mountains ToR (d) (ii)

Raising Warragamba dam wall will destroy the remaining link the Traditional Owners have to Country.

The First Nations people of this continent have the longest connection to country and living cultural practices in the world.

It is untenable that a recently arriving colonising force such as ourselves, having been on this continent for a microscopic fraction of the time of First Nations, could even consider, let alone actively destroy landscapes that are important cultural and spiritual Places.

Growing up, Australians were taught that First Nations peoples were nomadic hunter gatherers with no agricultural practices, economy, or political system – and (shamefully) classifying Aboriginal People as flora and fauna until 1967. We know better now, thanks to breakthrough books like Bruce Pascoe's 'Dark Emu' and Bill Gammage's 'The Biggest Estate on Earth'.

Vast destruction has been unleashed on the First Nations people since colonisation, we know better now and the destruction must stop.

We have heard from Gundungurra woman Kazan Brown in the media, labelling the draft Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment for the wall raising as "insulting" and "culturally insensitive". We should listen.¹

Flood risk mitigation ToR 1. (a)

HRD is not convinced that the raising of Warragamba Dam wall will be effective at mitigating flood risk on the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain.

Giving the community a false sense of security that flood risk has been diminished, be it on the NSW Government when developments built in risky areas are inevitably exposed to high and unexpected flood risk.

"Importantly, no configuration of Warragamba Dam will prevent flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. Since the dam's construction in 1960, contribution of the Warragamba catchment to major flooding events has ranged from 73% to 42%. An average of 45% of floodwaters originate from catchment areas that are not upstream of Warragamba Dam (NSW SES 2015). This means that even if a raised Warragamba Dam was to hold back some flood waters, other catchments could still cause significant flooding in the valley."²

Development on the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain ToR 1(a)

Plans to raise Warragamba dam wall seem to be a significant strategy in the plan to increase the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain population by 134,000 people by 2030. This plan will permanently change the socio-economic fabric of the region.

Sydney will lose a reliable close food producing region, potentially increasing our already significant reliance on imported food, with large carbon footprints and long food miles.

HRD has concerns the required infrastructure planning and investment may not keep up with the sudden significant population explosion in Sydney's Western Suburbs, and will lead to unreasonable demands on limited natural resources.

Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area ToR 1. (c)

The environmental damage this project would inflict on the environment of the World Heritage Greater Blue Mountains Area would be devastating. None of these ecosystems are meant to be under water for a couple of weeks. It would completely destroy them. 48 threatened species found

¹ <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6302092/warragamba-report-insulting-to-elders/?cs=14231>

²

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/wildrivers/pages/310/attachments/original/1554349542/Professor_Jamie_Pittock_-_A_report_on_the_alternative_flood_management_measure.pdf?1554349542

over 4,700 hectares would be further threatened – including Australia’s rarest bird, the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater.

The iconic Kowmung River, and Sydney’s only remaining wild river would be destroyed.

The World Heritage Committee noted this project would undermine the ‘Outstanding Universal Values’³ which led to the park being inscribed as a World Heritage Site.

For further information, please contact

Melissa Gray

Convenor

Healthy Rivers Dubbo

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jul/04/warragamba-dam-plan-threatens-blue-mountains-world-heritage-status>