

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Submission to the Legislative Council Inquiry into the Warragamba Dam Wall raising proposal

In January 2011, and the months following, I witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of the Brisbane floods on the lives of working people who lived in flood prone areas: the piles of water soaked furnishings, white goods on street pavements; the battered houses – many of which had to be substantially rebuilt. The families struggling to cope with the disaster, to try to get back to normal living.

The first thing that concerns me about the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall is that it creates the illusion that more urban development can take place in the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain.

I understand that Australia's zoning regulation for flooding at 1:100 years, is well below international best practice, for example, the USA's 1: 500 years. Raising the Warragamba Dam wall will not protect the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain if 45% of the historical floods in the valley have come from other catchments.

I would suggest that at this time of climate crisis, and based on the experience of the Brisbane floods, that it is foolhardy to change the Hawkesbury-Nepean food production zone into an urban wasteland that is just waiting to be inundated by flash flooding.

The second thing that troubles me deeply is the proposed destruction of sacred and archaeological sites that are central to the cultural heritage of the southern Blue Mountains. These include scarred trees, and hundreds of artefact sites in the area including stone tools, axe heads and ceremonial grounds which are a part of the Gundungurra people's history. I understand that the Draft Aboriginal Heritage Report prepared only covers 26% of the area that will be impacted by the Warragamba Dam wall project. Australia's Indigenous heritage should not be willingly disregarded for the sake of an infrastructure project of questionable value.

The same applies to the ecological impact of the proposal. The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area is a resource for all Sydney residents, including people like myself who live in the suburbs of the city. It is an important attraction for visitors to the city from other parts of Australia and overseas.

The area has been described by ornithologist Dr Martin Schulz as "truly one of the greatest wilderness areas of Australia. The area is so special because it is a functioning ecosystem, you have dingoes keeping kangaroos under control and it's all working like it should - it's healthy." [Blue Mountains Gazette November 20, 2018] The proposed 'controlled release' of water planned with raising the Dam wall, will have a devastating impact on this ecosystem which could take hundreds of years to recover, Dr Schulz says. And that's not to mention the specific rare species, including the critically endangered regent honeyeater bird, turquoise parrot, glossy black cockatoo and the brown treecreeper, which will also be harmed by this project.

Australia already ranks among the worst in the world in terms of our destruction of rare flora and fauna. I appeal to the NSW Government, and the Upper House Inquiry, please stop this proposal before it goes any further. Find other ways to house Sydney residents that do not involve the destruction of one of the most important resources this city has to make it a liveable environment.

