

Submission
No 213

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

Organisation: Blue Mtns Peakeepers

Date Received: 10 September 2019

Submission regarding the proposal to raise Warragamba dam wall

Mr Justin Field, MLC

Chair

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

NSW Parliament House

Macquarie St

SYDNEY NSW 2000

RE: Inquiry into the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam

I am writing in my capacity as one of the co founders of Blue Mtns Peacekeepers to make a submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee on the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall.

Blue Mtns Peacekeepers are dedicated to preserving the peace of the Blue Mountains. For us this does not purely mean protecting the tranquility of the area and stopping loud noise. We seek to conserve the natural environment, preserve world heritage values and respect Country. The proposal to raise Warragamba Dam Wall is a huge threat to the biodiversity value of the Blue Mountains. In this submission we are keen to addresses term of reference 1d(iii) in this enquiry.

Raising Warragamba Dam wall is a proposal that solves nothing and creates more risks and problems. This proposal will not effectively mitigate flood risk on the Hawkesbury Nepean floodplain. Around 45% of historical flood waters in the valley have originated from other catchments besides Warragamba, for starters. Furthermore, the wall raising will promote more development in risky areas, effectively increasing the number of people exposed to high flood risk.

The very act of raising the dam wall will encourage commercial housing development on the Hawkesbury Nepean floodplain, which feels like its the real agenda behind this proposal: the NSW Government shouldn't be putting more people in areas that are deemed dangerous in many other countries.

Blue Mtns Peacekeepers are deeply concerned about the the irreversible damage the raising of the wall will have on the cultural heritage of the southern Blue Mountains. Gundungurra man David King has spoken about how this proposal threatens to destroy the remaining link Traditional Owners have to country. It would result in the massive loss of sacred and archaeological sites, including the last remaining features of the Gundungurra peoples dreaming stories. The only draft cultural assessment that has been made utilised botched methodology, so that, of the entire area that would be submerged, only 26% was actually assessed by consultants. To persist with this project in the face of this information is to wilfully engage in the destruction of First Nations cultures.

It is obvious that the ecological damage that this project would inflict on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area is devastating and irreversible. Why is the Government supporting a project that threatens 48 threatened species found in the 4,700 hectares to be inundated, including the critically endangered Regent honeyeater (Australia's rarest bird) and the Camden White Gum? Why is the government prepared to destroy Sydney's only remaining wild river and wilderness streams, including the iconic Kowmung river? Earlier this year the World Heritage Committee noted that the project will also undermine the 'Outstanding Universal Values' which led to the park being inscribed as a World Heritage Site. This threatens its status as a World Heritage site, which has far reaching impacts. Australia is a signatory to UNESCO's World Heritage convention, and the NSW Government is responsible for honouring that commitment. It shouldn't be a big ask World Heritage status brings us a great economic benefit. Protecting ecology, biodiversity and habitat creates jobs and growth in NSW. I'm calling on the NSW select committee and the Legislative council to take immediate steps to withdraw support for this destructive proposal and commit to their task of protecting World heritage for the citizens of NSW, now and in the future.

Yours Sincerely,

Manda Kaye, Blue Mtns Peacekeepers, Blackheath NSW