

Submission
No 216

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

Organisation: Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment (FOKE)

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Mr Justin Field, MLC
Chair
Select Committee on the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall
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FRIENDS OF
KU-RING-GAI
ENVIRONMENT INC.

Inquiry into the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall

Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment (FOKE) wishes to make a submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee on the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall.

FOKE was founded in 1994 to promote, protect and enhance the environment and heritage of Ku-ring-gai. It strongly opposes inappropriate and unsympathetic overdevelopment, not only within Ku-ring-gai, but across Greater Sydney, including the Penrith district. In the 2000s it campaigned to protect the environmentally sensitive lands of St Marys Commonwealth ADI site. FOKE regrets that the Commonwealth Government sold this environmentally sensitive site for housing in 2004.

In 2019 FOKE joined the 'Give a Dam' Alliance because of its commitment to the environment; its commitment to Sydney's Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area; and its commitment to opposing overdevelopment. In 2019 FOKE contributed an article opposing the raising the Warragamba Dam published in the *Monthly Chronicle* an independent newspaper distributed throughout the northern suburbs of Sydney.

FOKE has an active interest in World Heritage values and has resolved to commence a campaign to call for the World Heritage listing of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, one of the oldest national parks in the world. Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park is connected, via the Hawkesbury bioregion, to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

FOKE's contribution to this Inquiry is as follows:

Raising Warragamba Dam wall will be ineffective at mitigating flood risk on the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain.

FOKE argues that engineering solutions, such as raising a dam wall are flawed, ineffective and will exacerbate and entrench future problems in dealing with the consequences of climate change where more extreme floods and droughts become the new norms. What is certain, is that floods will occur, regardless of a wall, as the Hawkesbury Nepean is a plain that is geologically defined

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as a flood plain. The most responsible action is remove housing and not allow further housing to be built on the flood plain.

Raising Warragamba Dam wall will promote too much development on the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain, with developers already speculating on flood-prone land.

FOKE has argued that on too many occasions, the State Government has put the interests of developers before the interests of the environment and community.

FOKE is well aware of State Government's demands for overdevelopment and its detrimental impacts on environmentally sensitive land including its own endangered ecological communities Blue Gum High Forest, Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest and Duffy's Forest.

FOKE fears that the raising Warragamba Dam wall is all about signalling to developers, they are prepared to rezone flood prone land, for massive economic benefit for investors that will reap super profits for developers.

FOKE has witnessed years of the State Government overriding local planning decisions to ramp up development and 'economic viability' for developers across Ku-ring-gai and Greater Sydney. FOKE knows too well how local councils are put under enormous pressure to rezone land for more density. If they do not meet the State Government's population 'targets' then the State Government intervenes and rezones for even higher densities.

The irreversible damage the raising of the wall will have on the cultural heritage of the southern Blue Mountains is unacceptable and will destroy the remaining link its Traditional Owners have to country.

FOKE pays respects to the Gundungurra Traditional Owners, its Elders, past, present and emerging. Raising of the Warragamba Dam wall will destroy the Gundungurra People's cultural heritage that includes rock art sites, burial sites and ochre sites and sacred waterholes that tell their creation story.

FOKE also expresses concern with the loss of European cultural values of the Southern Blue Mountains, the spiritual home of the bushwalking conservation movement that led to the World Heritage listing of the Greater Blue Mountains. The raising of the Warragamba Dam wall will flood the Kowmung River where the bushwalking conservation movement began. Many of these bushwalkers were residents of Kur-ring-gai, including Alex Colley, Paddy Pallin, Tom Moppitt, and David Darwin Stead.

The massive environmental/ecological damage that this project will inflict on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area is devastating.

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If the Warragamba Dam is raised by 14 metres – and now a possible 17 metres – it will flood, bury, and scar World Heritage area with sediment, weeds and water, and permanently degrade them. Majestic old growth trees will become stark, dead wood. It will wipe out the habitat of one of NSW's most beautiful and rarest of birds — the Regent Honeyeater and condemn it to extinction. It will flood the Camden white gum (*Eucalyptus benthamii*), which is nationally listed as vulnerable, and Kowmung hakea (*Hakea Dohertyi*) which is listed as endangered.

FOKE is deeply concerned about the crisis of NSW's biodiversity especially with the flawed and expanded use of biodiversity offsets. FOKE remains deeply concerned that there can be no biodiversity offsets for the flooding of World Heritage Area. It's unique biodiversity cannot be replaced.

FOKE believes that the NSW Government has a responsibility to protect, restore and ensure resilience for Sydney's biodiversity and not jeopardise or risk its survival. It also has a national and international responsibility to protect the World Heritage values of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

FOKE urges the Legislative Council Select Committee to make a recommendation calling on the NSW Government to abandon its proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall.

Yours sincerely,

Janine Kitson
Vice President
FOKE

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