

**Submission
No 218**

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

Organisation: STEP Inc
Date Received: 9 September 2019



STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978

9 September 2019

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

Dear Committee

Re Inquiry into the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall

STEP Inc is a community-based environmental group, with a membership of over 400 in the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai area. Our main objective is to preserve natural bushland in northern Sydney from alienation or degradation and ensuring proper management of this bushland including ensuring its role as habitat for animal species. Our group has considerable experience in environmental issues and the geology and soils of the Blue Mountains and Sydney basin in general.

STEP is strongly opposed to the proposal to raise the wall of Warragamba Dam for the following reasons:

1. the additional water held back by the raised dam, even if it is only temporary, will cause huge damage to the pristine wilderness and wild rivers of the World Heritage Blue Mountains National Park including the habitat of 48 threatened species and sites of cultural significance to the Gundungarra people.
2. The temporary flooding of rivers that are in the central regions of the Blue Mountains, such as the Kedumba River, will kill vegetation and this dead vegetation will be visible from the iconic tourist location of Echo Point. The value of this essential region for the NSW tourism industry, particularly from overseas visitors, will be seriously downgraded.
3. The proposal will not actually achieve its stated intention of significantly reducing the flood risk in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. As pointed out in the report by Professor Jamie Pittock¹ "Since the dam's construction in 1960, (the) contribution of the Warragamba catchment to major flooding events has ranged from 73% to 42%". The flood peak may be delayed but the damage from later release of the additional water that has been held back will prolong the damage in the valley that is likely to occur in any case after a heavy rainfall event.
4. Planners have already allowed homes to be built in flood prone areas and there are predictions of large numbers of new homes being allowed to be built in the valley. This

¹ Managing Flood Risk in the Hawkesbury-Nepean valley, Associate Professor Jamie Pittock ANU September 2018, "

will create more potential costs to the community as it is not possible to remove the risk entirely. Studies by several academics referred to in Pittock's paper have demonstrated that managing the water levels in the Warragamba Dam would be a much more cost effective measure. The most sensible decision will be to not allow more homes to be put in harm's way.

5. As Sydney expands the need for arable land is becoming more acute. The flood plain provides an essential area where food can be grown. The reliance on food imported from other parts of Australia or overseas increases transport and refrigeration costs.

STEP requests that this submission be made publicly available on the inquiry's website.

Yours faithfully,

Jill Green
President