

Submission
No 220

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

Organisation: Hawkesbury Environment Network

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 Hawkesbury Environment Network
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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

Inquiry into the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall

Dear Sir

Please accept this submission to the Legislative Council's Select Committee Inquiry into the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall. We make this submission on behalf of Hawkesbury Environment Network.

Hawkesbury Environment Network represents the concerns of those members of the community who are aware of the pressure that the rampant development of Western Sydney is having and will continue to have on the natural environment. We actively promote the sustainable development of our resources but oppose short sighted schemes that cause future generations to pay an unacceptable high price for bad planning policy.

The Hawkesbury/Nepean floodplain is a valuable resource that should be preserved for the natural processes and the food it provides to the people of Sydney. Our farmers have lived with the floods which flush the rivers and wetlands for many generations, as have the aboriginal people for much longer. These floods recharge the ground water and enrich the topsoil. In addition, the health of the Hawkesbury Nepean River is crucial to the oyster and fishing industries downstream from the floodplain. It is clear that raising the dam wall will pose an unacceptable risk of further damage to the Hawkesbury/Nepean river system.

Hawkesbury Environment Network contribution to this inquiry addresses terms of reference 1b and 1e, highlighting concerns over the plans for future development over the floodplain and the adequacy of the investigation into alternative options for flood mitigation in 'Resilient Valley, Resilient Communities' strategy.

The document titled 'Hawkesbury Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy Taskforce Options Assessment Report' makes it clear that only a region wide approach to reducing flood risk would be adequately investigated. The local problems-local solutions



approaches were quickly rejected as these would limit the future expansion of population growth on the floodplain. Hence, the conclusion that only raising Warragamba Dam wall could manage flood risk was the inevitable outcome. However, the report highlighted the potential to protect existing townships and infrastructure on the floodplain with the use of levees. Local Levees including Peachtree Creek at Penrith, McGraths Hill and Pitt town were shown to mitigate flooding at a far lower cost than raising Warragamba Dam wall.

If the aim of the NSW Flood strategy is to preserve life and existing infrastructure, then local solutions combined with a halt to further development on the Hawkesbury/Nepean floodplain would produce the best long-term outcomes. The NSW government should abandon their plan to double housing on the floodplain. It would be totally irresponsible to add another 134,000 homes to an area which has a known flood risk. This expansion if allowed to proceed would only put more people in harms-way having a false sense of security that a raised dam wall would in some way prevent all flooding.

Hawkesbury Environment Network calls on the NSW government to invest in a genuine flood strategy based on international best practice floodplain development controls. This should involve a host of infrastructure and non-infrastructure approaches including;

- providing adequate evacuation infrastructure in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley
- building structures that would protect townships from all sources of catchment flood waters not just Warragamba Dam
- acknowledging the contradiction caused by trying to manage a water storage dam for flood mitigation
- sustainably managing water usage in the Sydney basin catchment by investing in local water recycling and tertiary treatment of stormwater which will capture coastal rainfall and
- adequately educating the existing population on managing flood risk.

Yours Sincerely,

Chairperson
Hawkesbury Environment Network

Secretary
Hawkesbury Environment Network