

Submission
No 222

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

Organisation: Bankstown Bushland Society Inc

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SUBMISSION to RAISING WARRAGAMBA DAM INQUIRY

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The Society wishes to put on record its opposition to the raising of Warragamba Dam. We make the following points:

The destruction of riparian wildlife habitat

The river flats along the Coxs and Kowmung Rivers and many of their tributaries, provide essential grazing and foraging opportunities for macropods and other animals in the confined gorges. They support an abundance of wildlife in a pristine landscape. Some of the most extensive grazing areas in the Burratorang Valley have already been submerged by the dam. Subsequent to its construction, the area backing onto the dam was dedicated as National Park to protect and conserve habitat values. The effects of raising the height of the dam are incompatible with this.

Aboriginal Heritage:

The local aboriginal people lost much of their heritage with the flooding of Burratorang Valley. However, the remote Coxs and Kowmung Rivers, where the landscape is largely unchanged since prehistoric times, still contain much that is important to them. Ancestor stories have been recorded that refer specifically to features in these valleys that can be identified. These features include natural waterholes along the courses of the main streams. Raising the dam will further the destruction of aboriginal heritage and be a blow to their culture as well as to that of Australia as a whole.

European History:

The Blue Mountains defied attempts by Europeans to extend settlement for a quarter of a century. The stories of men such as Bass, Wilson, Barrallier and Caley, as they strove to unravel the mysteries of the Coxs and Kowmung Rivers, are deeply imbedded in Australian culture. Pioneer settlers and cattlemen followed. For more than a century, cattlemen moved their livestock over remote mountain passes for the purposes of grazing and mustering. These rivers remain largely as the explorers and cattlemen found them and, as such, are monuments in the landscape to pioneer history, which raising of the dam will only degrade.

The Southern Blue Mountains is the heartland of bushwalking in New South Wales:

The Coxs and Kowmung Rivers lie at the core of iconic country frequented by generations of bushwalkers and nature lovers. The development of modern bushwalking has its origins in the Coxs and Kowmung valleys where over 100 years ago men such as Myles Dunphy and Bert Gallop refined the practice. Since then, countless numbers of enthusiasts have explored these valleys, learning much from their experiences. Out of appreciation for the beauty and wildness of the region came the drive for a Blue Mountains National Park with wilderness areas.

National Park status has for 60 years prioritised management for conservation values: raising the dam is incompatible with this.

It is a World Heritage Area:

The secure protection of natural landscape, historical and wildlife values, and the international recognition of this, qualified the area for World Heritage classification. This has been a boon for conservation, local tourism, and a plus for the economy of the state. The Blue Mountains is without doubt one of the great tourist attractions of the world. The raising of the dam would destroy long sections of valley floors of the magnificent rivers, degrade the national park and put World Heritage status in jeopardy.

Hawkesbury – Nepean Floodplain:

Raising the dam is not a remedy for flooding in the Hawkesbury catchment as floods will continue to come down the Nepean arm of the river. In fact, the higher the dam, the greater potential flooding impacts will be. Water height levels would still have to be carefully controlled. The Hawkesbury floodplain is naturally adapted to receive floodwaters which have made it made it, since early days of European settlement, high quality farming land that has served Sydney well and enable it to flourish. This farming land should not be converted to urban sprawl, which is what lies behind the push for raising the dam. Sydney needs this land to continue to supply it with fresh food as it has always done.

Conclusion:

There are too many negative impacts of raising the dam for what is essentially a land grab on the floodplain for unrestrained development. Given the great environmental, cultural and historical significance of the landscape, Bankstown Bushland Society trusts you will consider carefully the points we have raised and recommend against raising the dam.