

**Submission  
No 250**

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

**Name:** Cr Daniel Myles  
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To the Legislative Council Select Committee on the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall

Tuesday 10th September, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this important issue.

I am a Councillor of the City of the Blue Mountains. However I make this submission as a private citizen, not on behalf of the Council, although I am aware of the Submission of the Council and I endorse it.

I oppose the raising of the Dam wall by 14 metres as I feel it will give a false sense of security to people in the Hawkesbury-Nepean district.

In 1978, my parents and I lived in Wilberforce during the disastrous flood of that year. We were among those who were evacuated to higher ground. While scary, this was little disruption to us as we were living in the Wilberforce Caravan Park at the time and simply hooked up our caravan and left. Many other people however were terribly affected and I can still remember seeing them with their boxes of belongings in their cars after evacuating their homes.

We were evacuated to the Wilberforce Primary School which is approximately 15 metres above the general level of the River. So many residents were displaced and forced to live with limited facilities, that they endured great discomfort. By contrast my Mum, Dad & I had gas powered lighting and cooking and were much less affected. I make this point to underline that so great is the impact of a flood that it takes the ownership of a caravan to provide a strong measure of comfort in such a crisis. Most people do not have this and even if they do, or are able to stay with family and friends, they still have the worry about the condition of their home left behind.

So why am I against the raising of the Dam wall? Because rainfall captured by Warragamba Dam is far from the only factor that contributes to a flood event. It may not even be the largest factor depending on circumstance.

My Dad was, in 1978, a Surveyor working for Survey Branch of the NSW Department of Public Works. His job was to conduct hydrological surveys of the Hawkesbury River. For this he had a boat and the services of several assistants, then known as Chainmen.

The purpose of these surveys, which used echo sounding technology as well as more traditional theodolite/level methods, was to gain an appreciation of the cross sections of the River. This could be used to ascertain the dangers of the flow of River water being retarded by silting via the formation of large, often transitory, sand banks. These form because the Great Dividing Range is primarily made up of sandstone – with the emphasis on sand. Runoff from the Mountains carries sand into the River system in great quantities depending on unpredictable circumstances. For instance, the water flow under and through the Mountains undermines the footings of the

existing peaks, cliffs and gorges leading to these structures slowly falling away. These footings are often made of softer material including coal, upon which the sandstone of the Range rests. The sandy rubble slowly crumbles and flows into the River (Attachment 1). This also accounts for the extremely craggy aspect of the Great Dividing Range including the Blue Mountains. It is not water flowing over the rocks that causes the unique vista of the Blue Mountains but gravity! I should add that water does collect sand from the sandstone by surface flow as well.

However, the presence of silting is only one of a number of factors that causes flooding.

Of particular concern is the large amount of high ground draining into the River below the Dam. From the Dam to Windsor is approximately 61 kilometres of River (Attachment 2). This includes all the flow from the Grose River, Colo River and MacDonal River not to mention Glenbrook and Erskine Creeks near the Dam and many more tributaries which do not even have names (Attachment 3). Things get worse below Sackville where the River receives runoff from both sides (Attachment 4).

The presence of the Sackville Gorges also slows the flow of the River as the twists and turns amount to some 45 kilometres of River length rather than 17 kilometres straight-line distance from the Ebenezer/South Maroota area through to Wisemans Ferry (Attachment 5). This results in much more water being present to push back against the pressure of a flood event.

The Hawkesbury is also tidal as far as Ebenezer (Attachment 6) and more so closer to the outflow point at Mooney Mooney and Brooklyn. This means pressure from the Tasman can still further prevent the flow of excess water caused by a flood event.

My clear submission is that a flood event is caused by a combination of: rainfall, silting, natural geography and tides. At best, as far as the populated part of the Blue Mountains is concerned, rainfall from Wentworth Falls to Medlow Bath on the South side ONLY of the Great Western Highway is what drains into the Dam. ALL other parks of the Blue Mountains go into the River below the Dam. This is why Yarramundi Bridge is so often underwater after significant rain.

I am also concerned at the possible loss of Aboriginal heritage sites as well as natural habitats for wildlife caused by this proposal. In the background also lies the fear that World Heritage Listing will be removed from the Greater Blue Mountains area.

However I do not believe in "Trees before Lives" and have cautioned fellow Mountains residents in allowing the debate to simply be along these lines. If I believed that raising the Dam wall would make the difference in preventing a flood, I would support it.

I DO NOT believe this.

Will it capture extra rainfall that might otherwise contribute to a Flood? Yes.

Will it prevent a Flood? Definitely not.

A final point is that should the Dam fill completely then, for the reasons outlined above, there may still be significant water slowly draining out of the flooded Hawkesbury District. I understand that the proposal is for a slow release by the new 14 metre portion of the Dam wall. Similar to the release of water from the Wivenhoe Dam in the 2010-11 Brisbane Floods, outflow from Warragamba could actually contribute to flooding. Something like this may have occurred in 1978 in the Hawkesbury as well – that's what Mum and Dad were told at the time, anyway.

You will note that throughout this submission, I have used a capital R to commence the word 'River'. My last submission is that a River is a Verb, not a Noun!

Thank you.

Daniel Myles