

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 7 September 2019

Partially
Confidential

To the Review Committee:

I would like to add my voice to the rejection of the proposal to permit the elevation of the dam wall at Warragamba.

I completely adhere to the community opinion that Public land should remain out of the hands of private investors even when the investors are purportedly at arm's length.

The many reports of who will benefit from the so-called 'downstream-flood-prevention' inculcates private investors, (specifically real estate investors) acting under the guise of public good. The value of the bush protected as catchment far outweighs the economic benefit of investors being able to build on newly re-categorised (read downgraded) flood risk areas.

This seems to be so obvious, it almost needs no further clarification. The public ought not be skimmed of its assets (the bush) in order to promote real estate moguls or greedy Councils as stakeholders, who are all too happy to promote housing development as a means of financial boost.

Instead, I would like to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves - the wildlife. Of course the dam proposal is exclusively limited to benefit the humans which surround the catchment area. It deliberately punishes the wildlife who can't complain, can't petition, and who suffer in silence.

I am a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation officer. Every hour of every day I deal with the support and care of animals whose natural mothers have been mercilessly killed by humanity's cars, housing, domestic animals, habitat clearing and sheer bloody mindedness. (Try rat bait for an example of bloody mindedness. The possums are attracted to it, and they die a horrifying death, via internal bleeding... as do their offspring who ingest the poison through their milk intake.)

Humans have removed the ecology on which they depend. We have paved their homes in order to set up our homes, and established industries which poison their air and water. And now this proposal will swallow more of the bush of Sydney.

If you have any doubt as to the horrendous impact of humanity on our national wildlife, ask National Parks and Wildlife for the statistics they keep on how many native animals are brought into care every year. The answer is tens of thousands, of every species.

Removing even more of their dwindling natural habitat in the call for promoting private investor / stakeholder profiteering, would be the most callous action. They can't tell you. They can't object. They just die. Quietly.

(And for those who would argue that there is plenty more bush for them to move to, away from the rising water levels... I'd remind them of the idea that the North Atlantic could never be fished out.)

The bush is far from "endless" anymore.

From an ethical standpoint, there are some actions whose rewards are more valuable than cash.

To quote the renowned Australia ethicist Peter Singer on animal rights,

"The suffering we inflict on the animals while they are alive is perhaps an even clearer indication of our speciesism than the fact that we are prepared to kill them (for food). The question is not '*Can they reason?* [Or] *Can they talk?* [But] *Can they suffer?* **If a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration.**"

[Animal Liberation. Harper Perennial Press 1975]

Quoting our other monumental ethicist Richard Hare:

"Neither political liberty nor economic equality are of necessity good things of themselves." [P.166]

"It is in accordance with... [a rational, moral stance to such questions] **to assign equal weight.. to all the preferences.**" [P.180]

(Moral Thinking: It's Levels Method and Point - OUP 1981)

Thus, firstly: Taking away the wildlife's environment and substituting that with the terror of a diminished territory and a fight to the death for dominance, or alternatively a death by starvation, is the epitome of a wilful consignment of suffering - and we ought be under an obligation to stop suffering wherever we see it.

Secondly: The benefit to humans of future economic profit fails to treat the animals with the respect of equality. This is speciesism - every bit as abhorrent and unjustifiable as racism.

As a scientist and a wildlife rehabilitation officer, I can assert from direct personal evidential experience, that possums, gliders, macropods, birds and wombats are sentient. (And this list is limited to just the species I have direct experience with.)

They experience fear and happiness, they dream (both good dreams and bad), they play, they have memories (also good memories and bad memories), they recognise human faces (and parts of faces*) and the names we temporarily give them. They make eye contact and, when annoyed with you, they will withdraw eye contact and will even shun you, They mourn the deaths of those close to them. They show affection to their temporary carers (even when we hurt them in order to treat them) and they are each a little individual with a distinct personality.

Given they are sentient, they fulfil Singer's requirement for equality of consideration.

I beseech the decision committee to act ethically: Consider the native wildlife and the loss of habitat. Attribute their suffering equal measure and recognise our obligation to not create suffering.

Yours Sincerely,

* My current Eastern Grey Kangaroo joey, at 300 days old not only recognises my voice and my face, but he knows the significance of the mouth within a face. He constantly tries to lick my mouth (forbidden) as a show of affection. Yes... even when I am not holding his bottle of milk.