

**Submission
No 269**

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

Name: Mr David Ongley

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Mr Justin Field, MLC
Chair
Select Committee on the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall
Legislative Council
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Inquiry into the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall

My name is David Ongley and I live in the Penrith area. I have a lifelong love of the bush, outdoors and nature. I am an IT professional but have a strong and passionate interest in bird photography. I exhibit and sell my images and spending time in the bush is a key to my mental health. Further, as a member of a western suburbs community, I am conscious of retaining space and quality of life where I actually live and surrounding areas.

Spending a huge amount of money on a project where the stated benefits are questionable and the proven negatives are lamentable deeply concerns me. The unstated negatives such as over-development in the Hawkesbury floodplain concern me even more. I think the money budgeted to be spent on this project would be better used elsewhere.

Raising the Warragamba Dam wall by 14 (or is it 17?) metres will cause extensive environmental destruction in the way of permanent inundation to large areas of the Blue Mountains National Park World Heritage Area and Kanangra-Boyd National Park. Surely it is illegal to destroy World Heritage Area habitat and cannot be allowed.

I appreciate that some of the area that would be flooded is not accessible to the public. And also that much of the other areas are rarely visited. But that is not the point. Just knowing this wilderness is there, hopefully forever, gives me a sense of peace. For the record, I have hiked into and camped beside the Kowmung River and intend to do so again. The loss of this habitat could also be harmful to endangered species such as turquoise parrot and regent honeyeater. As a dedicated birder and photographer I feel very angry about this.

The press and the Water NSW website have stated the purpose of raising the wall as flood mitigation. I'm confused. I thought that Lake Burrangorang was the Sydney water supply. I never knew the purpose was to prevent or minimise flooding. Of course, it's a side effect but to look at that as a functional purpose seems wrong. That aside, almost half of the flood waters from historical flood events have come from sources other than the Burrangorang Valley so raising the wall will do nothing to alter that.

I read that 6,200 houses are below the 1 in 500 years flood level. Losing everything in a flood is tragic but people who chose to live in those areas know the risks. This has not changed in five decades. What's worse? Wiping out wilderness that is millions of years old and impossible to replace or recover, further endangering extremely rare birds, or asking a relatively low number of people to endure hardship and loss every 500 years?

I don't think you have to be a genius to pre-empt the logical next step and wonder if there might be an idea that in raising the dam wall, it might be possible to start building on areas of floodplain that are currently not zoned for development. This logic is supported by sales of land in the Hawkesbury floodplain just after the announcement of the dam wall.

Opening up development in this area will destroy the environment on both sides of the wall for the sake of greedy developers and governments. I've often driven around Richmond Lowlands thinking isn't it nice that they will never build here because of the risk of flood.

And on top of all of that, I read today in the SMH that the NSW government is in possession of a report that shows that raising the dam wall will be of minimal benefit in such a 1 in 500 year flood. It's a 1 billion dollar white elephant and should be stopped.

Yours sincerely

David Ongley