

Submission  
No 276

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

**Name:** Ms Cathy Merchant

**Date Received:** 8 September 2019

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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  
8 September 2019

### **Inquiry into the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall**

I would like to make a brief submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee on the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall. My concerns address Terms of Reference b) to f).

I have lived in Sydney all my life and have an interest in the protection of our natural and cultural heritage areas. I am a member of the Bennelong Reconciliation group and a number of conservation groups but not commenting on behalf of these organisations.

b) I consider the government's claim that raising the wall will mitigate flooding as spurious. It is my understanding that a lot of water enters the flood plain downstream of Warragamba Dam. Raising the wall will not mitigate this flood risk but proposals to raise the wall will fuel development interest in areas that are known to be flood risk areas and increase risk exposure for future average home owners. Climate change may exacerbate this risk. Media reports have also suggested these concerns<sup>1</sup>.

c) Sadly the current NSW Government has prioritised economic considerations ie potential housing and infrastructure development in the absence of a balance with social and environmental considerations in how Sydney grows. Given a raised dam wall affects World Heritage Area it is imperative that the government seeks advice from the World Heritage Committee. The protection of the Blue Mountains World Heritage is a primary matter and fast tracking this project without discussion with the WHC is alarming.

d) The NSW government has committed to improved transparency in its activities. In taking no account of c) above to progress this project represents a failure in commitment to the people of NSW who are fed up with secrecy. The disregard for Australia's significant natural and cultural heritage is concerning especially when government spokesperson's dismiss these significant concerns with statements like "preliminary modelling is indicating that the additional area temporarily inundated would be around 0.05%" of WHA<sup>2</sup>. This indicates a serious bias in the way this project is being progressed.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/leaked-charts-undercut-case-to-lift-warragamba-dam-wall-opponents-20190803-p52djf.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-07/warragamba-dam-battle-heats-up-as-environmentalists-raise-issues/9840694>

It demonstrates the NSW government's lack of vision and failure in commitments to protect World Heritage, significant indigenous heritage and precious ecosystems and threatened species.

e) and f) I have no confidence that the NSW government has the capacity to take account of the principles of ecologically sustainable development in how housing growth is facilitated in Sydney and how improved quality of life emerges in these communities when underpinned by these principles. The reason for this lack of confidence is that the government has already demonstrated an ideological agenda to run rough shod over most of NSW - whether this be literally with "heritage" horses over Kosciusko National Park or figuratively in weaker protections over threatened species and ecological communities in NSW and environmental water within the Murray Darling Basin under NSW responsibility. The NSW government appears limited in its application of notions of "Cost Benefit Analysis", "resilience" and "international best practice" outside its predetermined agenda. It is unlikely to fairly balance social and environmental priorities in the processes identified in e) and f).

In summary I have very serious concerns regarding the proposal to raise Warragamba Dam Wall and the process undertaken by the NSW government to progress this proposal.

Yours Sincerely,  
Cathy Merchant .

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