

**Submission
No 293**

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

Name: Mr Robert Anderson

Date Received: 9 September 2019

Dear Sirs,

For many considered reasons I object to the proposal to raise the height of the Warragamba Dam. There are far more reasons for not doing the work than advantages in proceeding. Raising the height of the dam wall cannot achieve the overall aims stated by the NSW Government. However, other positive environmental actions may provide similar or better outcomes – if they will be considered by the Authorities.

I declare my interest and long term involvement with the natural areas of the Blue Mountains National Park. I currently serve on the Advisory Committee for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area together with the Yerranderie (Management) Committee set up by Wollondilly Shire Council. Early bushwalks with the Catholic Bushwalking Club took me through the Burratorang Valley before it was cleared for the waters of the Warragamba Dam. Since then, I have driven, kayaked and walked most of the country and rivers from the highest ridges to the ocean and Broken Bay. As a student, I was taught the History of Architecture at UNSW by Miles Dunphy and assisted his son, Milo Dunphy to preserve and save both the Kowmung River and the Boyd Plateau from commercial exploitation. I am fortunate to know these huge natural areas as a priceless legacy - scenic, unique, useful and precious to all people in NSW, now and into the future.

I sincerely ask that all members of the Parliamentary Committee and necessary Departmental Officers visit and tour the total country by road, water and even air, always accompanied by skilled guides. This is the only way the 'Decision Makers' will understand the value of the GBMWhA and permanent, negative implications that will result from raising the height of the Dam

This is a natural, heritage area which can never be replaced if it is ever lost through hasty decisions. It must be passed on to future generations as unscathed as possible.

Below the Dam, the most casual examination of maps of the total Hawkesbury system will confirm that nearly 50% of the flood waters that regularly inundate the lower valley originate in streams not contained by the Warragamba Dam. Material and maps published by Water NSW confirm these basic facts.

Nothing that anyone can ever do to the top of the dam wall will 'flood proof' those low lying areas to be entirely safe for occupation by thousands of new residents. Occasional 'flood mitigation' that may be achieved by the proposal is simply not sufficient reason for the work to proceed. No Government Authority, Federal, State or Local can ever take the responsibility for allowing large scale developments within a known danger zone. Personal losses, social disruptions and justified compensation claims would be immense – when the big floods inevitably occur.

It is the duty of all Governments to stand firm against the 'bleating' of speculative land owners and greedy developers whose only consideration is money and profit. These people are unconscious (or ignore) all the real needs of the rest of the population and the larger environment.

Upstream from the Dam wall, the potential detrimental effects and problems from the Proposal are easy to understand and appreciate. Here, the only guaranteed result will become clearly visible with the permanent destruction of nearly 5,000 hectares of Heritage listed, wilderness country. This includes over 60 km of watercourses and about 50 populations of threatened species, all currently protected within the pristine, natural environment of the Blue Mountains National Park.

UNESCO has already indicated that should the Dam Proposal proceed, NSW may or will lose the World Heritage status for the Greater Blue Mountains Area – unique country stretching from near Goulburn to the Hunter Valley.

Combining the potential damage to the natural environment with major economic impacts on business and tourism, this must make raising the Dam into a very marginal project.

To explain, the anticipated damage to the GBMWHa will result from one physical aspect. At the moment, all the numerous floods run free through the upper river gorges, ‘cleaning’ the banks as they rush downstream. They have done this for millions of years and the rocky evidence is there to see in the Kowmung, Coxs and Wollondilly Rivers above the current ‘high water mark’ of the stored water.

If 14m (even 17m) is added to the height of Dam wall, this will stop and pond (even for a short time) the high flood waters, which will immediately drop their load of heavier materials (sand, gravel and some light silt) to drown and smother all life and land forms beneath them. This will include hundreds of priceless sites and heritage material left by the original Aboriginal Owners of this country and more recent evidence from European settlers in the area. Future floods will not ‘self-clean’ those areas and the brown choking material will stay forever. It will not be a pretty sight, clearly visible from mountain lookouts and future aircraft using Badgerys Creek Airport. The huge area of scared country would stand as a long term monument to this generation’s failed protection for this priceless, heritage area.

Silt and siltation are words hardly acknowledged in the official documents, but this heavy natural material, in all its forms is the major factor influencing the current matter and indeed the whole future of the Warragamba Dam.

A - Through geological time, eroded materials have moved down through the Warragamba River and a hundred other streams to form the fertile, flood prone lands of the lower Hawkesbury Valley.

B - With every flood, (big or small) silt, sand and gravel reduces the volume of the vitally important water stored in the Dam.

C - Siltation is also the silent brown material that will choke and forever bury all life on the gentle river shores up-stream from the Dam in the World Heritage Area – if the height of the wall is raised.

Item A above explains the beautiful, valuable country north west of Sydney (and some people are hoping to exploit), while Item C is clearly explained in this and most other objections to the Dam Proposal.

It is Item B that deserves further examination.

Siltation of Lake Burragorang has been quietly proceeding since the wall was finished about 1960 until today, long stretches of the upper rivers (once deep pools) within the stored water have become choked full and turned into level ground. (Most times now, the fish cannot migrate upstream along the remaining shallow channels). Millions of tonnes of potentially valuable and useful material are substantially reducing the volume of the stored water!

It would be most interesting to obtain reliable figures on the extent of the total situation?

This is not the submission to discuss in detail how the above problem might be turned into an asset, but the idea of removing that sand and gravel certainly deserves careful, professional consideration. With a long professional background in construction, town planning and large scale land development, I would be happy to submit technical information to start discussions on the idea.

Some time, somewhere, someone will have to find a solution to the siltation – or a ‘few’ people in Sydney will always be very short of water!

To conclude I can only repeat my request for all members of the Committee to visit and inspect the areas that will be affected by the proposal to substantially alter the height and functions of the Warragamba Dam. Beautiful Lake Burragorang is man-made, the water supply for millions of people and is located in the middle of the most dramatic mountain scenery in NSW. It is only 60 km from the CBD of Sydney - but (to date) very few people have ever seen it!

The Committee must not allow this precious jewel, this huge natural area, heritage listed as significant in the world, to be completely destroyed by a 'small' engineering project that is impractical and cannot achieve its stated aims!

Yours sincerely,

Robert Anderson – Architect (Rtd)