

**Submission
No 307**

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

Name: Ms Lilian Wycisk
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9th September 2019

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

Inquiry into the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall

I, Lilian Wycisk, would like to make a submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee on the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall.

As a community member of Western Sydney and a former resident of the Blue Mountains, I hold strong values in the conservation of remnant bushland particularly in the Sydney region. I am employed by a bush regeneration company and am actively involved in voluntary bush regeneration groups.

I would like to express my personal concerns relating to the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall, specifically with regards to the likely environmental impact on listed threatened species and ecological communities of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (Terms of Reference 1d (iii)).

According to WaterNSW, the Hawkesbury-Neapean Valley is “the most flood-prone region in NSW, if not Australia” (Water NSW, n.d.). There has been a long history of infrequent flooding in the area, records dating back to early European settlement, it is a natural phenomenon that has already been drastically modified by the dam as it exists today (Water NSW, 2016). Despite the inherent risk associated with development on a floodplain, local councils and the NSW government has nonetheless approved housing in the flood prone area and has proposed major housing development in the future (Infrastructure NSW, 2017).

To mitigate flooding events, a cost benefit framework has been used to justify a proposal to raise of the dam wall by 14 meters (Infrastructure NSW, 2017). This framework is not congruent with the non-economic value of the remnant bushland that will be affected by the project. According to the Warragamba Dam Raising Preliminary Environmental Assessment (Water NSW, 2016) the construction and operation of the raised dam has the potential to impact several vulnerable and endangered species protected under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 (now the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016). The report identifies 5 listed Threatened Ecological Communities and 48 listed threatened species upstream of the dam and 8 listed TECs, 83 listed threatened species and 36 listed migratory species affected downstream. Altering the duration, depth and frequency of inundation upstream of the dam presents issues with waterlogging, bank erosion, sedimentation, water quality and weed infestation. This can potentially lead to the devastation of vegetation communities which puts stress on fauna that rely on the habitat value of those communities, it also threatens aquatic flora, fauna and habitat.

With regards to the Terms of Reference 1d (iii)), to date, the assessment of the environmental impact of the project is incomplete.

- The EIS for the proposed Warragamba Dam raising is ongoing and yet to be published.

- The potential impact of water inundation and extended flood water retention on rivers and lakes upstream of the Warragamba dam are ongoing and not yet published.
- The extent of clearing remnant vegetation during construction works has not yet been published.
- Lack of information available to the public about the environmental impact of the proposed flood mitigation dam has inhibited public scrutiny of the project.

I have grave concerns that the proposal for raising the Warragamba Dam has not adequately assessed the environmental impact of its construction and operation. Flood management strategies need to be developed to protect the rare species and invaluable bushland that occurs in the vicinity of the dam, as well as protecting those people who have chosen to live on the floodplain.

Yours Sincerely,
Lilian Wycisk

References:

Infrastructure NSW (2017), Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy. Available online: <https://bit.ly/2wDd4VL>

Water NSW (n.d.), Warragamba Dam Raising, Available online: <https://www.watarnsw.com.au/projects/greater-sydney/warragamba-dam-raising>

Water NSW (2016), Warragamba Dam Raising Preliminary Environmental Assessment, prepared by BMT WBM Pty Ltd, Sydney. Available online: <https://bit.ly/2rzXjtz>