

Submission
No 331

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

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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

Re: Inquiry into the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall

Dear Mr Field and Committee

I would like to make a submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee in opposition to the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall, about which I hold serious concerns. Raising of the wall will result in significant inundation of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and have an enormous detrimental impact on its biodiversity value, along with negative cultural and social impacts. As a bushwalker of many years standing, I have spent a great deal of time walking in the Blue Mountains and have a deep and personal appreciation of its outstanding and unique natural value and beauty.

If the proposed project proceeds, it will flood 4,700 hectares of World Heritage listed National Parks in the Blue Mountains, causing irreversible damage to the Kowmung, Coxs, Nattai, Kedumba and Wollondilly Rivers. It will put at risk at least 48 threatened species found within the area to be inundated, including the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater and the Camden White Gum. As noted by the World Heritage Committee earlier this year, the project would significantly impact the 'Outstanding Universal Values' of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. This project could put the site on the 'at risk' list and undermine Australia's international reputation.

The irreversible damage the raising of the wall will have on the cultural heritage of the southern Blue Mountains is also unacceptable. It will result in the loss of hundreds of sacred Aboriginal sites, including grave sites and the last remaining waterholes of the Gundungurra people's dreaming stories, as well as rock shelters containing Indigenous art. It is noteworthy that the draft cultural assessment assesses only 26% of the entire area that will be submerged, which is manifestly inadequate and insulting to the traditional custodians of the land.

The argument that raising Warragamba Dam wall is required for flood mitigation for the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain is spurious, particularly given that 45% of floodwaters originate from elsewhere. It would be more cost effective and less destructive to invest in international best practice flood management strategies such as management of the existing storage of Warragamba Dam to provide additional airspace for floods, improvements to flood evacuation routes in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley, increased flood forecasting capacity, use of flood levees and diversion structures and adopting international best practice floodplain development controls. These are all practical and better long term alternatives to raising the dam wall for flood management.

Raising Warragamba Dam wall will promote accelerated housing development on the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain, thus effectively increasing the number of people exposed to high flood risk. Plans to significantly increase housing on the Hawkesbury-Nepean Floodplain will not only put more people at risk but will change the social fabric of this semi-rural, agriculturally productive region. Australia's zoning regulation for flooding (1:100 years) is far below other international best practice, such as that of the USA (1:500) or the Netherlands (1:1250). We should not be putting more people in areas that are deemed dangerous in many other countries.

The assessment of flood control favours raising the Warragamba Dam wall by ignoring its environmental, cultural and social impacts and the benefits of alternative flood control strategies. We should not be putting the interests of property developers ahead of the environment and communities and I urge the committee to recommend to the NSW Government that it abandons this short-sighted and destructive proposal.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Susan Hemsley