

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

Name: Dr Jennifer Gill
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Partially
Confidential

Dear Committee,

Please accept this submission to the Legislative Council's Select Committee Inquiry into the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall. I consent to this submission and my name being published in full.

I urge the committee to recommend that the NSW Government abandon its proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall by at least 14 metres.

If this project goes ahead 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. At least 48 threatened species that inhabit the area will be put at risk, including the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater (one of Australia's rarest birds) and the Camden White Gums. In July 2019, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee found that raising the dam wall would significantly impact the 'Outstanding Universal Values' of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Raising Warragamba Dam will result in the loss of over 300 sacred Aboriginal sites within the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, including the last remaining waterholes of the Gundungurra peoples dreaming stories and grave sites. So many Aboriginal sites were lost without a thought when the current Warragamba Dam was filled – surely we can do better now. It is unacceptable that the draft cultural assessment undertaken by SMEC Engineering and its consultants only covered 26% of the entire area that will be submerged by the raised dam.

I urge the committee to recommend that the NSW Government abandon this short-sighted dam proposal, and further summon the CEO of SMEC Engineering, _____, to give evidence as to why his company has been ignoring the concerns of Blue Mountains Indigenous people and not following UNESCO World Heritage (IUCN & ICOMOS) Assessment Guidelines.

The real driver behind the proposal is clearly a push to increase housing development across the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley floodplain. The Government should abandon plans to double housing on the floodplain, adding at least another 134,000 homes to an area which has a known flood risk.

We should not be putting the interests of property developers ahead of the environment and communities.

Alternative options for flood mitigation for the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley have been identified which are cheaper, less destructive and should be adopted instead of raising the dam wall. These include:

- Investing in evacuation infrastructure in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley;
- Adopting international best practice floodplain development controls;
- Using flood levees and diversion structures; and
- Managing the existing capacity of Warragamba Dam by lowering its current full storage level to provide additional airspace for floods and investing in water recycling and desalination infrastructure.

The protection of the Blue Mountains as World Heritage is the result of tireless advocacy by individuals, walking clubs and community groups over several generations, so that future generations could enjoy this unique and iconic natural environment. The work and vision that went into protecting the magnificent natural values of the Blue Mountains should not be undone by raising the Warragamba

Dam wall and inundating an irreplaceable part of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. I therefore strongly urge the Committee to reject the proposal.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Jennifer Gill