

Submission  
No 355

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

**Name:** Mr Ryan Hawken  
**Date Received:** 10 September 2019

---

9 September 2019

Mr Justin Field MLC  
Chair  
Select Committee on the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall  
Legislative Council  
NSW Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

### **Inquiry into the Proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam Wall**

Dear Sir

I would like to make a submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee on the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall. This submission is informed by my professional experience as an engineer in flood plain management and urban design.

Importantly I would like to object to the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam Wall

#### **Options Assessment needs to consider other development scenarios**

Development on the floodplain in and of itself is not a bad thing. It can be done well, with risks managed.

The issue here is that a 'solution' has been picked first without looking at all the viable options, and effectively excluding any consideration of social or environmental impacts in the options assessment stage.

The options assessment that has been completed to date looks at massive structural infrastructure options, many of which have been explored previously and shown to be largely ineffective, and a number of text book non-structural options, that are regurgitated for every flood management study and promptly discarded.

Basically the options assessment is a summary of old ideas from the past 30 years all constrained by a single issue, flood management mindset. Few, if any, new options were analysed.

This is a city shaping decision, and options should be derived accordingly based on a city wide, multi-faceted context, not constrained by the flood management prism as is currently the case.

The options need to consider development elsewhere; and different types of development; or less or no development.

The assumption that development will happen regardless, and continue as per the status quo, with on-grade, free standing single dwellings, needs to be discarded.

And critically these options need to consider environmental and social impacts at the options stage, not as an afterthought.

## **Environmental and social impacts not considered in the Flood Risk Management Study**

The Blue Mountains National Park is of national and international significance. Its natural beauty generates significant tourism which sustains the towns through mountains.

If the dam is raised it is known that it will have irreparable impacts on critically endangered species and ecological communities and will destroy the ecology of the Kowmung River. It is also known that it will cause irreversible damage to many significant sites of the Gundungarra people. There will be no doubt be further impacts that have yet to be considered or identified. As noted by the World Heritage Committee, the proposed project will undermine the Outstanding Universal Values which led to the park being listed.

The Flood Plain Risk Management Study and Plan prepared by INSW doesn't sufficiently consider the environmental and cultural impacts at the options stage. In this regard it is not in accordance with the NSW governments own Flood Prone Land Policy or Floodplain Development Manual (DIPNR 2005).

The Flood Prone Land Policy states "the potential for flood losses in all areas proposed for development or redevelopment shall be contained by the application of ecologically sensitive planning..."

And Figure 2.1 of the Floodplain Development Manual clearly sets out that as part of the process the Floodplain Risk Management Study must "Determine options in consideration of *social, ecological and economic factors* relating to flood risk".

This has not been done in this case and means the options assessment is flawed.

That a government would proceed with a dam raising option where there are significant irreversible impacts to an internationally listed area without considering other development option scenarios or environmental and cultural impacts is unacceptable.

As succinctly put recently in Foreground (<https://www.foreground.com.au/cities/raising-warragamba-dam-will-do-far-more-harm-than-good/>)

"Raising dam walls is a typically reductive response to an extremely complex problem.... It is not a resilient response... and it encourages people to forget about the risk. It allows us to turn away from the complexity and the challenges, and to continue doing what we always do or what the market demands."

Having hiked in the lower and upper Blue Mountains over the past 30 years, including along the Kedumba and Kowmung Rivers I know what beauty and solitude the national park offers.

I'd implore the Committee to review the process undertaken to date and recommend that the NSW Government returns to the options stage and considers options derived on a city wide, multi-faceted context, not constrained by the flood management prism as is currently the case.

Yours Sincerely  
Ryan Hawken  
Environmental Engineer UNSW 2006 (Honours 1<sup>st</sup> Class)