

Submission  
No 359

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

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Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Raising the Warragamba Dam Wall

Dear Committee members,

Thank you for giving me the chance to have my voice heard on this matter.

I am a local general practitioner in the mid Blue Mountains, having lived and worked here for the past 19 years. I have raised my family here and spent a lot of time exploring the natural heritage of this area. I have deep concerns for the health of our community and support the AMA in recognising climate change as a health emergency. One of the most important things we can do to mitigate climate change and address our threatened species emergency is to protect our remaining wilderness and biodiversity hot spots.

Raising the dam wall with “controlled water release” will increase water inundation times upstream - into one of the greatest wilderness areas of Australia. There is no doubt in my mind that this will destroy vast tracts of this world heritage area and compromise the only remaining wild river systems in the Sydney basin region. This also has a huge potential loss of culturally significant sites to traditional owners.

There is also the economic impact of potential loss of tourism. Having travelled in Costa Rica earlier this year, I have seen first hand the economic benefits of preserving wilderness and promoting ones country as a natural wonderland. The Blue Mountains and surrounds certainly has been viewed in this way by tourists both within Australia and overseas and I believe raising the dam wall puts this at significant risk.

The NSW government, in proposing to raise the wall of Warragamba Dam is attempting to prop up a highly flawed policy of allowing increased housing in flood prone land. As stated by Assoc Prof Jamie Pittock, “The NSW Government’s strategy is constrained by two overriding policy decisions, namely that (i) it will not reduce the 5,000 houses on the most flood-prone lands, and that (ii) it will allow an additional 134,000 people to settle in harm’s way on the floodplain over the next 30 years (Infrastructure NSW 2017).”

There is significant doubt that raising the wall of Warragamba dam will protect these areas, with numerous experts stating that it will only protect from small to moderate floods. With climate change and more extreme weather patterns, we need our governments to be addressing the risk of large scale flooding events.

Please take seriously my concerns and consider the long term impacts of such a flawed proposal. There were very good reasons that legislation was passed to forbid any further increase in the area inundated by the Warragamba dam, and I believe a rigorous assessment of alternative strategies for flood mitigation and urban planning is required.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Samantha Critchley