

Submission
No 390

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

Organisation: Regen Action Wingecarribee

Date Received: 17 December 2021

17th December 2021,

Warragamba Dam Wall Raising Project

This submission is to express a strong opposition to the proposal of raising the Warragamba Dam Wall, and also offer a safe, scientifically proven, environmentally and culturally beneficial alternative that will prepare the effected communities for extreme weather events now and into the future.

The impact of raising the dam wall on the environment, on habitat loss and on sacred site desecration runs much further than the 65km of wilderness streams that would be inundated by the wall raising. This area is the home to 48 threatened plants and animal species. At a time when habitat loss through bushfires is extensive, removing another 65km of wilderness streams is unfathomable. For Gundungurra people the inundation will destroy or significantly impact hundreds of specific sacred sites and more broadly drown the land they have walked and sat on for thousands of years. When so little of pristine cultural lands exist, it would be a tragedy to allow this project to proceed knowing its devastating impact.

As a Not For Profit community organisation, Regen Action would like to offer an alternative solution to the dam wall raising that preliminary analysis has shown will provide the same flood mitigation requirements. That is to implement a broad-scale regeneration of the catchment area in question – approximately 1.35 million acres. Through the implementation of Nature Based Solutions (a Regeneration technique), vast amounts of water is able to be stored in the landscape and this system enables a retention of flood velocity and volume during inundations, and in times of drought can provide enhanced potable water security to the Greater Sydney area.

Whilst this solution of using Nature Based Solutions in Landscape Regeneration adequately delivers flood mitigation and water security it simultaneously has been recognised as a highly effective solution for bushfire and drought resilience, water storage and filtration, retention of top-soils, desertification and increasing GHG emissions. The capacity for this project to capture vast amounts of carbon is also significant and the improvement of soils and increased fertility to farming lands will bring greater prosperity to farmers and greater nutrition to consumers.

Economically this solution is also an extremely viable and attractive proposition with current estimates at around one third of the cost of the dam wall raising.

This alternative proposal has the capacity to become a world leading regeneration model especially as we have recently created a symbiotic collaboration with the Independent Council of Ecosystem Restoration (ICER) which is a recently convened panel of world leading scientists with strong credentials in hydrology and geomorphology. As an additional benefit not only does this panel have the latest research and data that validates our claim (their letter of support is attached to this submission), they are also prepared to assist in validating the proposal.

Regen Action also has support for this proposal from the local Gundungurra community, our rural Chamber of Commerce and also the Shire development advocates by way of the Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group (SHKSG)

Regen Action would like to open discussions and offer our support to facilitate a feasibility study into this

alternative to the dam wall raising, and suggest a collaboration with water NSW for this purpose.

Kind regards,

Kirstine McKay
Chair – Regen Action Wingecarribee.