

Objection to the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project

Tony & Judy Brown

I write this objection to the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project on behalf of my wife Judy and myself. We live on a rural property at Sodwalls about 20 km south-west of Lake Lyell. We travel past Lake Lyell 2 or 3 times a week. We have owned the property Sodwalls for 8 years and lived here full-time for the last 4. Prior to living here full-time we spent 3 to 4 days per week at the property. Over the last 40 years we have spent a lot of time in the Central tablelands area camping, four-wheel driving, exploring with our children and staying with friends. We have a strong knowledge of and attachment to the area as do our now 3 adult children who frequently visit us on the property with their own families.

I am a semi retired solicitor and Judy is a retired registered nurse.

Over the years we have used Lake Lyell for picnics/barbecues, relaxing with family and/or friends and even a book club meeting.

The grounds for our objections are numerous. I am aware more detailed submissions, including the Concerned Lithgow Community Group (CLC), have been lodged and give the sources of the evidence concerning the efficiency of the Hydro scheme itself and the ecological and social damage it is likely to cause. I won't refer specifically to this evidence since it will be familiar to any authority reviewing the project.

We are members of the CLC.

Main objection

Lake Lyell is an extremely popular recreational venue not only for people in the Lithgow area of the Central tablelands but from people all over the state. It is a place of beauty and provides a wide range of activities including picnics/barbecues, camping, bushwalking, swimming kayaking and fishing. This project will cause immense ecological damage to the area with removal of the hilltop for the dam, the constant variation in water levels in the dam, the workers village to be constructed and all the other infrastructure that goes with the project. The lake will no longer be a popular recreational area.

At the same time the proposal fails to meet the New South Wales government's guidelines which require a minimum of 300 m operating head whereas this project averages just 255 metres. This means the scheme isn't very efficient. And it is one of the 2 main variables that determine the energy potential of the Pumped Hydro system in significantly less energy per unit of water being stored. This increases costs and produces ecological impacts which are greatly disproportionate to any benefit derived.

In our view it is totally unacceptable that a very popular recreational area should be desecrated and replaced with an inefficient energy production facility. Prof Blaker of

the ANU, an expert in the area, as identified thousands of technically suitable sites around the country. It is a failure of government planning, and probably a capitulation to vested commercial interests, to allow this project to proceed a beautiful and popular recreational area.

Employment

It is said in favour of the scheme will employ lots of local people during construction. It is more likely that people with the appropriate skills will be brought in from elsewhere during the construction of the project.

Only 15 people will be employed in operating the system once it is completed. The business will negatively affect a number of event and hospitality businesses in the area which will probably close down or suffer a significant financial detriment with the consequent effect on the proprietors and families. These businesses not only employ a lot of people in the area they also attract visitors to the area.

There are also other businesses which operate in the lake area providing services around bushwalking, fishing and kayaking. These will also be negatively affected in that the proprietors will suffer a financial loss and less people will be attracted to use the services in the area.

We don't believe the project will be a significant financial benefit to the area but rather the opposite.

Damage to indigenous heritage

Mount Walker is a place of men's business and Farmers Creek and area of women's business. There are also a plethora of cultural artefacts in the area extended as it showed no interest in preserving and which is a matter of great concern to the indigenous population as well as many non indigenous people.

Damage to platypus & the ecology.

There is a significant colony of platypus living in the area in the Farmers Creek arm of the lake. The project in filling in a part of this arm will have a devastating effect on this colony. Although the platypus hasn't been declared endangered in NSW there is no doubt the species is struggling to survive and we should do all we can to support that.

The area also has an historical and scientific significant going back as far as Charles Darwin. The long-standing ecological integrity of the area should be maintained.

Restoration of the area

The scheme is projected to operate for 80 years. It includes an upper reservoir wall taller and longer than the Sydney Harbour Bridge and excavation and installation of the plant and equipment required for the scheme. There is no possibility that the scheme will be restored to its natural form as the result to do so. Given the history in Australia of miners failing to undertake promised restoration when the project is finished I seriously doubt it.

Conclusion

Given the cost and inefficiency of this scheme, and the fact that it is a temporary scheme, to allow it to proceed would be a major failure of government planning. The benefit does not outweigh the losses that will be suffered to a wonderful recreational area and its ecology and the effect on the local area.

It is also the case that there are superior alternatives in both pumped Hydro and battery storage. In particular technology for battery storage is advancing rapidly. Use this technology, as has been done nearby, so far there are alternative.

Tony & Judy Brown

489 Cuthill Road

Sodwalls 2790