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To whom it may concern,

Submission as an objection to the Warragamba Dam Wall raising, its Preferred Infrastructure Report and response to submissions by WaterNSW

WaterNSW has failed to establish that the benefits from the proposed dam wall raising outweigh the impacts of the project. The rumour of possible changes to the boundaries of the World Heritage Area, for example, would be a legal nicety and fail to mitigate impacts on the heritage values now in World Heritage property. As you would be aware, the National Heritage Council is considering expansion of the World Heritage property and evaluating additional national heritage values, including cultural values. This assessment process is in tune with recognition of Aboriginal cultural values, and incorporation of that recognition means into decision making.

The Minister's approval of a raised dam would on the other hand confirm what the former IUCN advisor on new World Heritage Areas, Dr Jim Thorsell claimed at the time of listing on the 29th of November, 2000 - that Australia will not adequately protect and manage this property, and as a result its listing would downgrade the cultural standing of World Heritage properties generally. Australia must not prove Dr Thorsell right.

The Burratorang Valley, its national parks and state conservation areas, is a markedly different landscape with different ecosystems compared to other parts of the World Heritage property. Similarly, the Coxs and Kowmung Rivers of Blue Mountains and Kanangra-Boyd National Park are landscapes characteristic of the hard Lachlan Orogeny rocks, not sandstones (i.e. very different from the Sydney Basin IBRA region). These reserves of the South Eastern Highlands IBRA region also offer visitors a different set of aesthetic experiences from the rest of the World Heritage Area. These areas are not just bits of bushland to be degraded by flood inundation. These areas all have World Heritage equivalent cultural and biodiversity values. The ruination by flood inundation of 65 kilometres of wilderness rivers, and 5,700 hectares of National Parks, 1,300 hectares of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area is unconscionable.

The well-deserved recognition, greater security, and management to the highest standard is the future World Heritage vision for the southern Blue Mountains.

Ours and future generations will benefit from deeper levels of understanding and involvement in the management that should be brought about by World Heritage listing of the Greater Blue Mountains, and through that active engagement our culture can offer hope for an environmentally sustainable future. WaterNSW's damaging dam proposal cuts across that vision to provide more risky urban expansion on the floodplain. There is nothing environmentally sustainable about this proposal.

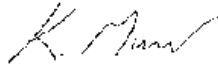
There are alternatives to dam wall raising, including the prevention of floodplain development. Australia can do better. We can respect the culture of Traditional Owners, and not inundate over 1500 identified cultural heritage sites with this proposal. We can keep people safe by building adequate escape routes and assist those who are on the floodplain to relocate or cope with floods. We can protect and enhance the World Heritage properties entrusted to us. We do not need to slide into environmental and cultural degradation.

Raising the dam wall does not stop floods, it creates a false sense of security that will lead to floodplain development, and ultimately more flood damage costs, not less. Urban design with nature means no more urban development on floodplain. This huge engineering solution only yields a perpetuation of the view that we can overcome floods, instead of live with them, and nature. It is a billion dollar false hope that stamps down the World Heritage idea and denies the huge task of climate change adaption that starts with a sense of humility as well as responsibility.

Don't ruin World Heritage.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this National Heritage assessment process.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Muir', written in a cursive style.

Keith Muir