

As a resident of the Southern Highlands, it is extremely concerning to me that the Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure did not require Bluesox to prepare a biodiversity report when the proposed development will impinge on the Wingecarribee River and its riparian zone. Therefore, it is impossible for the Environmental Impact Statement to assess the biodiversity impacts on the ecology of this critical watercourse.

It appears that the proposal will be affected by water run off and flooding in extreme flood events which are increasingly common as climate change impacts our environment. Surely, after the flooding issues that have already occurred in NSW recently, this should be prevented at the outset.

Additionally, the lack of a biodiversity report means that key threatened species are ignored. Firstly there are microbats present in N.S.W and listed under the Biodiversity Conservation Act as either Endangered or Vulnerable to extinction and it is important to ensure that their habitat is protected.

Secondly, it is common knowledge and has also be acknowledged by university studies that platypus live in this area of the Wingecarribee River. Already, there are issues with water quality as evidenced in the EcoLogical Report in the EIS where it was identified that turbidity exceeded the monthly average of 16.5 NTU by several fold. Professor Ian Wright and his colleagues at the University of Western Sydney have confirmed these concerns.

Activities associated with the proposed construction are already identified as having “moderate to high impact to aquatic ecology”. At the same time it is also clear that there is little evidence that the mitigation measures proposed can be appropriately implemented. Again this is very concerning.

Besides microbats and platypus, the river is also home to Rikali or native water rat. We must respect and protect these animals, the river and riparian zones in which they inhabit rather than destroying them for short term profit.

It is apparent that this development is not appropriate to the site and more importantly has not taken into account the natural environment and department is exacerbated by the lack of a biodiversity report.

All these issues reflect poor planning and lack of respect for the local environment and the community at large. Therefore this development must not be permitted to proceed.