From:	Jan Ardill
To:	DPE Warragamba Dam EIS Mailbox
Subject:	[SUSPECTED SPAM] Submission – Warragamba Dam Raising Project – SSI-8441 – Jan Ardill, Hazelbrook, 2779
Date:	Monday, 8 November 2021 3:06:09 PM

To whom it may concern,

SUBMISSION INTO THE EIS BY THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, INDUSTRY AND THE ENVIRONMENT ON THE PROPOSED RAISING OF THE WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

8/11/21

(ardillann@gmail.com)

INTRODUCTION

My name is Jan (Janette) Ardill and I am submitting this response to the NSW Government Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment) for the raising of the wall of Warragamba Dam for the stated purpose of mitigating flood events in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Valley of western Sydney.

I was born and grew up in the north western suburbs of Sydney, then moved to the Blue Mountains suburb of Hazelbrook more than 30 years ago. My son was born and raised here, and as a family we have bushwalked in many areas of the Blue Mountains, while my partner in particular has been a very active walker in the more remote areas of the National Park and World Heritage Area.

I am concerned and angered that this plan to raise the Warragamba dam wall poses a great threat to the natural and cultural values of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, by flooding thousands of hectares containing endangered species habitat, and irreplaceable indigenous heritage sites.

IMPACT OF THE PLAN

This proposal to raise the wall of Warragamba Dam has been justified as a means of mitigating the 100-year flood risk within the population growth areas of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Valley in Sydney's west, at the base of the Blue Mountains. The catchment area of Warragamba, which provides a major

part of Sydney's drinking water, includes a large swathe of the **Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage,** which is protected by the **UNESCO World Heritage Convention.** This is an agreement whereby the various levels of Australian governments and local populations undertake, to the best of their ability, to protect and enhance the natural and cultural heritage contained within the area set aside for the benefit and enjoyment of the earth's population.

If the Dam Wall is raised to the extent planned, 7,ooo hectares of the World Heritage and Wilderness areas and 65 kilometres of wild rivers, particularly the declared Wild Kowmung River and its junction with the Cox's River, will be flooded and destroyed.

Endangered Australian Flora and Fauna Species

Included in these areas to be flooded are habitat for endangered wildlife such as breeding habitat for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater. The restricted range of the Camden White Gum is also to be flooded, thus causing it to become extinct in the wild. This tree was already caused to be endangered in the first place by the construction of Warragamba in 1933.

Both these species were conveniently omitted from a list of endangered species recently compiled for "special protection" by then NSW Environment Minister Matt Kean.

The EIS does not contain any thorough assessment or report into the impact of the Wall Raising on threatened species of Australian flora and fauna.

It is not just the existence of a number of endangered wildlife and fauna species inside the World Heritage Area that causes concern. The problem in my opinion, is the national and state picture of disappearing wildlife and natural areas which are rapidly succumbing to the increasing Australian population and "development" (or "destruction") of the country's natural places and habitats. There are now over 500 species of endangered Australian flora and fauna. Many suburban Australians have little understanding of the scale of what is happening around them, but unfortunately one day they will look around them and see that there is nothing left apart from houses, suburbs, and denuded farmland with only a few species of birds and wildlife.

The EIS takes little of this into account.

My question is: When the "cost-benefit analysis" was made as the basis for the decision to raise the Dam wall, what exact value was given to the natural and cultural heritage contained within the flooded areas?

Continued Flooding

I have been informed that 45% of the floodwaters which occur during major flooding events in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley are derived from outside the Warragamba catchment. This water would most likely come in an easterly direction, from Eastern Creek and its tributaries, as well as the Grose River in the Blue Mountains. This does not appear to be considered by the EIS and flood mitigation plan.

And once the Wall is raised, are there plans to do anything else to protect the local residents from major floods which will still occur and still have an impact on residents in the Hawkesbury-Nepean river valley? (Not to mention those who will come to live in estates that will no doubt be built in low lying areas at risk.)

Indigenous Heritage Sites

Over a thousand significant Indigenous Heritage sites will also be flooded by this proposed Wall Raising; in fact, I have heard the entire area described as one giant archeological site. This would make sense as many Aboriginal settlements throughout the past 40,000 years would have been situated along warerways.

Descendants of the original inhabitants of the Burragurang Valley are still living in the Blue Mountains and Southern Tablelands regions and have spoken in an articulate manner of the value of these sites to

their tribes and people. They believe that the EIS does not contain an adequate examination of the Indigenous Cultural Heritage sites and their significance, not only to the nation but to the world. The Indigenous people were not properly consulted.

De -Listing

The threat to the World Heritage natural and cultural values is such that experienced conservationists believe that the area could be placed in serious danger of de-listing from its World Heritage status. The destruction caused by the flooding will also add to **other threats** coming from outside the area.

These include: the western Sydney Airport under development, the "Croc" Park Hotel proposed development at Wentworth Falls, and other large housing estates proposed for bushland areas at Katoomba. These are all on the edge of the World Heritage area and

represent a “trashing” of its values.

Post-Bushfire Studies

Another aspect which the EIS totally fails to take into account is the massive impact of the megafires of 2019-2020 on the World Heritage Area (WHA) itself and the large area impacted along the east coast of Australia from Queensland to South Australia.

It is believed that millions of native animals lost their lives and over 1,ooo hectares of bushland habitat were destroyed by fire within the WHA, whilst there was also substantial destruction of wildlife and habitat outside the area. It has been difficult for scientists and ecologists to quantify this damage, and it will likely become better known and recognised only in the long term.

There have been no post-bushfire surveys of native wildlife and bushland recovery carried out, so little is known about how well these species and habitats have recovered from the widespread destruction.

Climate Change

Climate Change itself, while responsible for the megafires, is also impacting on the wellbeing of Australian flora and fauna in ways that we are only just coming to understand. There has been no modelling considering the impact of climate change on species and habitat within the WHA.

Forested and natural areas are regarded as important “carbon sinks” when states or other organisations are calculating their plans for reaching net zero carbon emissions. These carbon sinks can be used to offset carbon emissions. There is no such acknowledgement nor modelling in the EIS. As carbon sinks, natural “green” habitat are also important in mitigating the temperature increases which will be (and already are) accompanying climate change. The western suburbs of Sydney, adjacent to Warragamba, already experience significant temperature rises due to climate change.

Reduction in Water Use and Recycling

This is one topic which has been completely left out of the EIS. Sydney Water has done very little to encourage the use of recycled water for non-drinking purposes in Sydney. An entire network of pipes for recycled water could be constructed – a more beneficial infrastructure plan than high rise towers, motorways and dam walls! This would lower the demand for high-quality drinking water such as that provided by Warragamba and allow the dam to be kept at lower levels – less dangerous flooding! It would also drought-proof

the city, and allow the dam to provide for other uses such as fire-fighting.

Safety

My question is: Have any studies been carried out into the safety and reliability of the Dam Wall once it is raised, given that it would be holding back a much greater quantity of water at times of high rainfall which at present is released to lessen the pressure on the wall. If anything goes wrong there will be a far greater volume of floodwater needing to be released into the populated river banks.

Another question: Have any studies been done into the capacity of the sandstone holding the present wall, as well as its ability to support the raised wall and increased dam capacity. I, for one, do not believe all that I am told by engineers in an unquestioning manner. Particularly given the fact that at the present time, "Liberal" governments have withdrawn from regulating and monitoring corporations in the interests of quality and public safety.

Supposed Future Benefits of the Wall Raising?

The EIS does not contain any modelling or analysis of the extent to which raising the wall will prevent floods, nor does it contain analysis of any economic benefits to be gained from the proposal.

Tourism in the Blue Mountains

As I have stated before, the natural, cultural and economic values of the World Heritage Area are not added into the equation. These include the economic benefits of tourism in the Blue Mountains. Apparently the increased flooding of the Burragarang Valley will be seen from the lookouts at Echo Point, Katoomba, affecting the enjoyment of national and international tourists. Not to mention the loss of bushwalking and wilderness amenity experienced by walkers.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Needless to say, I am not at all in favour of this proposed Raising of the Dam Wall.

Alternative options

In my opinion, the EIS has been written from the viewpoint that there exists only one solution to the problem of flood mitigation, and looks at the consequences of applying that one solution in a most inadequate manner. We have seen no detailed examination of the

options for flood mitigation. We have also seen many topics neglected by the EIS with little detailed cost-benefit analysis. Future population growth within the adjacent suburban area has been regarded as inevitable and the values of the World Heritage area are not taken into account nor given any weight when considering options.

Bushfire Disaster

My personal belief is that we need to preserve all those areas which survived the megafires of 2019-20 intact because they are now all the more precious and irreplaceable. Also, their preservation will give the damaged areas a greater chance of regenerating. This is not rocket science, but would be unquestioned common sense if we were dealing with any other valued but damaged assets that we were determined to preserve and enhance.

Rights of Nature

As with many other "solutions" which are taken when our suburban lifestyle collides with the existsence of natural landscapes and habitats, our Australian consciousness rarely accepts that "nature" has value in itself and has the right to continue to exist un-disturbed.

Australia's Shame

The destruction caused by the Wall Raising will be, in my opinion, a matter of great shame. Particularly with regards to Australia's Indigenous heritage. We have, for some reason, recently prided ourselves on our growing awareness of and respect for our First Nations peoples but recent events, such as the destruction of Indigenous cultural sites in Western Australian by mining company Rio Tinto and the threatened destruction of important Indigenous sites at the Adani Coal Mine in Queensland make it clear that Australia is no better than other delinquent nations in the way we allow the needs of material so-called "development" to triumph over natural and cultural heritage values.

Trashing

I believe that this "trashing" of our wilderness and cultural areas makes us an international laughing stock and tars all of us with the same brush which the current NSW coalition government has earned with its disregard of the environment and our NSW National Parks.

Better Use for $2 billion

Alternative options for flood mitigation in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley must be vigorously pursued.

Population growth within this area (and, in my opinion, within the greater Sydney basin) must be restricted to current levels. I agree with Blue Mountains City Council that the state government should use the money allocated for dam wall raising ($2 billion) to purchase those properties presently at risk of flooding.

The flood-prone banks of the Nepean-Hawkesbury river valley should be returned to their natural state and would become an important area of wetlands with value for wildlife and people. The people of the Penrith area are in sore need of more places for recreation, particularly walking – the daily crowds on the Bridge to Bridge walk in Penrith attest to that. The population would have been greatly confined and disadvantaged compared with other more fortunate areas during the COVID lockdowns of 2020-21.

This lack of recreational space is another reason for limiting the population to a more sustainable level. Along with many others I have been dismayed when learning that the newly developed scenic "Lakes" scheme in Penrith-Castlereagh is also to be surrounded by homes. What a slap in the face for the environment and the local people!

We must seriously adhere to our obligations as custodians of the World Heritage Area and the river valleys at our doorstep. We have nothing to lost by doing so and everything to gain.

Yours sincerely,
Jan Ardill
19 Albert Rd.,
Hazelbrook, 2779, NSW

I accept the Department's submissions disclaimer and declaration

I have not made a reportable political donation in the past two years.

I do not want the 5-6 paragraphs (which contain my personal biographical details) of the initial INTRODUCTION to be published online. Many thanks.