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I am writing to object to the proposal to raise Warragamba Dam wall. I believe the project would incur unacceptable cultural and environmental impacts and that there are alternative, multi-benefit approaches to flood mitigation that represent much better use of public funds.

As a long-term Blue Mountains resident, I love this place wholeheartedly and am deeply upset that the NSW government would even consider a project such as this, which would compromise the World Heritage listing of the area and many of the values underpinning it (the dam wall raising is specifically listed as a 'high threat' in the IUCN's 2020 Conservation Outlook Assessment for the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area).

In 2018 I was fortunate enough to take part in the annual Bunburang Walk, which in this iteration was seven days spent walking across the Blue Mountains, following traditional Gundungurra pathways from Glenbrook to Megalong Valley, led by Gundungurra Traditional Owners and an expert archaeologist. We saw traces, everywhere, of the folk who'd lived and travelled there before us: layer upon layer of evidence, reminding us that people have called this place home for countless generations. Chert cutting tools, basalt axe heads, rock art, grinding grooves, scar trees, rock arrangements, stories and songlines everywhere. We followed part of the Gundungurra creation story and visited one of Gurangatch's waterholes on Reedy Creek.

Being immersed in Country with Gundungurra people, Elders and people from other Aboriginal Nations helped me better understand the significance of the entire cultural landscape: it's not just about particular sites or objects, although these are important too. The whole lot is part of the area's creation stories and to destroy this landscape by raising the dam wall would be utterly devastating. That Reedy Creek waterhole we visited, created by the ancestral being Gurangatch and in which he rested during creation, would be irreversibly damaged by inundation if the dam wall was to be raised.

I don't think it's possible as a non-Aboriginal person to truly comprehend the heartbreak and spiritual damage this destruction would cause to Gundungurra people and other Aboriginal people with links to the area (people who have already suffered far too many losses). It is however vital that we *listen* when the people most affected tell us what this feels like, what it would mean, and that we *act* to help stop the destruction. It is clear that protecting the cultural landscape is essential to enable current and future generations of Gundungurra and all other people to learn and share understanding on Country, seeing and hearing and smelling and touching the physical features that embody the creation stories.

As a water management professional (having worked for many years in waterway monitoring, stormwater treatment, waterway restoration and water sensitive strategic planning), I feel qualified to say that the dam wall raising proposal also flies in the face of contemporary approaches to integrated water management. At national, state and local levels, the

knowledge and strategies needed to manage water more holistically and sustainably are well developed, for example the huge body of work produced by the Australian CRC for Water Sensitive Cities. It is extremely disappointing that the NSW government persists in its desire to spend billions of dollars on a single piece of sole-purpose infrastructure. There are no multiple benefits with this proposal, only the dire and irreversible loss of Gundungurra cultural landscapes and World Heritage listed environmental values.

A far better approach would be to manage water in an integrated way that will achieve multiple benefits for communities, at the same time mitigating flooding, improving environmental condition and protecting the Gundungurra cultural landscape of the Burratorang valley. Imagine the innovative solutions that could be rolled out across the urban catchments of Lake Burratorang: rainwater and stormwater harvesting and reuse at residential, business, public facility and neighbourhood scales, bushfire-fighting water held in the landscape, green infrastructure such as raingardens, green walls and green roofs making for cooler, more attractive towns and cities while protecting waterway health. All of these examples can be part of a more creative solution to downstream flooding. The big difference is that a billion dollars used in a more innovative, water-sensitive way would achieve benefits far beyond flood mitigation alone, all while better protecting cultural and environmental values and stimulating local economies.

I urge decision-makers to protect the Burratorang Valley, prevent the Warragamba Dam wall raising and fund alternative flood mitigation measures including water sensitive retrofits in the urban catchments of Lake Burratorang.

Yours faithfully,

Amy St Lawrence