

To whom it may concern,

I wish to object to the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall and, in particular, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) currently on exhibition.

I live in the Blue Mountains and spend a lot of time bushwalking with family and friends. This is a beautiful and unique environment, as recognized by its World Heritage status. It is absolutely scandalous that the NSW Government is even considering raising the dam wall given the extremely damaging impact this development would have upon the natural and cultural values of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The World Heritage status of the Blue Mountains also means that Australia has obligations under the World Heritage Convention. Among other things, this means that Australia 'should ensure that...[the site's] Outstanding Universal Value, including the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity at the time of inscription, are sustained or enhanced over time' (Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, para. 96). The Warragamba Dam Raising Project and the EIS on exhibition manifestly fail to ensure this.

I am concerned that the environmental and cultural assessments in the EIS were developed by SMEC Engineering, a firm known to have abused Indigenous rights, and which was recently debarred from accessing World Bank finance due to its lack of corporate integrity. It is also inexcusable that only 27% of the impact area was assessed for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. Local indigenous groups are aware of many more highly significant cultural sites within the area, which will be negatively impacted by the raising of the dam wall. Threatened species surveys also fail to meet the minimum requirements set out in the guidelines. No expert reports were sought to supplement the inadequate field surveys. It is simply not possible for an informed decision to be made regarding the environmental and cultural impacts of the proposed raising of the dam wall on the basis of this poorly executed EIS.

The EIS also fails to model the impact of the raising of the dam wall on flooding and economic outcomes downstream. While the raising of the dam wall will presumably give the green light to developers to build residential properties on the western Sydney floodplains, there is no clear evidence that residents of these properties (and existing housing) will not be exposed to unacceptable flood risks. Some 45% of floodwaters affecting this area originate outside of the Warragamba Dam catchment so will be unaffected by any raising of the dam wall.

Further residential development on the western Sydney floodplains benefits only one interest group—developers. It comes at the high price of exposing western Sydney communities to unacceptable risks and destroying irreplaceable natural and cultural values in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. I strongly urge the Government not to rely on this flawed EIS. It would be both unethical and politically disastrous for the NSW Government to proceed with this project, which demonstrates such blatant disregard for both human and ecological communities up- and down-stream from Warragamba.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kate Purcell

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