

Environmental Impact Statement Submission

As a proud Gundungurra descendant, I reject the EIS without hesitation or reservation for the following reasons. The NSW government is being deceitful, even their draft paper from September 2018, put together from a study conducted for SMEC consultants, who were the firm commissioned by Water NSW, estimated, the affected World Heritage area, would be more than 1300 hectares, not the 300 hectares, which is currently being touted by the Government and lobbyists.

This EIS is all smoke and mirrors based on assumption, assertion and limited fact. It is a rubber stamp as opposed to a comprehensive, informed, polished or even scientific environmental impact statement. The EIS has been undertaken for what is alleged to be a “project to provide flood mitigation to reduce the significant existing risk to life and property in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley downstream of the dam”. When in reality at the end of the day, raising the wall, will have little or no impact, on the Nepean flood plain. Even major Insurers have recommended that the government use the monies allocated to raise the wall, to instead by back affected flood plain housing which they assert, should never have been built on in the first place. This would seem to be a common-sense suggestion, when you give consideration to the fact that raising the wall has the potential to result in the extinction of 92 plus species of flora and fauna and cause cultural genocide, with respect to the Gundungurra people both past and present. Plus, the flooding of the Nepean flood plain, would continue even if the wall was raised, because the tributaries which predominantly affect the flood plain do not run into the Warragamba catchment area.

The fact is, that the original report commissioned by the NSW Government identified 92 threatened plant and animal species “which could potentially be impacted”, as a result of the wall being raised. Which of itself is significant, because it is apparent that this report was based on survey efforts, which were “less than required by the guidelines”. One has to ask, if the guideline were followed diligently, what would the real impact of raising the wall be? How much more extensive damage would ultimately be unleashed, on this Pristine UNESCO wilderness area? How many plants and animals would be ultimately lost, due to extinction, because the government wants to push through a project, to appease developers and party affiliates?

The simple fact is, raising the wall ultimately, will have little significance, with

Environmental Impact Statement Submission

respect to alleviating flooding on the Nepean flood plain. This fact is irrefutable, because the affected flood plain, is flooded for the most part, by tributaries which do not run into the Burragorang catchment area.

Factor in the impact raising the wall would potential have on culturally significant aboriginal heritage sites, which the NSW state government appear to have little, or no regard for, as long as they can appease developers and one comes to realise that Australia's, at times "brutal colonial past", is alive and well inside the NSW government. Why has the potential destruction of significant, Aboriginal heritage sites and the cultural genocide of the Gundungurra people, plus the potential for a flora and fauna mass extinction event, been given only rudimentary consideration, in this rubber stamp EIS? Is Aboriginal heritage of so little significance to the NSW Government? Is the potential for losing native flora and fauna forever, simply irrelevant and far less important than developers being able to obtain insurance from insurance companies?

One also has to ask whether those ministers pushing this project are in reality fully educated on the project proposal and the history of the Burragorang Catchment area. People like Minister Stuart Ayres who is championing the project, consistently refer to the once in 100 years flood event and say things like "the upstream impacts of the project "must be carefully measured against the social, economic and environmental impacts flooding can have on downstream communities in western Sydney." To this end I concur. But Mr Ayres and others, fails to comprehend or understand that the bulk of Nepean flood plain, flooding, even with respect to the most recent floods, occurred as a result of the influx of flood waters that do not run into the Burragorang catchment area. This in and of itself makes the raising of the wall a moot point. People like Mr Ayres, also fail to recognise, that since that last 'once in a hundred-year flood event', which is mentioned so frequently, 9 dams have been built upstream from the Burragorang catchment area.

Maybe Mr Ayres should take heed of the insurance councils' comments about buying back affected flood plain land instead of raising the wall and come to terms with the fact that the Nepean flood plains, should never have been built on in the first place, because they are simply doing what the environment expects flood plains to do and that is flood. One the proponents of those wanting to raise the wall recognise this fact they would realise, without floods,

Environmental Impact Statement Submission

these floodplains wouldn't "work"—they would not be able to deliver the ecosystem services the natural environment benefits from. With a little more research, they would understand the reproductive opportunities for fish, frogs, birds and trees flood plain flooding offers. They would come to understand floods also enrich the soils and although catastrophic for humans they are a natural part of an ecosystem from which the environment benefits. So before mentioning the environmental impact that flood plain flooding causes, possibly he should learn about the environmental benefits?

In reality the raising the wall proposal is neither based in fact, common sense, thoughtful consideration or what is best for one of the world's most significant pristine UNESCO environmental areas. It appears to be driven more by, half-truths, ignorant lobbying, money, and pure stubbornness. This is of extreme significance when you consider that recent research has highlighted that just 23% of the entire planet's land surface is pristine wilderness and the area which will be impacted by the raising of the wall is part of that 23%.

As a society have, we become so soulless and driven by greed, that this is irrelevant and not even important enough to consider. Especially when making a decision, that could potentially destroy, this area and affect future generations. By depriving them of pristine wilderness, so rich in indigenous cultural heritage and the diversity, of unique Australian native flora and fauna, that cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

Using buzz words and pseudo solutions which mean nothing might make some in the NSW government feel better. However, I am afraid the purchase of **“credits from the market”** or **contributing to the Biodiversity Conservation Fund**. Will not magically bring extinct flora and fauna back to life, nor will it magically replace 70 thousand years of significant indigenous cultural heritage. They are in reality a nonsense, used when individuals and Governments, are trying to justify the unjustifiable. *Especially when you also consider by their own admission, they have already stated “the project is likely to have a significant impact on threatened flora species and threatened fauna species”.*

Damien Duncan

Environmental Impact Statement Submission