

To Whom It May Concern

Submission re project number SS1-8441

I live in Katoomba in the Blue Mountains and over the past 40 years have bush walked in this area and visited many times with family and friends who also live in this beautiful World Heritage listed environment.

I find it very hard to comprehend why the NSW Government would put at risk the Blue Mountains World Heritage protected environment, which is also a hugely popular tourist destination and source of revenue, by proposing to raise the wall of the Warragamba Dam in order to allow developers to build more houses on Western Sydney flood plains. Having read factual details about this major project and the EIS, as well as various reviews and comments, I cannot see how the NSW Government could justify raising the Dam wall.

So I strongly object to project SS1-8441 for the following reasons:

- Over 65 kilometres of Wilderness Rivers, including the Kowmung River - a declared 'Wild River' - as well as 5,700 hectares of National Parks and 1,300 hectares of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area would be inundated by this proposed project.
- As has been documented following careful research, habitat for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater, along with habitat for Koala colonies and Sydney's last remaining Emu population, would all be drowned if the Warragamba dam wall were allowed to be raised.
- According to the Commonwealth Government, at least 1,500 Indigenous cultural heritage sites would be inundated and lost by the proposed raising of the Warragamba dam wall.
- Such damage to the natural environment and cultural values caused by the proposed project - despite seven layers of legislative protection - would certainly be a breach of Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention.
- The Environmental Impact Statement for the proposal lacks adequate assessment of the actual risks involved:
 - Only 7.5 metres of the 17 metre increase in dam height has been considered an 'impact area';
 - Only one day was spent researching in the field and just 27% of the impact area was assessed in relation to evidence of Aboriginal cultural heritage;
 - SMEC Engineering, the firm that carried out the environmental and cultural assessments for the project, has previously been BANNED

from working on World Bank projects in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka due to its extremely poor record of working with Indigenous people;

- This assessment, carried out by an internationally discredited firm that has been banned by the World Bank, undermines important environmental protection legislation in NSW.
- Despite the fact that 81% of the Blue Mountains Heritage Area was devastated by severe fires during the Summer of 2019-2020, NO post bushfire field surveys for threatened species have been carried out;
- NO modeling of the stated flood and economic benefits of the proposed raising of the dam wall has been provided in the assessment.
- Experts in the field have repeatedly raised concerns about the proposed raising of the Dam wall. These experts include former NSW SES Deputy Commissioner Chas Keys, who has stated that the proposed project is “flawed” and “should not be proceeded with”.

There are many alternatives to raising the Warragamba dam wall and these should be properly investigated and followed through, including:

- Building flood evacuation roads,
- Lowering the full supply level of the dam,
- Reducing floodplain development: and
- Locating safer and more suitable sites for residential housing, including areas previously identified, such as in the Southern Highlands; and
- Utilising all that empty, post-covid lockdown office space in Sydney for much needed affordable, residential accommodation in the CBD.

For all the reasons outlined above, I submit that this proposed project SSI-8441 to raise the Warragamba Dam wall should NOT be approved. To do so would cause irreversible and catastrophic harm to native wildlife, Indigenous cultural sites and the World heritage natural environment of the Blue Mountains. It would also set a dangerous precedent for Australia's World Heritage and National Park protections.

Yours sincerely,

Diana Covell
Resident, Blue Mountains
New South Wales