Submission – Warragamba Dam Raising

I object to the project for the following reasons:

Many alternatives to raising the dam wall exist, including the construction of flood evacuation roads, lowering the current level of the existing dam wall and controlling and reducing flood plain development – it has to be said that raising the dam wall is analogous to constructing more roads to reduce congestion and travel time – vehicles fill new roads rapidly and in a short time the conditions e.g. travel time or congestion that existed before the intervention return – a similar situation can be predicted with raising the dam wall – there will be a temptation to fill the dam to address water shortages that will surely arrive and a new higher level will be implemented and any flood mitigation capacity will be lost – it follows that flood mitigation could be achieved by lowering the stored water level at the current dam wall height.

Raising the dam wall is proposed to prevent flooding downstream in the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain – perhaps a silver bullet to solve the problem – while it will impact on low level flooding events – more than 50% of the water entering the floodplains comes from sources other than Warragamba dam for anything other than for minor rainfall events raising the dam wall will not contribute to flood mitigation. Indeed the current rain event would have filled the dam to the new supposed "17 metre flood mitigation level" it would now be spilling an estimated 500 billion litres into the point where seven tributaries meet and the Hawkesbury River drains the valley – there will still be flooding – it is interesting to reflect on a recent NSW government construction project – construction of a new bridge over the Hawkesbury River at Windsor – one of the stated aims of the new bridge was flood resistance – it is currently under water.

There are currently some seven layers of supposed legislative protection for areas that will be affected adversely by inundation and destruction in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area – these protections will count for little if they can be over ridden almost at will.

No modelling of the stated benefits of the dam wall raising are provided – surely this alone is a damming criticism of the EIS

The principal benefit of raising the dam wall will flow to property developers, land owners and possibly politicians (post parliament of course) and will allow the NSW Government to install a projected 134000 new residents in the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain over the next 30 years – into is seems almost certainly – harms way. There is a long history in NSW and indeed Australia of government expenditure on major projects benefiting small groups of well connected individuals and companies. Who knows what political donations have been made or promised in the opaque and interconnected federal and state funding of political parties. Qui bono.

Raising the wall of dam wall by the projected 17 metres would inundate the following:

65 kilometres of wilderness rivers
5700 hectares of National Park
1300 hectares of World Heritage area

The Kowmung River, a declared "Wild River" will be inundated.

The habitat for many animals including the critically endangered Regent Honey-eater, Koalas and what is understood to be the last Sydney Emu population will be destroyed. A population of the rarest of our gum trees – the Camden White Gum will be inundated and destroyed.

A large number of indigenous cultural heritage sites – estimated by the Commonwealth Government as at least 1500 in number – will be inundated and destroyed. Only about a quarter of the area of proposed inundation area has had surveyed for aboriginal cultural sites – A NSW version of Juukan George?

The wildlife assessment grossly inadequate – just 3.5 hours was taken assessing the koala population and one day assessing the impact on aquatic life which would include the threatened platypus

The EIS assesses only 7.5 metres of increased dam wall height impacted area when the plan is to raise the wall 17 metres – this is clear attempt to make a significant reduction in environmental offset costs.