

## **SUBMISSION**

### **RAISING WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL PROJECT**

My name is Jeffrey Bridger and I am making this submission as a private citizen. I have bushwalked and holidayed in the Blue Mountains for nearly 50 years. I value the Blue Mountains for their beauty, eco systems and native flora and fauna. I have real concerns regarding the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall to negatively impact on the Greater Blue Mountains and undermine its status as a UNESCO World Heritage listed area. Further, I doubt that raising the dam wall will be effective in mitigating serious flood risk in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley.

I request that the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment refuse the proposal to raise the wall of the Warragamba Dam.

I have no special expertise, only a love for the natural environment.

The proposal is incompatible with the Blue Mountains as a UNESCO World Heritage listed site. This listing recognises its outstanding universal value because of its beauty, topography, biodiversity, rare flora and 1541 identified Indigenous cultural sites. There would be an increased frequency and extent of flooding of areas of the Blue Mountains. There would be permanent changes to ecosystems and the ecology of areas. They would be permanently changed. Animal and plant species will become extinct. Indigenous sites will be inundated and become inaccessible to traditional custodians curtailing their cultural practices. Too many indigenous cultural sites have been destroyed. The most recent and notable being destruction of the 46,000 year-old cultural site in Juukan Gorge, Western Australia in 2020. Raising the Warragamba Dam wall would result in a clear breach of Australia's undertakings under the World Heritage Convention.

Inundation from the proposal would negatively impact on the Blue Mountains economy as it is dependent on ecotourism. Access to areas such as the Kedumba Valley and Kowmung River would become further restricted with raised dam levels. Inundation would cause a noticeable physical impact on effected landscapes. One of the most obvious would being scarring. This would be visible to tourists at places such as Echo Point, Katoomba.

The integrity of the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been questioned by ecologists involved in it. They have said their findings were watered down or ignored in the EIS. The severe bushfires of the summer of 2019/2020 devastated 81% of the Blue Mountains Heritage area. I understand no post-bushfire field surveys have been undertaken under the project's EIS. Such surveys are essential to an EIS. I understand only 27% of the Heritage area was assessed for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage that would be impacted by inundation. This is an inadequate EIS survey of heritage.

Severe bushfires and extreme weather events will occur with increasing frequency due to climate change. National Parks are carbon sinks and mitigate the effects of climate change. The inundation resulting from the proposed raised dam wall will

cause deforestation. One of the resolutions at the recent Glasgow UN Conference on Climate Change was to halt and reverse deforestation and phase it out world wide by 2030. Climate change was the underlying cause of the severe bushfires in south eastern Australia in summer 2019/2020. This was the worst bushfire season since the beginning of European colonisation.

The likelihood of extreme wet weather events and heavy flooding will increase due to climate change. The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley will flood even with a raised dam wall. The rivers downstream of the Warragamba Dam such as the Grose and the Colo are responsible for 45% of floodwaters that inundate the Hawkesbury-Nepean area. There are likely to be more extreme floods like those that occurred in south east Queensland in late 2010/early 2011. The Hawkesbury River Valley is a flood plain and is unsuitable for residential developments and should not be built on. The Insurance Council of Australia and the Insurance Australia Group (IAG) recognise this and do not support building on this flood plain.

The experience of the 2010/2011 Queensland floods concerning dams used for flood mitigation is that it can exacerbate a flood. The Wivenhoe Dam released a considerable proportion of its flood mitigation capacity which worsened the flooding further inundating thousands of homes.

An auxiliary spillway was built at Warragamba Dam in 2002 to mitigate floods. So why propose to raise the dam wall? The funding that will be needed for this project could be better utilised on other options to mitigate flood risk and improve infrastructure for emergency evacuation of residents in extreme floods in the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain.