

WARRAGAMBA DAM EIS RESPONSE

Subject - Submission – Warragamba Dam Raising Project – SSI-8441

I object to the proposed raising of the Warragamba Dam Wall for the following reasons.

1. The destruction of the remaining highly significant Indigenous sites of the Gundungarra people will be lost in the inundation of flood waters. I have seen photos of some of these magnificent sites and am horrified that they will be lost with little regard to their significance. Many sites were previously lost when the dam was originally constructed. The EIS states that only 25% of the area was studied over a period of 25 days. This is clearly insufficient. SMEC, the company that completed the EIS has been barred by the World Bank because of their history of cultural assessments that are abusing Indigenous rights.

In 2005 the NSW Government announced that Public School Students were to “Salute Aboriginal Custodians” with a “Welcome to Country” and “Acknowledgement of Country” at all School Assemblies. My children have grown up with this. As adults we also hear this before important events, meetings and also before some Television programs. It seems the NSW Government/WaterNSW are paying this lip service only and believe it does not apply to them in regards to this proposal. Why is it okay to ignore this history?

There are remnants of European settlement that will also be lost.

2. This project will threaten the World Heritage Status awarded to The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in 2000, if it goes ahead. This is something that was hard won and should not be jeopardized. UNESCO is very concerned about the project.

It's not a World Heritage area for no reason.

65 km's of pristine wild rivers and stream's will be inundated with flood waters. Part of the most protected natural area in all of Australia.

The impacted area is home to critically threatened species such as the Camden White Gum and the Regent Honeyeater. This is known to be critical habitat where breeding takes place. Other known varieties of wildlife that currently live in the inundation area include Platypus, Wombats, Emus and Dingoes which all may have their homes flooded. Only 3 hours were spent surveying for Koalas in the entire area. None for the Platypus.

The methodology used in the EIS to assess downstream benefits is very different from the methodology used to assess the upstream environmental impacts.

3. The fact that the Hawkesbury/Nepean River Flood Plain is actually a flood plain! This area will always flood regardless of the Warragamba Dam wall being raised. A number of other rivers/creeks flow into the flood plain including the Grose, Colo, Coxes and run-off from huge areas of the Blue Mountains and Greater Sydney itself which filters into the Sydney Basin and ultimately the river system. In recent years the Hawkesbury/Nepean rivers flooded without one drop of water overflowing from the Warragamba Dam Wall. Our community of Warragamba/Silverdale was cut off when the Blaxland Bridge crossing of the Nepean River at Wallacia was closed due to these flood waters. It doesn't matter how high you raise the Dam Wall, the flood plain will still flood.

The development of the flood plain with houses, driveways, streets, car parks and shopping centres, decreases the open areas where water can be absorbed and drain away. Rainfall will flow into the rivers and flooding will occur when we receive vast amounts of rain. The water has to go somewhere!

4. The Traffic. The EIS states that over 208 additional heavy vehicles will transport materials to the site each day for 6 days per week. There is also to be expected a workforce of 500 who will be traveling to and from the site. The EIS identifies two main routes for this traffic. The Northern Route will come through Wallacia, up Baines Hill and on through Farnsworth Ave until Production Ave. Most of Baines Hill is single lane and already has a high number of trucks that struggle to get out of 1st gear and consequently hold up traffic. There are also break downs of these trucks which then require emergency services to run a contra flow of traffic to clear the extended build up of vehicles. The Southern Route will travel up through Tahmoor, Picton and The Oaks along Montpellier Dr/Silverdale Rd. At present Montpellier Dr is not rated to carry the trucks that will be used. The EIS states that Marsh Rd, Silverdale cannot be used as part of the direct route due to it being in such poor condition. Marsh Road is in fact the best quality road in all of Silverdale! Warradale Rd near Silverdale Road is quiet narrow and is already a problem when residents park on the road in front of their homes. The road is not wide enough for two vehicles, let alone trucks, to pass each other.

There is currently no permanent Police presence in the area. We rely on the Police having to travel from Penrith/St Marys to attend any accidents or incidents. This is at best, a 30 minute wait. With an increased level of traffic and workers in the area the Warragamba Police Station should be manned 24 hours per day.

Nearly the entire length of the routes to be used are single lane, passing through small villages. The impact to these residential areas which are not designed for this level of traffic will be massive.

The EIS identifies that this extra traffic will have a detrimental impact to the roads of Wollondilly Shire. The EIS also states that the State Government will not take over the maintenance of these roads. Wollondilly Shire Council will continue the maintenance. In early 2021 the NRMA reported that Wollondilly Shire has the worst roads in Sydney. I'm afraid our cars cannot afford to sustain a further deterioration of the roads with the additional trucks and traffic.

All this traffic will pass a number of schools every day for 5 years! For 5 out of 7 years of schooling they will have to contend with this noise on a daily basis.

5. The EIS also states that there will be significant impact on the Eastern Access route for escorted access for Yerranderie residents. Trails also used by Emergency Services for access in times of fires will also be severely impacted. How will these be maintained?
6. The government have stated that they plan on allowing 100,000 more homes to be built on the flood plain once the Dam Wall has been raised. It will still be a flood plain that will still flood regardless of the Dam Wall height. This should not be allowed. Minister Stuart Ayres stated on air on the Channel 9 news in 2015 whilst standing in front of a flood marker that there will be "development as far as the eye can see". This video is still available to view on the Penrith Lakes website.

The Insurance Council of Australia has withdrawn support for the project and have also stated that the homes that are presently in the flood zone should be purchased back and no further development should be allowed.

7. The impact on the village of Warragamba will be immense. The dust and noise will be felt and heard from 7am to 6pm, five days per week and from 8am to 1pm on Saturdays. The crews are also allowed to work outside these times if needed due to concrete batching or weather conditions, as examples. The EIS advises that the noise impacts won't actually be known until the work begins.

The tourism impact will be huge. The Warragamba Dam viewing areas will be closed as well as the new Visitors Centre. The area used to have a thriving tourism with visitors enjoying picnics in the parks and walking across the Dam Wall. This all ceased when the Auxiliary Spillway was added and has never been able to recover to the previous levels. In 2017 a section of the Warragamba Dam Picnic grounds was set aside as a Recreational Vehicle Friendly site equipped with a Dump Point. This has encouraged tourists to stay a few nights in the area. This will no longer be desirable or even possible with the planned works. The businesses have worked hard to rebuild. The local businesses were not supported by the workers engaged on the Auxiliary Spillway construction. Nor were locals employed.

The Laydown Area for the materials will be within one kilometre of the local sporting areas, public swimming pools and the local primary school. It will also be within a couple of hundred metres of the new housing development that is currently being constructed off Marsh Rd, Silverdale. There are a number of pre-schools along with the rest of the Warragamba Village businesses that are within a 2km area. A large number of homes are also in the immediate area. The dust from the Laydown Area will impact everyone in this area.

8. The EIS states that the raising of the Warragamba Dam Wall is for flood mitigation only and that not one drop of water that is to be retained in the event of a flood will be kept for an increase in drinking water. The water will all be released over a period of two weeks. The aim is to give affected residents in the flood zone time to evacuate. This will simply prolong the effects of flooding to residents. The area will flood regardless of the raising of the Dam Wall. Sydney will in fact need more drinking water with the increase of the population when more homes are built on the flood plain. All of whom will still be in danger of flooding.
9. What will happen during the work to raise the Dam Wall if we get a significant rain event? Part of the Warragamba Dam wall will be removed, including the spillway gates. Will the water quality be affected during the construction? Will more water treatment be needed once the current water is contaminated with all the debris from the new inundation area?
10. I found the quality of the EIS was poor and is intentionally misleading. For a document that took 4 years to complete it is riddled with mistakes. With over 4000 pages for people to review in a limited time and to respond, it is difficult to find all of the errors. I did find that Warragamba was referred to as Wallacia several times. I also noticed that Wallacia now apparently has a swimming pool and sports grounds (it doesn't). I also noticed that data on traffic and the number of residents in the Silverdale/Warragamba area was recorded in

2018. Since then, a number of new developments have been approved and there are many more residents in the area. This also affects the number of vehicle movements on the roads.

The assessment of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area was also completed prior to the bush fires that went through the area in 2020/21. Was this area re-assessed? The bush fires were extensive in this region and this should be accounted for.

From earlier leaked copies of the EIS it has become apparent that some critical information in regards to endangered species has been watered down or eliminated to bias the EIS in a positive view.

I don't feel that enough effort has gone into making the EIS available for people to be able to review it if they don't have social media or the internet to view it. As a resident of Silverdale we did receive a "Warragamba Dam Raising Project Community Update, Summary of Proposed Construction" brochure in our letter box recently. I found this document by NSW Government/WaterNSW was very biased towards the project. It did mention that WaterNSW consulted with local stakeholders and held a community engagement session in Warragamba. After inquiring as to when this was held and who went, I learnt that it was by invitation only and only a few people were actually invited. How is this Community Consultation?

In Summary, I cannot understand any justification for a project that will not actually solve the problem of flooding in the Hawkesbury/Nepean Flood Plain. The area will continue to flood, and for longer, if the Dam Wall is raised. It will provide a false sense of security to those who live there.

The money should be spent on a Buyback scheme for the worst affected homes, for improved escape routes and better management of the Warragamba Dam in regards to releasing water BEFORE a flood. No future development of the flood plain area should be approved.

I would like to think that we have learned to value our history, that it must be respected and treasured. We must also look after what we have left of our unspoiled country. Once it is gone, it is gone for good.

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