

Warragamba Dam Wall Raising

I wish to register my objections to the proposed raising of the Warragamba Dam wall.

My primary reason for objecting is the impact on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, in particular the wilderness area of the Kowmung River. Any damage to this area is akin to destroying Lake Pedder in Tasmania or the Juukan Gorge caves.

I am also concerned about the taxpayer funding for the flood mitigation works will just serve to benefit downstream landowners and developers. Any financial benefits from the scheme should flow back to taxpayers.

The Need for Dam Wall Raising

Warragamba Dam was built for potable water capture and storage. Although the construction of the dam caused significant environmental impacts at that time, the need for a water supply for Sydney and the technology available at that time led to the current existing dam.

The proposal to raise the dam level to use the augmented storage for flood retention and prevention of downstream flooding will cause significant further impacts.

I understand that there is no need for structural works on the dam to ensure dam safety.

I understand that there is currently no intention of using the augment dam capacity for addition water storage for Sydney's water supply.

The entire rationale for the dam raising of the dam is to reduce flooding of downstream areas. It is noted that much of the flooding comes from other than the Warragamba catchment.

Environmental Impacts

When any development is proposed, the environmental impacts must be considered.

The principles of dealing with impacts are:-

1. avoid the impacts
2. unavoidable impacts should be mitigated
3. offset impacts

To avoid the impacts on the upstream areas, the raising of the Warragamba wall should not proceed. This would mean that properties and infrastructure downstream would still be subject to flooding. Since most of these works

should not have been built in the first place (going back to Governor Macquarie), I have no problems with this. I suspect, however, that the political imperatives will govern, and the works on the dam wall raising will proceed.

Consideration must therefore be given to the mitigation of the impacts.

Mitigation of Impacts on Wilderness Areas (Kowmung River)

Vegetation permanently inundated will eventually die. The proposal is to only use the additional dam storage as a temporary measure, so with proper management the native vegetation should be able to be saved, especially for those areas inundated in the most extreme events.

Key areas of the wilderness areas should be given remedial works after any flooding event. This would certainly be for any parts of the Kowmung River that may be flooded, and possibly the Cox's River. Any areas that become damaged by flooding must be reinstated by planting appropriate native vegetation, and any exotic weed species that are likely to establish in cleared and vulnerable flood affected areas must be eliminated.

There are a number of National Park, Council and Landcare Groups which would be capable of carrying out such remedial works when required. Compared to the capital costs of the scheme, ongoing and infrequent maintenance and regeneration works would be minimal.

The critical areas requiring consideration for ongoing treatment after flooding must be identified prior to completion of any wall raising works. A number of creeks and rivers feeding into the dam should be so treated, though the Kowmung River would be considered the most important.

Ensuring no loss of existing vegetation will minimize erosion problems and subsequent increase of sediment within the dam.

Additional offsets to (e.g. extra land added to National Parks) have been proposed, and these should still proceed, as even with remedial works after flooding, the overall loss of vegetation could be significant.

Mitigation of Impacts on Indigenous Heritage

I am not an expert in these matters, but I understand that there could be significant sites within the affected areas.

Before any works commence there must be a complete survey of the entire affected area. Any resulting action can be determined at that time, but we can not allow destruction or damage without a full understanding of what is likely to be affected.

Floodplain Development

The proposal to raise Warragamba Dam wall is to protect downstream infrastructure in the floodplain, particularly around Windsor and Richmond. Current development has occurred over many years, guided by a variety of (generally inadequate) rules on flooding likelihood and flood levels. This has resulted in much development that should not have occurred, but has meant some people with vulnerable properties were unaware of the extent of the risks. I therefore do understand the aims of the Government to resolve these issues.

Currently undeveloped land within the floodplain should not be developed as a result of mitigation works resulting from the Warragamba Dam raising. Any beneficial gains from development of land, which is currently unsuitable because of potential flooding, should flow to the government of NSW. Ideally, any additional land could be used as recreational land (including national parks) to further offset upstream losses and to provide additional recreational land in an area of Sydney which is rapidly expanding and losing such areas.

Summary

Ideally, no raising of the dam wall.

If dam wall is raised:-

- Never use the additional dam capacity for permanent water storage.
- Provide addition areas of National Parks as offsets
- Carry out rehabilitation works in critical upstream areas after each flooding event.
- Carry out a full investigation of all impacts on indigenous heritage
- Carry out no further development in current flood prone areas

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