

Fiona Manwaring

PO BOX 3007

Wallacia NSW 2045

Warragamba Dam Assessment Team

Planning and Assessment

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

Locked Bag 5022

Parramatta NSW 2124

Submission – Warragamba Dam Raising Project – SSI-8441

I strongly object to raising the Warragamba Dam wall, with my reasons outlined below.

I am born of English, Irish & Scottish ancestors who settled in Australia in the early 1800s. Born in Darug Country in 1970 and home is now on Gangangara Country.

After a trip to Thailand in 2014, I started to question my own countries Deep Time history. Being educated through the 1970 and '80s meant I did not know this ancient land or the first people to reside here. My understanding of Aboriginal Culture, Spirituality, and connection to everything are a mere seven years old; however, there is hardly a day that I don't learn something new or form a deeper connection and understanding.

I have outlined some of my critical findings over the past several months below. It is incredibly frustrating for me as an Australian to watch the First Nations people's complex knowledge systems and connection to Country dismissed in the WaterNSW Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Given the understanding Australia now has with our Deep Time history proving beyond doubt that as described in The

Dreaming, Aboriginal people and their ancestors were here, long before 1788, and longer than most of the Western world can get their head around.

Aboriginal Heritage

I wish that the oldest continuing culture in the world be allowed, encouraged, listened to, and be the loudest voice in Australia's plans as we head into the next 1000 years.

1. Karskens (2021, p. 18) states that the Dyarubbin (Nepean River) dates to more than 200 million years ago on the supercontinent Gondwana. Karskens (2021, p. 18) adds that a rising plateau formed the Blue Mountains.
2. Karskens (2021, p. 22) of Aboriginal History of the Dyarubbin (Nepean River) science can place Aboriginal existence at 47,000 years.
3. Griffiths (2018, p. 1) states that human history began over 60,000 years ago in Australia. He further adds that Australians have an uneasy relationship with the history of this continent.
4. Flood mitigation – Castlereagh Plain – Karskens (2021, p. 183) displays a map of the Nepean-Hawkesbury River from Emu Plains to Pitt Town. This map shows three locations cobble fords placed between Emu Plains & before the Grose River enters the Nepean. Cobble fords being strategically set to slow the Nepean River flow and make it spread across the country, thus watering

the land and making use of the rain & river water. Pascoe et al. (2021 p. 79)

describe how the fast coastal streams generally ran slower in 1788. Big rivers like the Murray and Darling having frequent fords along them.

5. Dr Lynne Kelly's conversations with the Aboriginal Elders gave her a glimpse into the complexity of their information systems. The extraordinary range of memory methods they use led to the publication of *The Memory Code* in 2016. Kelly (2016) quotes Aboriginal Elder Eileen McDinny of the Yanyuwa people of the Gulf of Carpentaria in the Northern Territory *"Everything got a song, no matter how little, it's in the song – the name of a plant, birds, animal, Country, people, everything got a song"*.

Regent Honeyeater

(Taronga Zoo, 2021). Taronga Zoo notes on their website that the Regent Honeyeater is critically endangered in NSW. Further, Taronga Zoo states that for over 20 years, they have been involved in a recovery program. Additionally, the NSW Government, Office of Environment & Heritage lists the Regent Honeyeater's home as Burragorang, the Cumberland Plain, and ten other regions in the Sydney Basin updated 7th June 2021. (*Regent Honeyeater - Sydney Basin: Distribution and Vegetation Associations* | NSW Environment, Energy and Science, 2021.)

I was astonished to hear in the WaterNSW online information sessions that they don't consider the heritage-listed Blue Mountains National Park upstream of the Warragamba Dam a significant breeding ground for these little birds.

Floods along the Warragamba/Nepean/Hawkesbury River

1. The floods along the Warragamba/Nepean/Hawkesbury River system have been happening for tens of thousands of years, as told by Aboriginal oral history. The first written record I have been able to locate is in 1789, where Captain John Hunter wrote:

“For here we had evident marks of the vast torrents which must pour down from the mountains, after heavy rains. The low grounds, at such times, are entirely covered, and the trees with which they are overgrown are laid down (with their tops pointing down the river), as much as I ever saw a field of corn after a storm.” (Karskens, 2021, p. 259)

2. Infrastructure NSW Resilient Valley, Resilient Communities. Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy states in their Executive summary that the “floodplain falls mainly within four fast-growing Local Government Areas in Western Sydney: Penrith City, Hawkesbury City, The Hills Shire and Blacktown City. It includes the population centres of Penrith, Richmond and Windsor and many surrounding suburbs”. Infrastructure NSW also states that flood exposure will increase across the valley in the future. Up to 134,000 people live and work on the floodplain, with this figure forecast to double over the next 30 years. Over 25,000 residential properties are currently subject to flood risk. (Infrastructure New South Wales, 2017)
3. Infrastructure New South Wales produced the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy, Taskforce Options Assessment Report. Dated January 2019, recognising Karskens 2016 research that states after the flood of 1816 and

1817, Governor Macquarie issued General Orders asking for settlers to relocate from their low-lying farms to townships, few settlers obeyed.

4. Lambley (1997) research states that the Sydney Water Corporation, owner, operator of Warragamba Dam in conjunction with the Fahey Coalition Government, wanted to raise the Warragamba Dam wall by 23 metres before the March 1995 election. Lambley (1997) further states that it was the election in March 1995, when the Carr Labor Government gained power, they reversed the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall. However, the Carr Labour Government built the new spillway to remove the risk of the dam wall collapsing in a catastrophic flood.
5. In a letter written to the Western Weekender Mr Gilbert (2021), he was the mine manager at the now Penrith Lakes scheme, and that in 1980/'90s, the final quarry design was that the "lakes" were to remain as near as possible to empty so that they could provide flood mitigation for towns downstream. Gilbert (2021) notes that the exception was the Sydney 2000 Olympics rowing Lake, initially a temporary venue.

My issues & observations

1. It is a song as a memory aid that assists Aboriginal Elders maintain their complex knowledge systems that produce an encyclopedic memory. Australia is a lucky country as we have the oldest continuing culture globally, right here! Yet, their voices and knowledge are dismissed way too often. It is like Government Departments fear this Country's deep time history.

2. I'd suggest that looking for a Regent Honey Eaters nest in the catchment is not a priority of WaterNSW. Thus, allowing WaterNSW to contradict another Government Department.
3. I hope that the environment offset that WaterNSW talked about in their online information sessions is not Taronga Zoo's breeding program.
4. Maybe it is time to assess who the real winners and losses are: My observation is property developers are the only winners, the people who buy the redeveloped property are the losses, for most of the current property remaining undeveloped is in low lying areas; therefore, I'd strongly suggest being able to afford any flood insurance would be out of peoples reach. Furthermore, Governor Macquarie instructed settlers to relocate to higher ground around 1817.

My Recommendations

1. With the permission of the Gangangara Custodians, conduct the most up to date scientific dating of the artifacts located and mentioned in the EIS. Now before the Gangangara Custodians lose more of their Country.
2. Start treating the history of Aboriginal People and their history at the forefront of everything we plan to do in this state.
3. Start listening to understand Aboriginal People, as they hold essential knowledge of this great Country, which will enrich our lives.
4. I wish that every Australian forms a greater understanding and connection to the oldest continuous culture globally and that Governments Australia wide place this part of Australian history way before anything we do.

5. Stop building on the flood plains! In WaterNSW words, it is dangerous and catastrophic. If WaterNSW can use these words to describe the flood plan, then why are we as humans allowing other humans to build in harm's way?
6. Stop rehashing old projects that will do little more than create a false sense of security for the people living along the Hawkesbury-Nepean flood plan.
7. Start recognising that as humans, we are not able to control floods. We must learn to live with floods and keep all of humankind safe, as floods are a natural event in this country and aid the natural environment's health.

References

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