



Trish Doyle MP

Member for Blue Mountains



02 4751 3298 | bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au | 132 Macquarie Rd Springwood NSW 2777

New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

Warragamba Dam

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Tonight I speak about the Warragamba Dam wall project on behalf of a number of people in my community. I begin by acknowledging Aunty Sharyn Halls, Kazan Brown and young Taylor Clarke, who have been a fortifying part of this campaign. They have been members of registered Aboriginal parties who have expressed strong opposition to the New South Wales Government's proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam wall. I will read a statement that the group made so eloquently recently. They said:

The impact that this proposal will have on our cultural heritage and ability to access significant Ancestral land will be devastating. It will destroy sites which are core to our Gundungurra dreaming story, "The Journey of Gurangatch and Mirrigan", further shattering the song lines of our people. Until the dam [wall] proposal is scrapped, we will continue to fight for our lands and our culture.

Recently I joined nearly 950 people in the Blue Mountains to march to save the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area from the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall. The wild rivers of the southern Blue Mountains form a landscape that has been largely untouched by modern society. The area is home to 48 threatened plant and animal species, ancient river valleys, rare dry rainforests and hundreds of Indigenous cultural sites. The significance of the southern Blue Mountains landscape led to it being inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2000. Ornithologist Martin Schultz has stated:

The area is so special because it is a functioning ecosystem, you have dingoes keeping kangaroos under control and it's all working like it should—it's healthy.

The plan to raise the dam wall will see the area flooded through a "controlled release" of water which Dr Schultz says threatens the biodiversity in the region. He warns it could take hundreds of years for the ecosystems to turn into something functional again. Raising the Warragamba Dam wall will destroy 65 kilometres of wilderness rivers and inundate 4,700 hectares of the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park, threatening endangered wildlife and culturally significant Indigenous sites. It is a developer-driven proposal. It will make it easier to build on flood-prone land in western Sydney but it will not stop floods.

Further, the Government has peddled a number of lies. I would like to know why the Minister for Western Sydney misled the public when he stood on the floodplains and said, "As far as the eye can see—to that tree line—that's the urban development land", when he was talking about flood mitigation. This is about development. The Blue Mountains tourism industry is very worried; it is worth an estimated \$500 million per year and inundation of our world heritage area, the desecration of Indigenous sites and the wild rivers being impacted will have economic implications of epic proportions.

I thank all those who turned out in Katoomba on Sunday 9 June—my colleague Adam Searle, MLC, shadow Minister for climate change; our mayor, Mark Greenhill; the many hundreds of families; Harry Burkett; Wilson from the Colong Foundation; and Keith Muir. I also thank Bob Debus and the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and the many young students who are standing up because they believe in saving our environment. I encourage people to attend the screening of an excellent short film called *Give a Dam: Flooding the Blue Mountains*, which contrasts the wilderness landscapes of the southern Blue Mountains with the overdevelopment that is happening across western Sydney.

I ask the Government, and especially the Ministers involved, to recognise the important environmental and historical value of the heritage-listed Warragamba Dam and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and to understand that raising the dam wall would destroy 65 kilometres of wild rivers and inundate thousands of hectares of our World Heritage listed national park. I would like the House to acknowledge that UNESCO is due to make a determination next month on whether the decision to raise the dam wall is in breach of the World Heritage Convention that Australia should follow. I ask the Government to stop this developer grab.