1 November 2019

**Second protest targets Warragamba Dam consultant SMEC**

Opponents of NSW Government plans to flood thousands of hectares of Blue Mountains World Heritage wilderness by raising Warragamba Dam wall staged a peaceful protest this morning at the Sydney offices of Snowy Mountains Engineering Corps’ (SMEC) in Parramatta.

SMEC Engineering, the company commissioned to conduct environmental and cultural assessments for the project, has been accused of abusing Indigenous rights, engaging in bribery and corruption, working with military dictatorships and rubber-stamping immensely destructive dam projects across the world.

A submission detailing these accusations has been made by 17 international NGOs to a NSW parliamentary inquiry into the dam project. It can be found [here.](http://bit.ly/2BZzuAf)

Today’s protest was organised after SMEC Engineering declined to meet and properly consult with Traditional Owners and representatives from the Colong Foundation’s GIVE A DAM Campaign and NSW Nature Conservation Council. SMEC also refused to meet with peaceful protestors at an action held at their North Sydney headquarters in October.

**Kazan Brown, Gundungurra Traditional Owner** **said**: “Given the way they've treated us, it doesn't surprise me one bit these allegations have been made by overseas Traditional Owners.

“Our requests have been ignored – the whole Aboriginal heritage assessment is just rubbish. The real question is how did the NSW Government come to choose these consultants? We need a worlds-best-practise consultant for a site with such important cultural and natural values. 

“If this project proceeds, we will lose the last links to our dreaming story, destroying the song lines of our people. It is incredibly disrespectful the NSW Government chose a consultant with such a bad track record.”

**Nature Conservation Council CEO Chris Gambian said**: “The only proper course of action now is for the government to engage a new company – one with a spotless reputation – to conduct fresh cultural and environmental assessments. It is very troubling that a company under such a cloud was ever chosen for this sensitive and critical work.

"The government must explain what probity checks, if any, were undertaken prior to the appointment of SMEC and whether the government was aware of the serious allegations as outlined by the Rivers Without Boundaries International Coalition.”

“If SMEC is proud of its track record, we’re ready to hear them out. CEO James Phillis should name the time and place and we’ll be there to hear why his company can be trusted to do this sensitive and important work. If he’s not able to do that the NSW Government should hire a company that can.”

**Annie Nielsen, Convenor of Parramatta Climate Action Network & Secretary of Reconciliation for Western Sydney said**: “Parramatta Climate Action Network joined the protest today as it is completely opposed to the NSW Government raising the dam wall. If the dam wall is raised large areas of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area will be flooded as well as some of the areas remaining Aboriginal sacred sites.

“Housing should not be built on the floodplain of the Hawkesbury-Nepean and we should protect the remaining, critically endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland. So much has already been lost to over-development, contributing to excess heat in Western Sydney, compared to the east.”

As the main consultant tasked with producing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the dam raising project, SMEC have already been caught cutting corners on the cultural assessment for the dam project. Their draft cultural assessment only surveyed 26% of the total area to be impacted by the dam for Indigenous artefacts, sites and cultural significance.

Part of the assessment has been leaked showing the company is likely attempting to disguise the true impact upon the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, with leaked documents revealing a secret plan to raise the dam 17 metres instead of the assessed 14 metres. [1]

**REFERENCES**

[1] [**Government's secret plan to raise Warragamba Dam wall by 17m**](https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/government-s-secret-plan-to-raise-warragamba-dam-wall-by-17m-20190315-p514lq.html)**,** SMH, March 15, 2019.

**TO INCLUDE:**

**Photos of protest**

<http://bit.ly/2N72wV8>

**Video to the live stream**

<http://bit.ly/2q5AboZ>

**International submission**

<http://bit.ly/2BZzuAf>

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