Dear Ms Berejiklian,

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the Water NSW Amendment (Warragamba Dam) Bill 2018 that is currently before the NSW Parliament. This amendment will nullify section 153B of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 allowing the temporary dam inundation of two national parks, a world heritage property, a declared Wilderness area, a declared Wild River, a National Heritage site and the Warragamba Special Catchment Area by the proposed 14 metre raising of the Warragamba Dam wall. **We call on you to withdraw the Water NSW Amendment (Warragamba Dam) Bill 2018 from the NSW Parliament, and that plans to raise Warragamba Dam be taken off the table immediately.** Raising Warragamba Dam wall would put the Australian Federal Government in clear contravention to the World Heritage Convention, and would justify placing the GBMWHA on the World Heritage in Danger List.

These natural areas are of the highest conservation value in Australia that should be preserved at all costs. There is yet to be even an environmental assessment completed on the impacts of the proposed dam development. The largest of flood events would inundate up to 4,700 hectares of national parks and 65 kilometres of wilderness streams above the current full storage level of the dam. Inundation of this nature would result in extensive and irreversible damage to the integrity of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWHA).

In 2000, the Blue Mountains National Park was listed on the World Heritage Register due to its “exceptional representation of major eucalypt groups”, “exceptional diversity of habitats... of the Australian fauna within a single place” and outstanding ecological integrity. The Warragamba Dam wall raising proposal would have a significant impact on these values, as well as the values for which the parks themselves are gazetted. For example, the nationally threatened Camden White Gum (*Eucalyptus benthamii*) and the critically endangered Regent honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*) are two key species whose future existence would be threatened by the dam raising proposal. At least 25 threatened species are known, or are likely to occur, within the national park estate that would be inundated by the proposal. Numerous Indigenous cultural heritage sites, belonging to the Gundungurra people of the southern Blue Mountains, are also located within national parks that would be inundated by the dam wall raising. Delicate cave art, rare eucalypt scar trees, dreaming waterholes and marker sites are amongst the cultural heritage sites that would be submerged by a raised dam wall. An Aboriginal Place application was submitted to the NSW
Office of Environment and Heritage by traditional owners earlier this year in a further attempt to protect their cultural sites from the proposal.

It should also be noted that the Blue Mountains National Park Plan of Management explicitly recognises the cultural, National Heritage, scenic, catchment, wilderness, wild rivers and recreational values of the park. These values would also be degraded by the proposal, most notably through the artificial inundation of the declared Kowmung Wild River and the associated catchment values which protect Sydney’s drinking water supply. The proposed Bill seeks to remove the national park lands within the World Heritage Area from being subject to the Blue Mountains National Park Plan of Management. We view this as a retrograde step in the protection of Australia’s World Heritage estate.

Several flood mitigation options have been identified as alternatives to raising Warragamba Dam wall, although it appears they will not be adequately investigated during the environmental impact assessment process. Leading flood and water quality experts believe that mitigating flood risks in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley can be achieved through several equally cost-effective alternatives. These include managing the existing storage of Warragamba Dam to mitigate floods, significant improvements in downstream evacuation routes, increased ability for flood forecasting, and the adoption of international best practice floodplain development controls in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. Such options would not cause environmental degradation within the World Heritage Area upstream of Warragamba Dam wall. It is evident that housing development of downstream floodplains is a key driving factor for the dam wall raising proposal. Infrastructure NSW has said it forecasts an additional 134,000 people to live on downstream floodplains over the next 30 years, more than doubling the existing floodplain population.

The impacts of temporary inundation caused by the raising of Warragamba Dam wall would significantly degrade the integrity of Blue Mountains National Parks, and therefore the outstanding universal values of the GBMWH. Because of this, the proposed legislation and the Warragamba Dam raising proposal should be withdrawn. We call on the NSW Government to ensure that any further decisions made regarding flood mitigation in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley be informed by the best available scientific advice, and that all impacts on National Park and World Heritage values be avoided.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Garrett AM
Former Minister for the Environment and Arts
Former President of Australian Conservation Foundation

Bob Debus AM
Former NSW Attorney General and NSW Environment Minister

Geoffrey Cousins AM
Former President, Businessman and Environmentalist
Former President, Australian Conservation Foundation
Bruce Gall  
Former Director  
Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service  

Dr Graeme L. Worboys  
(Hon) Associate Professor  
Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University  

Kim de Govrik  
National Parks Area Manager  
Kanangra  

Professor Richard Kingsford  
Professor of Environmental Science  
Director of Centre for Ecosystem Science  
School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of New South Wales  

Sharyn Halls  
Gundungurra Elder  

Kazan Brown  
Gundungurra Traditional Owner  

Associate Professor Willem Vervoort  
Associate Professor Hydrology and Catchment Management  
Sydney Institute of Agriculture, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, the University of Sydney  

Dr Carolyn Pettigrew  
Former head of Information Services  
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service  

Associate Professor Stuart Khan  
School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of New South Wales  

Dr Hayden Washington  
Environmental scientist  
PANGEA Research Centre, University of New South Wales  

Professor Michael Archer  
School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences, University of New South Wales  

Dr Nikki Thurgate  
Research Project Coordinator/Senior Research Fellow  
Centre for Freshwater Ecosystems, School of Life Sciences, La Trobe University  

Professor Andrew Pitman  
Professor of Climate Science, University of New South Wales  

Associate Professor Jamie Pittock
Ross Crates
Postdoctoral Researcher
Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University

Debbie Andrew
Former Senior Project Officer
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Office of Environment and Heritage

Roger Lembit
Ecologist

Michael Doherty
Plant Ecologist
Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University

Emma Spencer
PhD student in Ecology
School of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Sydney

Michael Jackson
Archaeologist/Cultural Heritage Advisor
Jackson Ward Archaeology

Dr Val Attenbrow
Archaeologist, Research Affiliate
Department of Archaeology, the University of Sydney

Dr Margaret Moussa
Lecturer in Economics
School of Business, Western Sydney University

Janice Wilson
Principal Archaeologist
Umwelt (Australia) Pty Limited

Wendy Goldstein
Lecturer/Director of Master Sustainable Development Program
Department of Environmental Sciences, Macquarie University
Former Head Environmental Education at IUCN Switzerland (1992-2005)

Dr David A. Tierney
Honorary Senior Research Fellow, the University of Sydney

Professor Christopher Dickman
Professor in Terrestrial Ecology
School of Life and Environmental Sciences, the University of Sydney

Associate Professor Mathew Crowther


xiii Ibid

