



The Hon. Stuart Ayres MP

Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism
and Western Sydney

Mr Ian Bailey
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Dear Mr Bailey,

Thank you for your letter of 5 November 2020. I note your concerns and thank you for sharing the views of Birding NSW.

There is a very significant existing risk to more than 130,000 people who live and work in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley - the most flood-exposed floodplain in NSW, if not Australia. Infrastructure NSW is overseeing implementation of the NSW Government's Flood Strategy for the valley. Comprising nine integrated outcomes, the Flood Strategy is based on the latest flood, population, evacuation, climate, cost/benefit modelling and analysis. It is available [online](#) on the Infrastructure NSW website.

A key outcome of the Flood Strategy is the proposal to raise Warragamba Dam spillways by up to 14 metres to protect the lives, homes and livelihoods of people downstream. The raised dam would temporarily hold back floodwaters and release them in a controlled way after the flood peak. The proposal would see no change in the dam's permanent water storage.

Warragamba Dam can fill and spill rapidly, even from low storage levels during drought. During the February 2020 flood, the storage rose by around 32%, or about a year's average supply to Greater Sydney, in four days. On one day during the largest flood in living memory in 1961, inflows were significantly more than the volume of Sydney Harbour. It is not possible to prevent the dam from overflowing without risking dam safety or Greater Sydney's water supply.

The options assessed in the development of the Flood Strategy are discussed in detail in an Options Assessment Report available [online](#). The Raising Warragamba Dam proposal is the most effective infrastructure option to reduce the significant existing regional flood risk. It would prevent or delay the most hazardous floods and allow increased certainty of time for people to evacuate.

Raising Warragamba Dam for flood mitigation is considered State Significant Infrastructure under NSW legislation. A detailed environmental impact statement (EIS) is being prepared for the proposal under the *NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. It will also be assessed under the Australian *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* in relation to World Heritage, National Heritage and threatened species.

The NSW Government deeply values the significance of the World Heritage Area (WHA). Any development in or near the WHA is subject to rigorous impact assessment. The Government also understands and appreciates concerns raised by Traditional Custodians who are being further consulted on cultural heritage of the upstream landscape.

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The EIS exhibition will allow all those interested to provide comment at a time when all information is available. The final decision will only take place after all financial, environment and cultural assessments have concluded and planning consideration is complete.

Thank you again for your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely



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