

Select committee on the proposal to raise the Warragamba Dam Wall



Select Committee on the Proposal to Raise the Warragamba Dam Wall, 30 June 2020 (Uncorrected Transcript)

Table provides a summary of the questions taken on notice:

	Assigned	QoN Summary	QoN - Answer	Transcript Pg. No.
1	Mr Justin Field, MLC	What community assessment has been done to understand the perception of the February 2020 floods? If so, are these findings available to the committee in full? Were there other things that were tested?	Yes, we received anecdotal feedback from members of the community and stakeholders who perceived the event to be much larger flood than it actually was. Survey work has started with a targeted group and a broader community survey is planned in the upcoming months. This will inform further work planned on flood warnings and response.	8
2	Mr Justin Field, MLC	Referencing a chart (p20 of the presentation) 'Flooding in the HNV sub-catchment contributions to Windsor': please outline what the chart showed and indicate if you are prepared to put this on public record. Also, what was the time between the start of the February 2020 flood event and the peak of the flood? Please provide a couple of points – at Penrith and Windsor Bridge.	<p>The whole presentation has been provided on public record. Please see the chart extract from page 20 of the presentation.</p> <p>There is rarely a distinct start to a flooding event or the heavy rainfall that causes flooding. Most flood events are preceded by several days of minor nuisance rainfall that wets the catchment and causes minor rises in river level. For this reason, the start of a flooding event is often defined as when the river levels start disrupting normal activities like road ferries or low level crossings. Disruption to normal activities starts at around 17mAHD at Penrith and 4mAHD at Windsor.</p> <p>The rainfall started on 6 February 2020 with the main burst beginning on 9 February 2020 at around 6am. This main burst caused the river to pass the 4mAHD threshold at Windsor 5.5 hours later at 11:30 am and the Penrith threshold of 17mAHD six hours later at 12:00pm. The river peaked 16 hours after the main rainfall burst started at 10:00pm on 9 February at Windsor and at Penrith at 6:00pm (12 hours later).</p>	12

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE
WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE
WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL**

Supplementary questions: Infrastructure NSW

Answers are to be returned to the Committee secretariat by 28 July 2020.

1. Will the Environment Impact Assessment be approved by the NSW Cabinet before it is put on public exhibition?

The Select Committee is referred to the response provided in Budget Estimates on 10 March 2020, as extracted below:

***BUDGET ESTIMATES: PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 1 – PREMIER AND
FINANCE***

Tuesday 10 March 2020

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Mr STUART AYRES: *I do not mean to be rude about this but self-evidently the department that assessed the GIPAA thinks it is. I believe it is. The EIS will go to Cabinet before it goes on public release, like most of these substantial projects that go through Cabinet assessment before they go on public exhibition. We want to be able to allow people to see the impacts that raising Warragamba Dam wall will have on the environment so that they can assess those impacts against the benefits it will have in the community. I clearly accept there are people on both sides of this, which is why it is so important that we conduct this process in a fair and transparent manner, and that the EIS becomes the point at which everyone makes their*

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assessments around those environmental impacts. The evolution of this project will mean that those environmental impacts will be constantly evolving as they are assessed: If you were to put them out three years ago versus what we know now versus what you will probably know by the time the EIS is concluded. You just let the public see the EIS.

2. Has work on the business case for the project already commenced?

The preparatory work for the Final Business Case has commenced. The work is iterative and informed by progressive delivery of the nine outcomes under the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy.

3. Has a contract for the preparation of a business case been advertised?

No

4. Has a contract for the preparation of a business case been awarded? a. If yes, who will be preparing the business case?

No

5. Documents received by the Office of Justin Field MLC under GIPA were heavily redacted. The reason given in the GIPA response was that “premature release of information concerning those deliberations (Biodiversity offsets) could prejudice the effective exercise of government agencies involved in the process”. What section of the GIPA act was relied upon in not providing this information?

Response:

Clause 1 (e) of the Table in section 14 (2) where disclosure could reasonably be expected to reveal a deliberation or consultation conducted or an opinion or recommendation given, in such a way as to prejudice a deliberative process of government or an agency.

6. Will these following documents be available once the EIS is put on public exhibition?

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- a. Minutes from Biodiversity Update meeting held on 3 May 2019 attended by OEH, DPE, DoE, WNSW, INSW and SMEC
- b. Biodiversity Update (Warragamba Dam Raising EIS) report prepared by SMEC for meeting 3 May 2019
- c. Chapter 8 – Biodiversity Upstream, from the SMEC report prepared for Water NSW 18 September 2019 (redacted under section 14 (1) clause 2 (1) (e); section 14 (2) Table, clause 1 (e); & section 74 of the GIPA Act.)
- d. Document titled ‘Offset Options’ Sent by Kevin Roberts at Water NSW on 3 June 2019
- e. Document entitled ‘Warragamba Dam Raising – Biodiversity Offset Strategy’ referenced as document #22a in INSW GIPA Access Application REF #62
- f. SMEC Draft Biodiversity Assessment Report for Downstream
- g. SMEC Draft Biodiversity Assessment Report for Construction as reviewed by Water NSW
- h. SMEC Biodiversity Assessment methodology as presented to OEH, DoPE and Commonwealth DoEE

Response:

Documents released or partially released in response to an access application under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 determined by Infrastructure NSW on 20 December 2019 are not intended to be the subject of any further release by Infrastructure NSW.

The final Environmental Impact Statement will contain a chapter on Biodiversity.

7. Are offset credits being calculated for upstream biodiversity impacts? If so, how many credits have been calculated for upstream biodiversity impacts?

The Environmental Impact Statement is currently being finalised in response to agency feedback from the consistency review by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and in preparation for public exhibition. Upstream biodiversity assessments have been dealt with in accordance with the Framework

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for Biodiversity Assessment (FBA). The FBA underpins the Biodiversity Offsets Policy for Major Projects; it contains the assessment methodology that is adopted by the policy to quantify and describe the impact assessment requirements and offset guidance that apply to Major Projects.

8. Given the Australian Government has committed to provide the World Heritage Centre "updated information on the impacts of the bushfires, in finalising the EIS" in their April State of Conservation update for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Property, what engagement has WaterNSW had since this update was produced with the following entities in regards to meeting this commitment:

- a. The Commonwealth Government?
- b. The World Heritage Centre?

What specific actions, if any, are WaterNSW taking to contribute to meeting this commitment?

WaterNSW has submitted the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) for their consistency review prior to the public exhibition of the EIS.

The EIS followed the DPIE Guideline for applying the Biodiversity Assessment Method at severely burnt sites.

When the EIS is completed, WaterNSW would be pleased to share this information with interested parties including the Australian Government and the World Heritage Centre.