

**From:** Yeo, Sung-hee  
**To:** [Delegation Australia](#)  
**Cc:** [Natcom Australia1](#); [Australia World Heritage](#); [OSIPOVA Elena](#); [UNESCO Apia](#); [Jing, Feng](#); [Diop, Zohra](#); [Nakamura, Akane](#); [Debonnet, Guy](#); "BADMAN Tim"; [SHADIE Peter](#)  
**Subject:** RE: letter from Dr Mechtild to H.E. Mr Mackenzie  
**Date:** Monday, 1 October 2018 7:19:22 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)  
[MEDIA RELEASE Government attempts cover-up of NSWs rarest bird.pdf](#)  
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Dear Colleagues,

Further to my email on 26 September 2018, the Centre has received more information on the World Heritage property "Greater Blue Mountains Area".

Please verify the source and content of the information currently attached and also the one we already sent to you before.

Many thanks for your cooperation.

Best,

Sunghee

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# Warragamba Dam wall proposal could flood Aboriginal cultural sites, elders say

[Read online here.](#)

By [Kathleen Calderwood](#)

Updated yesterday at 3:40pm



**Photo:** [Taylor Clarke, 20, with her mother Kazan Brown at Gungalook Waterhole — a place that has special meaning to their family. \(ABC News: Kathleen Calderwood \)](#)

Kazan Brown's eyes well up when she talks about the Gungalook waterhole.

Its significance for her as a Gundungurra traditional owner is deeply personal and spiritual.

Her family used to live here, and the stories from the land date back thousands of years.

It is the reason why she fears so much for its future.

Sitting in the lower reaches of the Blue Mountains, at the southern end of Lake Burragorang — the lake created when Warragamba Dam was built in the 1960s — the waterhole is in the

middle of a well-trodden path: the push-and-pull between progress and protecting indigenous history.

If a proposal to raise the dam wall is approved, Ms Brown fears the waterhole will be flooded and lost forever.



**[Photo: "This is all that's left': Kazan Brown fears for her heritage if the dam wall proposal goes ahead \(Photo: Ross Byrne\)](#)**

"The landscape around it's not going to be the same, it's going to change," she said.

"We won't be able to see the kangaroo traps anymore, you won't be able to get this close to it anymore and it's just not going to exist — the waterhole itself will be flooded, it will be gone.

"This is all that's left, the first time around they flooded a good 80 per cent of our sites ... and now they want to take what's left."

## **A complicated history**

While the Warragamba Dam is currently used only to supply water to Sydney, the NSW Government wants to raise the dam wall by 14 metres for flood mitigation in the highly flood prone areas of north-west and western Sydney.

The Government says the extra 14 metres will not be used for water storage, only for flood mitigation, so the upstream inundation would only be temporary.



[Photo: The Gungalook Waterhole has special meaning to the Gundungurra people \(ABC News: Kathleen Calderwood\)](#)

Water NSW and Infrastructure NSW are preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposal, due next year.

If approved, the wall construction will take place from 2020-2024, at an estimated cost of \$690 million.

Traditional owners fear their cultural heritage sites and stories will be lost under the higher water level, and they say not enough has been done to properly survey and document them for the EIS.

## **'Quick and nasty' survey**

The archaeological and cultural heritage surveys took place over 25 days, yet Lake Burragorang has a foreshore of 354 kilometres.

Elder Sharyn Halls took part in the surveys over the 25-day period and is not satisfied with the effort so far.



[Photo: Sharyn Halls says the archaeological and cultural heritage surveys need to be done properly. \(ABC News: Kathleen Calderwood\)](#)

"It needs to be increased and we need to do it properly and it hasn't been done so far," she said.

"Nothing under another 60 days might work, but it depends on what you find and how much paperwork you've got to do along the way to how long it would take."

A spokesperson from Infrastructure NSW said the period was only set as an "initial guide" and the survey was not complete.

"It will take as long as required to satisfy the agreed methodology," the spokesperson said.

The project team was consulting with Aboriginal communities, the spokesperson said, with specialised Aboriginal heritage consultants employed to do the survey work.

Archaeologist Wayne Brennan said the effort so far had been "a quick and nasty".

"To do a proper job you can really use up to 12 months, and just six months of that would probably be field work," he said.

"Obviously there's the physical aspects of the sites themselves, the stones, the rock art, the things in between, the cultural features in the landscape.

"But far more importantly what we have are these ancestral creational being stories which are very rich in this area."

One of those stories is the creation of the Gungalook waterhole, which runs beside Ms Brown's old family property.



[Photo: Taylor Clarke at Kamilaroi Rock. \(ABC News: Kathleen Calderwood\)](#)

"The creation story is that the Gurrungatch [the serpent] came down the river and was chased by Mirrigan [a quoll-like creature] and made the river, as he's come down and this was where he rested," she said.

"I was brought here and told stories, shown the family property, the dreamtime story ... and I'd like to be able to do that with my grandkids."

Minister for Western Sydney Stuart Ayres said a balance needed to be struck between protecting Indigenous heritage and protecting the lives of the people who lived in the floodplain.

"The Hawkesbury-Nepean is one of the most complex floodplains in the world," he said.

"Thousands and thousands of people live in this part of the world and right now they are at risk of extreme flood events.

"Investing in a flood mitigation extension to the existing Warragamba Dam wall is not about creating inundation unnecessarily it is really only about creating inundation to prevent a catastrophic flood ... the first thing we do is we prioritise the safety of people's lives."

## **National Heritage List 'priority'**

The Greater Blue Mountains — which includes some areas around Lake Burratorang such as the Gungahook waterhole, but not all — is on the World Heritage List for its environmental values.

In 2005, an application was made to expand the boundaries of the National heritage area to include the entire shore of Lake Burratorang, adding another layer of protection to the area.

The application argues to include the area's cultural associations, natural beauty, geology and landforms on the National Heritage List.



**[Photo: Traditional owners fear scar trees in the Burratorang Valley will be flooded. \(ABC News: Kathleen Calderwood\)](#)**

Despite being put on a priority assessment list in 2008, the application has never been finalised.

A Federal Environment Department spokesperson said the assessment process was "continuing".

Now the Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association has pursued their own means of getting further protection for the area, nominating it a declared "Aboriginal Place".

If approved by the NSW Government, the declaration would recognise the Burraborang Valley's significance to the Gundungurra people.

"We've been mapping this whole area for 12 years and I feel we've had to take a few extra[steps] now to protect cultural heritage," Ms Halls said.





## NSW Government putting lives at risk on the floodplain

20 September 2018

134,000 people would be added to the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain over the next 30 years a key NSW government report on raising of Warragamba Dam wall has stated<sup>1</sup>.

**Colong Foundation for Wilderness Campaign Manager Harry Burkitt:** “Infrastructure NSW have said flooding constraints on development are a key reason why Warragamba Dam wall should be raised<sup>2</sup>. Stuart Ayres’ claim on Ray Hadley’s program this morning<sup>3</sup> that not a single house will be put on the floodplain as a result of the dam raising is totally inconsistent with these official reports.

“The government proposal will not solve the problem for flooding. The SES have found nearly half of all flood waters at Windsor originate from catchment areas not upstream of Warragamba Dam<sup>4</sup>.

“If anybody is putting people at risk on the floodplain it is the NSW Government.”

### Conservationists welcome Labor and Greens stand to protect national parks

“We welcome support from Labor and the NSW Greens to oppose the Water NSW Amendment (Warragamba Dam) Bill 2018<sup>5</sup> introduced into Parliament last night. The legislation winds back protections in the National Parks and Wildlife Act that prevents flood inundation of national parks in the southern Blue Mountains wilderness.

“Putting more people in harm’s way and placing a World Heritage property at risk by raising the dam wall are disturbing outcomes arising from this government’s dam proposal.”

“The upstream area at risk is a conservation heartland. It is Australia’s most protected national park, with six layers of protection, including being inscribed on the World Heritage list. Raising the dam will put at risk 48 of Australia’s most threatened species, inundate 65 kilometres of wilderness streams and many cultural sites of the Gundungurra people.”

### Media contact:

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<sup>1</sup> Infrastructure NSW, January 2017, Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy.

Available online: <https://goo.gl/b9N2rW>

<sup>2</sup> Molino Stewart - Addendum Report. Available online: <https://goo.gl/9ouccc>

<sup>3</sup> Labor refusing to support plan to raise Warragamba Dam wall. Available online: <https://bit.ly/2xB5ND6>

<sup>4</sup> NSW SES, Hazard and Risk in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. Average of major flood sources, pg. 105, Available online: <https://bit.ly/2NVybK9>

<sup>5</sup>Water NSW Amendment (Warragamba Dam) Bill 2018. Available online: <https://bit.ly/2QLj4Sn>





## Government attempts cover-up of NSW's rarest bird

Monday 3 September 2018

New research released last week<sup>1</sup> has revealed a remote Blue Mountains valley holds one of the last breeding populations of the Regent honeyeater, NSW's rarest bird. The World Heritage listed Burratorang Valley, located 70 kilometres west of Sydney, would be inundated by the proposed raising of the Warragamba Dam wall (for flood mitigation).

The ABC has today reported that an email from NSW Office of Environment and Heritage instructed WaterNSW, the proponents of the dam raising project, to suspend all environmental impact research into the Burratorang Regent honeyeater population<sup>2</sup> after the initial discovery of the bird was made late last year.

**Ornithologist, Dr Martin Schulz**, said the find was "spectacular" and "highly significant".

"We had no idea the population was this substantial. The research shows there were at least 7 breeding pairs and more than 20 individuals residing in the Burratorang Valley during flowering last year. You have to realise we are looking at only around 100 breeding pairs left in the wild.

"With limited effort, the researchers found almost 10% of Australia's remaining breeding Regent honeyeaters in the Burratorang Valley. There is no doubt this valley is critical to their survival, with more Regent honeyeaters likely to be found if adequate investigations were undertaken by the NSW Government.

"Flooding of the Burratorang Valley will be tantamount to signing off on the bird's extinction."

**Colong Foundation for Wilderness Campaign Manager, Harry Burkitt**, said: "while it is disgraceful the NSW Government is considering flooding a World Heritage site, it would be scandalous if the NSW Government is intentionally covering up the severe ecological impacts of a large public infrastructure project with viable alternatives."

"Not only does the dam proposal fly in the face of the World Heritage Convention, but it would now appear the environmental impact statement being prepared by WaterNSW will not meet either state or federal environmental assessment requirements.

"The NSW Government is trying to cover-up a find of national environmental significance because it doesn't suit their political agenda of allowing developers onto downstream floodplains."

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<sup>1</sup> Crates et. al, Contemporary breeding biology of critically endangered Regent Honeyeaters: implications for conservation, published in IBIS International Journal of Avian Science, available at [bit.ly/2MCWYmy](http://bit.ly/2MCWYmy)

<sup>2</sup> Calderwood, Critically endangered bird at risk from Govt dam wall proposal, available at <https://ab.co/2LQDO7t>





wildriders.org.au

**Dean Ingwersen of BirdLife Australia** said his organisation opposed the Warragamba Dam wall raising proposal due to its impact on the critically endangered bird species.

“The fact is Regent honeyeaters are literally one step from disappearing. We only have small pockets of known breeding habitat left along the east coast of Australia.

“Intentional destruction of Regent honeyeater breeding habitat, for a species this close to the brink, is simply unacceptable. You can’t just replace known breeding habitat of a critically endangered species like this.”

**Media contact:**

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Picture of Regent honeyeaters by Dean Ingwersen (reproducible with acknowledgement).

Footage of Regent Honeyeaters by Dean Ingwersen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSDR1DPAmy4> (reproducible with acknowledgement).





Culture Sector  
Division for Heritage

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H. E. Mr Angus Mackenzie  
Ambassador,  
Permanent Delegate of Australia to  
UNESCO  
UNESCO House

21 September 2018

Ref.: CLT/HER/WHC/APA/18/160

Subject: **State of conservation of the World Heritage property "Greater Blue Mountains Area"**

Dear Ambassador,

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre has received information about a coal mining plan, which may have a negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the "Greater Blue Mountains Area", which is inscribed on the World Heritage List.

We are sending this information to you (see Annex) in accordance with Paragraph 174 of the *Operational Guidelines* to enable us to verify, with your authorities concerned, the source and content of the information that we have received. We look forward to receiving your response as soon as possible and preferably within 2 months after the receipt of this letter.

Thanking for your continuous support in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

s22

/s/ Mechtild Rössler ( )  
Director  
World Heritage Centre

cc: Australian National Commission for UNESCO  
National Focal Point for World Heritage  
UNESCO Office in Apia  
IUCN