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No reason to fast-track Wyangala Dam project

The NSW Government is commencing preparation work for the construction of an enlarged storage at Wyangala Dam on the Lachlan River without a business case or planning approvals.

Inland Rivers Network and the Upper Galari Traditional Owners Group condemn the undue haste when Wyangala Dam is currently over 60% full.

‘There is no need to rush this very large, expensive project that will have significant cultural heritage, environmental, social and economic impacts in the Lachlan Valley,’ said Bev Smiles, President of Inland Rivers Network.’

‘There is enough water for everyone, with more flowing in.’

The area of the project, Wyangala Dam, is located on Wiradjuri Country.

‘Traditional Owners, elders and the local community from the Upper Bila Galari (Lachlan River) have always held strong cultural ties to our connection to country and the cultural significance of our rivers,’ said Isabel Coe, Traditional Owner

‘The plans to ‘fast track this project’ without the culturally appropriate knowledge holders of the project area is detrimental to our culture and heritage. As Traditional Owners we do not support the decision by proponents to attempt to engage with interested parties who do not speak for country. Organisations involved in the cultural heritage assessment report have no right to allow parties who do not come from Wiradjuri to speak on our behalf,’ said Isabel Coe.

‘This whole landscape is sacred to the Traditional Owners and clan groups of the Wiradjuri Nation with over 329 identified sites to be desecrated by the proposed inundation along the Lachlan River.’

‘The water flow of the Abercrombie and Lachlan river running into Wyangala will be disrupted with water being pushed back upstream causing major stagnation and water pollution to the freshwater ecosystem. Downstream of the Lachlan river - the Belubula, creeks and further down wetlands environmental flow will also be impacted as water and floods help flush and replenish the waterways,’ said George Coe, Traditional owner.

Both Inland Rivers Network and the Upper Galari Traditional Owners Group are critical of the poor consultation with community groups in the region.

‘This rush to start work is based on political announcements and National Party promises. It is without proper assessment or clear communication about the economic impacts, or even the need for more water to be captured from the Lachlan River,’ said Bev Smiles

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