

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Terms of reference

1.1 On 26 February 2007, the Senate referred the following matter to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport for inquiry and report:

The examination of all reasonable options, including increased dam capacity, for additional water supplies for South East Queensland, including:

- (a) the merits of all options, including the Queensland Government's proposed Traveston Crossing Dam as well as raising the Borumba Dam; and
- (b) the social, environmental, economic and engineering impacts of the various proposals.<sup>1</sup>

### Conduct of the inquiry

1.2 The inquiry was advertised in *The Australian*, *The Courier Mail*, and *The Northern Star* and through the Internet. The committee invited submissions from a wide range of interested organisations, government departments and authorities and individuals. The committee continued to accept submissions throughout the inquiry.

1.3 The committee received 246 public and 3 confidential submissions. A list of individuals and organisations that made public submissions to the inquiry together with other information authorised for publication is at Appendix 1. The committee held public hearings in Gympie, Brisbane and Canberra. A list of the witnesses who gave evidence at the public hearings is available at Appendix 2. The committee was pleased to undertake inspections of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam site and the Borumba Dam site.

### Scope of the inquiry

1.4 The committee acknowledges that under the Constitution, the management of water resources in Australia is a state responsibility. In conducting this inquiry, the committee spoke to, and heard from, many people who are directly and indirectly affected by various Queensland Government initiatives which aim to secure future water supplies. Throughout the inquiry, the committee has been very conscious that members of the affected communities and other interested stakeholders may have

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1 Senate Notice Paper, No. 129–26 February 2007, p. 2.

expectations that the Senate, through this committee inquiry process, may be able to affect change and influence the progress of certain initiatives. The committee recognises that the Commonwealth Government is significantly restricted in its ability to influence both the decisions made by the Queensland Government and the processes undertaken in implementing various water supply initiatives. However, the Commonwealth Government does have a role to play in the assessment and approval processes of 'controlled actions' under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. A number of initiatives fall under this category, including the Traveston Crossing Dam and the Wyaralong Dam. The committee is clearly aware of the limitations it faces in respect of this inquiry and intends to make accurate and forthright comments on the evidence received and detail appropriate and practical recommendations.

### **The committee's report**

1.5 Due to the broad range of issues covered within the inquiry's terms of reference, the committee has grouped related themes and topics together and allocated chapters accordingly. Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the inquiry process. Chapter 2 provides relevant information on the region of South East Queensland and the government structures in place to develop initiatives and implement strategies to secure and manage water supply.

1.6 Chapters 3, 4 and 5 relate to the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam and the proposed Wyaralong Dam. The committee received a significant amount of evidence on these dams and has split the three chapters as:

- Chapter 3 – a description of each of the proposals including evidence addressing the decision making process, the technical aspects of the dam, such as site suitability, and the cost of the dam;
- Chapter 4 – the social impact of the dams including community engagement and consultation and the affect on the communities; and
- Chapter 5 – the environmental impact of the dams including the Commonwealth Environmental Impact Statement approval process and the identified species impacted by the dams.

1.7 Chapter 6 considers the majority of evidence received regarding other alternative water supply options for South East Queensland and chapter 7 details the committee's conclusions and recommendations.

### **Acknowledgement**

1.8 The committee thanks those organisations and individuals who made submissions and gave evidence at the public hearings. The committee would like to express its appreciation and thanks to the Queensland Government for their contribution and cooperation during this inquiry. In particular, members of the committee appreciated the opportunity to undertake site visits at the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam and Borumba Dam sites.

**Note on references**

1.9 References in this report are to individual submissions as received by the committee, not to a bound volume. References to the committee Hansard are to the proof Hansard: page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard transcript.

