

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY SENATORS IAN MACDONALD, RUSSELL TROOD, BARNABY JOYCE AND RON BOSWELL

1.1 The evidence given to the Inquiry by so many witnesses from a wide range of professional, community, social and economic backgrounds leaves us with very strong doubt that, either the Traveston Crossing Dam, or the Wyaralong Dam will be particularly useful exercises in contributing to the solution of the long term water needs for the growing south-east region of Queensland. The proposal to construct these dams suggests to us that the decision to build them was politically motivated and reached without sufficient scientific, social or economic analysis.

1.2 We thank the Queensland public servants for their assistance and willingness to give evidence to the Inquiry. They have found themselves in a difficult position having had to justify publicly and before a parliamentary committee, elements of a policy with which they were plainly uncomfortable. In all they acted responsibly and professionally and were a credit to the public service system they serve. Yet none of this overcomes what appeared to us an exercise in trying to defend the indefensible.

1.3 The report of the Committee highlights the many discrepancies in and challenges to the information of the Queensland Government, much of which seems to have been prepared ex post-facto the decision to construct the two dams.

1.4 With regard to the Traveston Crossing Dam, the cost in financial, economic, environmental and social terms of stages one and two of the dam will dwarf any intended benefit to residents of Southeast Queensland. The overall negative impact of the dam on the people of the Mary River Valley will be in many cases grievous.

1.5 Considering the evidence provided to the Committee we have a very real concern that Australian native fauna which is unique to the Mary River system will be in serious danger of extinction if the dam proceeds. The evidence along these lines appears to be overwhelming and very persuasive.

1.6 Our conclusions on the Traveston Crossing Dam are reinforced by the actions of the Queensland Government. In dealing with the people of the Mary River Valley, the experts engaged by them and the volunteers supporting them, the government has been frequently evasive and inattentive to their desire for information on the dam.

1.7 At the completion of the Inquiry we have been left with the very firm conclusion that the Traveston Crossing Dam in particular, is a political response to a serious problem, but is not one which will solve the problem.

1.8 We believe there are many other possible solutions to Southeast Queensland's obvious needs for a more reliable long term supply of water that would be more cost

effective and would have infinitely less economic and social impact on those affected by the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

1.9 We believe that no work should be undertaken on the construction of the Traveston Crossing Dam without these alternatives being properly and fully investigated.

1.10 We believe that the Queensland Government should further pursue:

- their already initiated water saving measures, including rain water tanks and demand reduction;
- further work on increasing the capacity of the Borumba and other dams;
- a serious assessment of additional desalination projects;
- with greater vigour, their existing proposals on water recycling; and
- the possible advantages of the new technology in increasing use of grey water for non-potable purposes.

1.11 While the federal Minister for the Environment and Water Resources is required to follow strict processes in assessing the Traveston Crossing Dam under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, we urge the Minister to:

- require the Queensland Government to apply for EPBC Act approval for both stages one and two. The two stages of the project are so integrally entwined that we see very little logic in the two stages being separated for environmental assessment, especially when the proposed dam wall is intended to be constructed to stage two height at the outset. We consider it highly unlikely that stage one will have much benefit without proceeding to stage two, and even then the proposal is deeply flawed as a way of meeting southeast Queensland's future water needs;
- pay close attention in his determination of the social and economic impact of the dam's construction as required by the EPBC Act;
- very seriously consider the overwhelming evidence on the danger to unique fauna species in the river system which the imposition of conditions will not overcome; and
- very seriously investigate the allegations of the failure by the Queensland Government to comply with conditions imposed on the Paradise Dam.

1.12 Although the proposal to build the Wyaralong dam received less attention during the inquiry, we consider the evidence tended to the Committee regarding its shortcomings to have been compelling. The Queensland government's case for constructing Wyaralong is far from convincing, especially in the light of the many apparently superior proposals for supply in the area. Before committing any further

resources to this project, we would urge the Queensland government to re-examine the alternatives more closely and reconsider its decision.

1.13 Many of the concerns we have expressed with regard to procedures and dealing with affected residents in relation to the Traveston Crossing dam apply equally to the management of the Wyaralong proposal.

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