

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS**

1.1 The Australian Greens believe the proposed Traveston Dam should not proceed.

1.2 The proposed dam is not environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. As a broad and shallow dam on an alluvial floodplain it is also likely to be subject to unacceptably high levels of water loss due to evaporation and seepage.

1.3 While the Australian Greens in general support the analysis of the economic social and environmental shortcomings of the Traveston Dam proposal in the majority report, we believe it does not go far enough in its conclusions and recommendations.

1.4 The only conclusion we can reach from the evidence presented is that the proposed dam simply should not go ahead.

1.5 The dam would lead to the loss of at least three endangered species, has already caused and will continue to cause deep community distress and social dislocation, and would provide water at a greater cost than other alternatives. In addition, the dam is likely to prove ineffective due to climate change induced rainfall decline, high evaporation rates and high rates of seepage. It is therefore unlikely to meet predicted yields, will not meet environmental flow requirements, or address the needs of downstream water users.

1.6 The committee was presented with overwhelming evidence that this dam is a high-cost high-risk approach to sustainable water supply for South East Queensland

1.7 The Review of Water Supply-Demand Options for South East Queensland by the Institute for Sustainable Future and Cardno Australia found:

"According to this assessment, Traveston Crossing Dam is neither necessary nor desirable as part of the suite of options for ensuring water security for South East Queensland."

1.8 Key findings of the review include:

- Responding to the current drought in South East Queensland, the Queensland Government has developed a program comprising options including groundwater abstraction, source renewal, desalination, indirect potable reuse and demand management. This is a well designed program capable of significantly deferring critical water scarcity for the likely duration of the drought.
- Beyond this time horizon, the current drought situation should not direct planning for ensuring the long term water security of South East Queensland. Traveston Dam, although facilitated by the Queensland Government's emergency drought response legislation, is *not* a drought response measure.

Water from Traveston will not be available until 2012 at the earliest, likely to be well after additional water is required for drought relief.

- In the longer term, when Traveston Dam would potentially be able to supply water, the additional water from Traveston will not be needed. Demand for water in South East Queensland can better be met by a combination of other measures with a particular focus on reducing demand for water, especially in new houses that drive the growth in demand.
- As part of the Review, various supply and demand reduction measures were assessed in terms of their potential to provide water security in the short, medium and long term and in terms of their unit cost in dollars per kilolitre. Traveston performs poorly on both of these counts. The cost of Traveston dam is likely to exceed \$3 per kilolitre. The cost of reducing demand for water is on average about \$1.15 per kilolitre.

## **Social Impacts**

1.9 This proposal has already had significant adverse impact on the local community as were clearly outlined in the submissions to and the evidence received by the inquiry. The Australian Greens believe that, were it to proceed, the dam would continue to have unacceptable social impacts on the local community.

1.10 Mr Kenneth Campbell the Coordinating Counsellor of Kandanga Lifeline Sunshine Coast said at the hearing in Gympie:

"There were a range of issues that we were being asked to deal with. Some were directly related to the frustrations of people who were trying to get information and advice about how they might go about getting it right, through to issues of extreme stress and depression....

"There was no previous discussion or consultation with the community—that goes without saying because it was like a bombshell falling on them when they found out about it. In fact, from the time of the first announcement on 27 April through to the end of June, there was quite clearly a feeling in the community that this would not happen. There was a real expectation in the client base that I have talked to that when Peter Beattie came up in June he was going to tell them that it was not going to happen. So when that meeting happened there was a tremendous feeling that this was the end.....

"There is evidence of a growing trend for clients to be accessing GPs for related disorders including anxiety and depression. Stress levels due to the dam are creating relationship issues for otherwise stable relationships. Couples are fighting over whether to stay in the valley or go because they are not at a level where they can cope with it anymore. Individuals are losing resources that form part of the normal toolbox of coping skills. With people leaving the valley, the resources they had have gone.

1.11 Robert Hales, Associate Lecturer Griffith Business School said in his submission to the inquiry:

Lastly, the Queensland Government actions have contributed to excessive adverse impacts through failing to adhere to acceptable democratic and administrative processes. The construction of large dams will always have an adverse impact if there is a large population in the impacted area. However, the affected people in the Mary River Valley have experienced impacts in excess of what would normally be expected if robust democratic and administrative processes had been implemented. The key factor in this conclusion is the uncertainty experienced by almost all people in the impacted area. Many people in the Mary River Valley say that the Government has managed this aspect to achieve strategic advantage in implementation of the project. I would also make this conclusion. This conclusion is comparable to how financial, social and environmental risks associated with mega projects have been managed in other parts of the world.

1.12 It is clear that the procedural issues in the proposal have had an adverse social impact on the people in the affected area. These impacts are in excess of what would be expected if the dam were to follow ‘normal’ processes. Excessive impacts have come about because of a confusing and disempowering process of community consultation and engagement - with the Queensland Government moving in to purchase properties during the phase in which community consultation about the dam proposal should have been taking place. This very clearly sent the message that the consultation process and the EIS process were a sham and that irrespective of the findings of these inquiries the Government intended to proceed with the dam regardless.

1.13 The Greens accept the evidence that this has serious negative implications for people’s psychology, health, their social capacity and economic prosperity.

1.14 In conclusion, The Australian Greens believe that proposed Traveston Dam will have unacceptable social impacts and recommend that the proposal be abandoned.

## **Environmental Impacts**

1.15 This proposal will have unacceptable environmental impacts.

1.16 The Mary River catchment has significant conservation values. It is situated in a biogeographical transition zone between tropical and temperate environments, and as such contains a large number of plant and animal species of high conservation significance.

1.17 There are at least 38 resident species that are on the endangered list.

1.18 This includes a number of important species that are endemic to the Mary river catchment - the Mary River Cod *Macullochella peelii mariensis*, and the Mary River Turtle *Elusor macrurus*.

1.19 It also includes other threatened species that have restricted geographical ranges - including the Australian Lungfish *Neoceratodus foresti* (which is limited to the Mary and Burnett Rivers and is listed as nationally threatened under EPBC), the Grey headed Flying Fox (which is listed as vulnerable under EPBC), the Giant Barred frog and the spotted-tail Quoll (listed as endangered under EPBC).

1.20 It also includes a number of significant and threatened migratory species.

1.21 The area likely to be impacted by the Traveston dam also includes the great Sandy Strait wetland and the Fraser Island world heritage area.

1.22 Aquatic weeds pose a significant threat to the region, and damming the river, reducing river flows and increasing the surface area of still water behind the dam wall will greatly exacerbate the threat posed by aquatic weed species – including water hyacinth, *Salvinia molasta*, *Egeria densa* and *Cabomba caroliniana*.

1.23 In addition, The Australian Greens are concerned that the Queensland Government relied heavily in its discussion of its ability to mitigate the impacts of the proposed dam on reference to its assessment of the impacts of the Paradise dam. We believe that this is of major concern, particularly because there has been no audit conducted of the environmental conditions and the dam has not been functioning properly since it was built because it has remained largely empty. We are particularly concerned by its impacts on the Australian Lungfish, as there is compelling evidence that the fish lift is not properly functioning and is unlikely to mitigate the severe impacts of the dam on the breeding sites of the lungfish.

1.24 As a broad and shallow dam on a highly permeable alluvial floodplain it is likely to be subject to unacceptably high levels of water loss due to evaporation and seepage.

1.25 There are a number of other existing environmental concerns with the Mary river which will be greatly exacerbated by the dam.

- the river is over-allocated already;
- the water resource plan is flawed; and
- the river's water quality for dissolved oxygen and salinity is outside the Queensland guidelines for Water Quality for a large proportion of the time already.

1.26 In conclusion, The Australian Greens believe that proposed Traveston Dam will have unacceptable environmental impacts and recommend that the proposal be abandoned.

### **Northern NSW Rivers**

1.27 The Australian Greens are also very concerned about the prospects for the Federal Government's intervention in Northern NSW to attempt to secure water supplies in the south east Queensland as raised by the release of the Snowy Mountains

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Engineering Corporation report '*Integrated Water Supply Options for North East New South Wales and South East Queensland*'.

The report has a number of serious flaws including:

- The impacts of climate change were not considered;
- The impacts of reduced rainfall on yield estimates and environmental flows were not considered;
- Current allocations in the various catchments were not considered;
- Impact on catchment and other land uses were not considered;
- Costs of water will be substantially higher due to reduced yield and nature of supply;
- Impact on national parks will be unacceptable;
- Environmental impact is unacceptable; and
- There was no community consultation.

1.28 The Greens reject the use of rivers in northern New South Wales as a possible water supply option for south east Queensland.

### **Recommendation 1**

**1.29 The Traveston Dam should not go ahead.**

### **Recommendation 2**

**1.30 The Queensland Government should pursue alternative water supplies such as demand and supply management, rainwater tanks and recycling.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**1.31 The Queensland Government needs to ensure that population growth in the south east region of Queensland is sustainable. It should not be granting planning and development approvals unless proponents can demonstrate the necessary water is available and that planning processes address sustainable water supplies.**

**Rachel Siewert  
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