

The Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

INQUIRY INTO ADDITIONAL WATER SUPPLIES FOR SOUTH EAST Queensland – Traveston Crossing Dam

Submission in two parts:

1. Endangered species – Spotted Tail Quoll.
2. Government failure to respect Indigenous culture and lack of proper process for local residents of Mary Valley.
None of this information has been released to the public.

1. Endangered Species

In 1997 a proposed tip or mega dump was proposed for the Maroochy Shire. Residents of Belli formed a committee (BRAG – Belli Residents Action Group) to fight the dump. I was elected chairman and asked to carry out certain undertakings. One of these undertakings was to ask the Sunshine Coast Environment Council to undertake a field investigation for the proposed site. This site is in Stage 2 of the proposed Traveston Dam. A report was prepared by project officer Peter Sykes as per attachment. In this report, paragraph 5 talks about a major corridor to the north west of Gheerulla State Forest in the south where there have been confirmed recent sightings of the Spotted Tail Quoll. The Spotted Tail Quoll is an endangered species and anecdotal evidence suggests that they are in the Mary Valley area.

We ask the Federal Minister for the Environment to conduct a scientific survey to establish the number of Spotted Tail Quolls. The statement of corridors between Mothar Mountain and Gheerulla in the report and recent sightings raise the probability of Quolls using this corridor.

2. Indigenous

Whilst undertaking this report it was revealed by the owners that artefacts had been found on the site. I then consulted a senior Indigenous woman on the Sunshine Coast who referred me to a person in the State Government (KM). At an inspection with KM and Peter Sykes, KM stated that he had been shown the artefacts and given an explanation of the bora ring. He decided that it would be important to involve local traditional owners to get an indication of any heritage value. A senior elder of the Gubi Gubi Nation accompanied by KM and all generations of the owners of the property, an act of reconciliation took place whereupon it was agreed between the elders of the Gubi Gubi Nation and the extended family of the owners that

1. Artefacts were to remain on site.
2. The owners would look sympathetically at any request for use of the land in customs.

Since the Traveston Dam was announced I have been in touch with the Premier and State Government Departments to remind them that they have known for 10 years that a sacred site exists in the Mary Valley but there was no consultation prior to the Traveston Dam announcement and the reassurances that I have been given over recent years I now feel were lies. The Government is not sincere in its attempt to have full disclosure of all relevant community consultations.

Deputy Premier Anna Bligh has said that she hopes the Federal Government does not use the Environment Act to hold up the process. This coercion should not be allowed to circumvent either heritage or environmental concerns that people have raised. If the government was sincere to get the community consultations it would not have bought properties for the Traveston Dam before properly finishing the consultation.

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Report on Field Investigation (10 April 1997)
Proposed Maroochy Shire "Super-Dump" - Belli Creek
by Peter Sykes

Introduction/Background

Maroochy Shire is currently seeking to identify a site on which to establish a "super-dump" in response to anticipated waste disposal demand within the shire. Two potential sites are reportedly under consideration - one located in an area of State Forest west of Yandina in the Maroochy River catchment and the other on Belli Creek in the north-west corner of the shire (grid ref. MR807683) in the Mary River catchment. Resident groups have emerged in both areas in opposition to the proposed dump sites.

Field Investigation Findings

Members of the Belli Residents Action Group (BRAG) have requested SCEC assistance. A field investigation including a relevant literature search was conducted on 10 April 1997.

A 122ha site has been proposed for Belli, with the total area to be acquired by resumption if the dump goes ahead. One of the properties in question contains an operational gravel quarry. The area has yellow podzolic gravel soil structures and is classified Class D agricultural land, with steep slopes and strongly undulating ridges. Large areas of mixed wet and dry sclerophyll forest (mainly eucalypt) cover most of the site. It is bordered by both Cooloola and Noosa shires and is directly south-east (less than 2K) of the major Mt. Borumba-Noosa Shire-Wolvi wildlife corridor.

According to BRAG, to date only three pages of relevant official documentation has been obtained from Maroochy Shire. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the site has been identified as potentially appropriate because of its location on a "clay-pan", hypothetically reducing the potential for adverse environmental impacts on the Mary River catchment resulting from leeching from the dump site. Belli and Magpie Creeks border the site and are within its catchment area. Both creeks are in the Mary River catchment upstream of the junction of Yabba Creek and the river. Borumba Dam, the water source for Gympie and supplementary source for Noosa Shire, is on Yabba Creek. Maroochy Shire reportedly engaged a consultant to do a feasibility study, but this has not surfaced publicly.

Both koalas and platypus are reported to exist on the site. Cooloola Shire's conservation strategy recognises that, "Platypus are a useful indicator of ecological health in that both localised changes and alteration to catchments far upstream may harm the species (V2, 1996 p46)." There is a forested minor link corridor traversing the proposed site that connects the major corridor to the near north-west and the Gheerulla State Forest in the south.

Queensland's only confirmed recent sightings of *eastern quolls* have been in Gheerulla and in the State Forest at Mothar Mountain, which are connected by a combination of the existing minor and major corridors.

At least three naturally occurring waterholes and a spring exist on the site. Two of these that are within 50 metres of each other reportedly display widely divergent characteristics - one being fed by underground springs, perennial and/or watertable reliant (a "window" waterhole); the other "perched" waterhole wholly reliant on storm-water run-off and non-perennial. There was evidence the waterholes have probable indigenous cultural significance.

Conclusions

It appears that the planning process adopted by Maroochy Shire has not included adequate consultation with local communities. In addition, it is probable that the relevant requirements of the Environmental Protection Act have not been given due consideration - particularly in respect to sections concerning the dumping of waste that constitutes an environmental hazard and the relevant licence requirements. There appears to be no valid reason to withhold the reported feasibility study from the public and it should also be determined whether or not its terms of reference have gained DoE approval.

The ecological value of the proposed site should be adequately assessed. These studies should focus on assessing the ecological value of riparian linkages (esp. Belli Creek) and regional ecological corridors.

Long-term base-line studies are needed to determine the extent and restrictive capacity of the site's clay-pan. The co-existence of the perennial and non-perennial waterholes, and underground waterways is a clear indicator of probable fragmentation of the clay-pan. Such studies should be conducted when heavy rainfall follows a period of prolonged drought.