

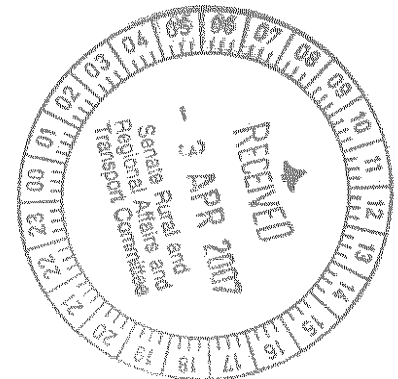
Tiaro Shire Council

The Mary River Shire

Our Ref: AB:sr DW No.: 226932
Contact: Chief Executive Officer

3rd April 2007

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



Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Inquiry into Additional Water Supplies for South East Queensland - Traveston Crossing Dam Information

The purpose of this submission is to provide information for the Senate Inquiry and more so to specifically request that an opportunity be made available for a local government representative from the local governments downstream of the proposed Traveston Dam to present to the Senate Inquiry.

Tiaro Shire (or the Mary River Shire) is located downstream of the proposed dam and the Council has, since the announcement of the Dam requested to be involved in the process. There is approximately 70km of the Mary River running through the Shire and the river is an integral component of the Shire. The river provides water for the town water supply, water for irrigation on many of the rural properties throughout the Shire, and also provides for recreational use. The proposal for the Traveston Dam will have potentially catastrophic outcomes, not only for all downstream shires and the communities that they support, but also for the natural environment which is supported by the Mary River.

Environmental Concerns

At least 18 endangered or threatened species of animals whose very existence will be at severe risk – from the Mary River Turtle, Mary River Cod and the lungfish in the freshwater areas, right out to the dugongs in the Great Sandy Strait and the migratory birds which feed on the Ramsar listed sandflats and wetlands in the strait and even the humpback whales which pay us a visit every year.

Some of these animals have been around for up to 400 million years. The important reason is that they make up the biodiversity of our region and maintain the ecosystems of which we are all part. They are for example major indicators of and contributors to water quality. Changes in water quality for whatever reason will have significant effects on their populations.

Maryborough has just spent a significant amount of money on the riverside precinct. Unfortunately, the river view is already largely obscured by mangroves because of the lack of fresh water coming down the river after the construction of the Mary River barrage. That situation will only get worse.

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The attenuation of the tides caused by the Mary River barrage has already been the cause of some major river bank slumping around Maryborough. That will only get worse.

Maryborough Council is working on a major marine precinct worth many millions of dollars in benefits, just downstream of the city. The river is already badly silted since Maryborough was a major ship building port and certainly since the barrage was built preventing all but the medium and major flood flows with their flushing effects. That situation can only get worse.

Economic

Tiaro and Woocoo, as mainly rural shires rely heavily on irrigated crop production. If the river is not allowed to flow, crop production will be drastically affected to the extent of making some properties economically unviable. Apparently, SunWater have assured some groups of irrigators that their water allocations will be fully maintained. Their allocations may well be maintained, but that does not mean that they will be able to use those allocations. If the river could be dry for up to 80 % of the time, then irrigated cropping will be just a memory. Tiaro Shire is already fully drought declared and has been for some time, ie the majority of the agricultural production area in the Mary catchment is now drought declared and relying on water from the Mary River for sustenance. Further cuts in available water will be disastrous. Livestock producers relying solely on the river to provide drinking water for their stock - if there is no reliable supply, then they also will be forced out of business.

The water resource plan for the Mary allowed for a 150000 ml strategic reserve for the Mary catchment. Sunwater themselves are fully aware that low or no flows in the Mary are their achilles heel as far as irrigation water is concerned. If the dam is built, they cannot guarantee anything.

Maryborough sugar factory has always said that it needs 1 million tonnes of cane to remain viable. Lack of irrigated cane and the associated downturn in production will make that figure a pipe dream and surely compromise the future of the mill.

The lack of fresh water flows will be felt in the estuary with few of the normal flushes and minor floods to trigger the spawning activities of estuarine recreational and commercial fish species, with major effect on the tourism based and commercial fishing industries in Hervey Bay.

Social

Given the probable economic downturns just mentioned, the social effects on unemployment will be catastrophic. Remember that the government has given away our strategic reserve of water which was necessary to cater for both urban and agricultural expansion. The ability for further expansion of any of the existing towns along the Mary River, along with the potential for growth of new areas would also be severely reduced.

Already, the water supplies for both Maryborough and Tiaro are hanging on a knife edge. Until the recent rain, Tiaro town had only 3 weeks water supply remaining. Maryborough relies heavily on Teddington Weir top ups from the Mary to maintain its supply. No water in the Mary, no top ups.

The whole social, economic and environmental fabric in the downstream reaches of the Mary absolutely depend on a reliable and quality water supply from our Mary River.

We are already in the middle of the worst drought on record in this country, and we know how fragile our water supply is. To further expand on this the State Government has just

advised that the Cooloola Shire (proposed location for the Traveston Dam) is now drought declared. The following is the media release.

"COOLOOLA SHIRE DROUGHT DECLARED

Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries Tim Mulherin has approved the drought declaration of Cooloola Shire under state drought processes following recommendations from the Local Drought Committee.

The declaration is effective from March 12, 2007. Mr Mulherin said over the past year the Cooloola area had recorded well below average rainfall with some patchy storm rain providing short-term relief to only a handful of properties. "Most creeks in the area have had little flow along with pasture quality being very low," Mr Mulherin said.

The latest declaration brings the area of Queensland officially drought declared by the State Government to 74 shires and 3 part shires which is equivalent to 63.4% of the land area of the State. There are also 85 Individually Droughted Properties in a further 10 shires.

Under shire and IDP declarations, primary producers are eligible to apply for assistance through the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS).

DRAS provides freight subsidies on the transport of fodder and water during times of drought, and restocking and returning from agistment in the recovery period."

Given that the Cooloola Shire is now drought declared, surely this is an indication that the already fragile environment of the Mary River catchment is not a suitable location for any new Dam.

As said at the outset of this letter, the purpose is to provide a submission to the inquiry and to request an opportunity for a local government representative from the downstream area of the Mary River to present to the inquiry. Council has also reviewed the submissions being provided by other downstream local governments and further supports the issues raised in them.

Should you have any questions in relation to this submission please feel free to contact me.

Yours faithfully



A G Brien

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER