

Committee Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

2nd April 2007

I would like to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Water Supply Options for South East Queensland, with specific reference to the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

My wife and I, with our 7 children, moved to a small acreage 10kms south of Imbil in August 2004. I commute through the Mary Valley each day to work in Gympie, where I am employed as a Veterinarian, with primary expertise in horses and cattle.

There are several areas which I am concerned about regarding this proposed dam.

Firstly, it is my belief that the Premier of Queensland, in announcing to proceed with the proposal on July 5th 2006 at a public meeting in Gympie, acted in a negligent and reckless manner in committing the State of Queensland to a multi-billion dollar infrastructure project, and was primarily motivated by a political outcome. I believe that the drilling at the original dam wall site showed it to be a dangerous location to build a dam wall, and proceeding would have put many lives at risk.

It was the understanding of the community, based on communication from the DNR project manager, Scott Smith, and other Government representatives, that result of drilling at the site of the proposed dam wall would dictate whether the proposal would continue or not. The Premier, however, stated in the media, during the weeks after the initial announcement on April 27th, 2006, and prior to July 5th, that the dam was “a foregone conclusion”, “a done deal”, and, quite astoundingly, but clearly reflecting his desperation to convey to the people of SEQ his determination to appear to be solving a crisis: “feasible or not, we will build this dam”. Also, prior to announcing the go ahead in July, the Government started running TV adds stating that the dam would be built, even though the official word from the Premier's office was that no decision had been made yet.

During the primary drilling process at the original proposed dam wall site, I was in contact on several occasions with a member of the drilling crew. Unfortunately, this person has specifically requested his name be withheld due to his reliance on State Government contracts for income. He did however convey to me that, on several occasions during the process, the Sunwater Geologist on site, Greg Dryden, had described the drilling results as very poor, with widespread evidence of unstable and poor foundations, and several underground waterways. This person stated that Mr Dryden was at a loss to explain the geology of the area. He also stated that, at one stage in late June, 2006, the mood of the whole drilling crew changed when a poor result was obtained at one of the abutments. Greg Dryden was quoted as saying “lets put this baby to bed for once and for all”, ie that in his opinion, the selected location was totally inappropriate, and geologically unsuitable. This person was also surprised at the haste with which the crew were forced to work, with normal procedures for drill site selection being replaced but “short cuts” which he found unusual for such a project.

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Drill core logs and a preliminary geologists report has been posted on the DNR website. There has, however, never been a detailed geologists report of these results made available to the public, despite repeated requests directly to Infrastructure Minister and Deputy Premier, who assured us that this information was available on the website. A recent contact with Greg Dryden made by David Ross has established that *no detailed geologists report* was ever made of this initial site.

On what basis, therefore, did the Premier commit \$2 billion plus of Queensland taxpayers money to this project? Why has a new site for a dam wall been sought and selected so soon after this announcement, if the original location was good enough for the Premier to commit to a multibillion dollar project?

My next issue is regarding the behaviour of QWI staff in treating members of the community. On November 3rd, 2007, Deputy Premier and Infrastructure Minister, Anna Bligh, addressed a public meeting in Gympie. In a press release on October 31st she stated: "To give landholders certainty land required for both dams and all stages of Traveston Crossing will be acquired now."

Prior to this, the rhetoric regarding voluntary acquisition of land stated that "the Government will stand in the market and offer to acquire properties from land holders willing to sell."

Ms Bligh's Oct 31st press release appeared to be stating that compulsory acquisition was to occur, however she was forced to admit during the meeting that no compulsory acquisition could occur until the Federal Government had approved the proposal.

In the weeks leading up to this meeting, QWIPL representatives were putting unnecessary pressure on landholders adjacent to the new dam wall site. One such landholder, Chris Petitt, was told that he had 4 months to make up his mind, (on whether to sell voluntarily or not) or the property would be compulsorily acquired.

Another neighbour, who has requested anonymity due to risk of losing Government contracts if identified, had an altercation with Mr Graeme Newton, CEO of QWIPL, in the presence of Scott Smith, also of QWIPL.

The landholders in question had already had an unfortunate experience with security guards whilst drill rigs were in their yard, drilling not far from their kitchen window, where they experienced intimidation of themselves and their children. They had also experienced extreme stress associated with the pressure, causing a need for counseling and anti depressant treatment, and a psychologist assessment of their 5yo son (due to his paranoia and change in behaviour).

On the afternoon in question, they had finally decided that they couldn't hold out any longer and notified QWIPL of their intention to negotiate.

Both Graeme Newton and Scott Smith attended soon after. During the course of the negotiations, a dispute over the value of a portion of the property occurred, and in a heated and intimidatory fashion, Graeme Newton said: "*If you make it hard for me, I will make it hard for you. I will compulsorily acquire your land, and you'll only get what the Crown thinks it's worth*"

According to the property owner, Scott Smith looked visibly shocked at his CEO's comments, given that he would have been used to acting within the boundaries of the Public Servants Act. In light of the Deputy Premier's press release, was the threat of compulsory acquisition a premeditated act of intimidation to bully members of the community to sell out, giving total control of the proposed dam wall site to QWIPL?

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Another issue I believe needs investigating is the cost of collateral infrastructure, such as relocation of roads, electricity lines, and telecommunications.

For instance what appears simply as a red line on the map, showing the relocation of the Mary Valley Road near Kandanga, will have a 500m (half kilometre) bridge built over a flood prone Kandanga Creek. There has been no drilling at this site to show that such a bridge is feasible. Surely a 500m bridge would be considered a major infrastructure project on it's own, yet it is merely a line on a map at this stage.

There is also hundreds of millions of dollars in electricity infrastructure in the valley, but the cost of relocating this appears to not be available to the public.

Anna Bligh has recently stated that if the Traveston Crossing Dam was built 3 years ago, it would now be nearly full. This may be right, if Borumba dam was emptied into it, no water was taken out of it, and no water was allowed to flow downstream. Even then, the high rate of evaporation and seepage would have seen it half empty. I don't know how she thinks she can get away with selling this sort of misinformation. However, it highlights how wrong this Government has been. Using their own flow modelling, it has been proven that this is totally false, and that suggesting a dam at Traveston crossing built 3 years ago would be full when most of the dams in SEQ are nearly empty is total fantasy.

When the Mary Basin Draft Water Resource Plan was initially investigated, a community reference panel was appointed and invited to contribute input into its formulation.

One of the primary concepts that was agreed upon was that, in the event of some storage facility, there *will* always be *minimal environmental flows maintained downstream*.

Although an attempt was made to change the word minimal for "optimal", the concept of minimal environmental flow for the maintenance of health downstream was considered a pivotal concept in plan formulation.

However, after the dam announcement in April, the draft WRP went to Cabinet for final amendments before setting in legislation, and the word "will" was changed to "may", so that it reads "there *may* be minimal environmental flows maintained downstream".

Why was this wording changed. It basically allows the dam operator to reduce flow to zero, and this would spell the death of the river downstream.

Thank you giving the community an opportunity to raise the awareness of the wider community the truth behind this totally flawed proposal.

Sincerely

Dr. Steve Dennis BVSc(Hons) MACVSc  
3rd April 2007