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4 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**

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this letter is to provide information for the Senate Inquiry regarding the examination of all reasonable options, including increased dam capacity, for additional water supplies for South East Queensland.

Although it is acknowledge that the Senate Inquiry is aimed primarily on issues concerning the Traveston Crossing Dam, this submission deals specifically with basic issues concerning the proposed **Wyaralong Dam** in the wider context of the examination of all reasonable options for additional water supplies for South East Queensland and is presented entirely from our personal perspective as landowners whose property will be severely affected should this proposed dam ever be built.

In addressing points in the section **About the Inquiry - Part (a) the merits of all options**, I make the comment that no options have ever been presented by the Queensland Government for study or discussion regarding their hasty decision to build a dam on Teviot Brook at Wyaralong nor have any explanations ever been given as to how this decision was made or the process implemented, despite repeated requests for this information to be made available.

The possibility of a dam being built at Wyaralong was first raised in 1990 after the disastrous decision by the Goss Labor Government (purely for political advantage as an election issue) to scrap the considerably well advanced plans to build the Wolfdene Dam. At the time, the announcement caused enormous anxiety and heartache in the small Wyaralong community but the assurance that the dam would not be needed before 2060, if at all, did somewhat allay our fears as obviously it would not immediately impact on too many of those concerned as it was 70 years in the future.

At that time a community action group T.R.A.D. (Teviot Residents Against the Dam) was formed and with strong support against the dam from the National Party's Member for Beaudesert Mr. Kevin Lingard and the Boonah Shire Council under Chairman John Brent, the Government's decision was challenged and everything possible was done to present feasible alternatives to this project as, even then, it was

obvious that Wyaralong (or Braford Hills or The Yards as it was then known) was a sub-standard site for a dam.

A comprehensive submission was sent to the Government with details of viable alternatives such as mandatory installation of household rainwater tanks, de-salination, recycling, harvesting of stormwater, etc. but all were dismissed as being too expensive or, in the case of rainwater tanks, a health risk.

Many of the alternatives suggested then are the same ones that the Queensland Government is now implementing as necessary and desirable but not one is being presented as an alternative to the actual Wyaralong Dam project even though **acknowledgement has been made that the dam would not produce the yield originally calculated and that it is not a “stand alone” project and would work only in conjunction with the Bromelton Offstream Storage and Cedar Grove Weir on the Logan River.** There is no provision in the Government’s infrastructure for a pipeline connection from Wyaralong Dam to the “water grid” and outflow from the dam would be entirely reliant on water being released downstream in Teviot Brook.

Another feasible option which does not appear to be receiving any further consideration is the possibility of the construction of the dam on the Albert River at Glendower for which almost 100 per cent of the required land has already been acquired by the Government. This dam was proposed originally, along with Wyaralong, as another substitute for the Goss Government’s scrapped Wolfdene Dam and was to have been completed before a dam at Wyaralong. A dam on the Albert River would spare the Logan River from further degradation, particularly in its estuary, which is a cause of serious environmental concern in its effects on Moreton Bay and Southern Moreton Bay in particular.

The raising of the Maroon Dam on Burnett Creek is another option and one which would cause very little further environmental damage and no detrimental social impact whatsoever. This dam has never been allowed to reach its Full Supply Level.

**To sum up the issues raised under section (a) it is obvious that there are many viable options and alternatives to building an expensive (\$500,000,000) shallow (average depth less than 5 metres) dam at Wyaralong which when full would lose more than 21,000ML or 1.7 metres per year in evaporation. However, the Government appears to be on a single-minded mission in delivering expensive infrastructure with scant regard to the apparent lack of logic in the hastily arrived at, politically driven decision having been made to build a dam which would lose more to evaporation than the Government’s own (dubious) figures of 18,000ML suggest that it could yield.**

The yields which could be produced by an enlarged offstream storage facility at Bromelton near Beaudesert and additional offstream storages on the Logan, Albert and Coomera Rivers could negate the necessity for a dam at all. Analysis of updated data shows that the Wyaralong Dam would not be viable and that had it already been built would be close to, if not empty, today. (Moogerah Dam and Maroon Dam which

are both also situated in Boonah Shire are at present holding 4.03% and 18.47% total storage respectively) There has been no flow in Teviot Brook for a considerable time.

**Comments on Part (b) the examination of the social, environmental, economic and engineering impacts of the various proposals – but in particular with regard to the effects of the proposed Wyaralong Dam on Wyaralong residents and affected landowners:**

Right from the time of the initial announcement in 1990 of the possibility of a dam on Teviot Brook, lack of information and a total absence of any actual studies into the project were of major concern to all those who could be affected. The uncertainty of never really knowing the status of the projected time-line for the proposal created an atmosphere of extreme anxiety and distress and the ever constant possibility or probability of losing long-held family properties was emotionally and psychologically draining.

This situation has been seriously affecting landowners continuously since then and with the possible date for construction wavering between the years 2060, 2026 and 2015 at various stages, inability to plan for the future has been a real and ongoing problem. However, by the time of the Premier's shock announcement in 2006 it had seemed possible that the Wyaralong dam proposal may have been replaced by the Government's apparent preference for building the proposed dam at Tilley's Bridge, Rathdowney instead.

For many weeks in the lead up period before the 4 July 2006 announcement, Wyaralong seemed to have disappeared from the equation. Very little mention was made of it in the print and electronic media. The Premier was bombarded with loud vocal dissension and obvious anger by the people of Rathdowney with whom he had meetings on more than one occasion. Politicians of all persuasions including Government Ministers, Local Government and Council representatives, the Leader of the Opposition and even Federal Senator Bob Brown flocked to speak at the regular 'No Dam at Rathdowney' meetings and it seemed that many of the people of Rathdowney had all but accepted that the dam would go ahead there.

**A report produced by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water in May 2006 states under the heading "Questions and Answers – Tilley's Bridge water infrastructure – ...The Tilley's Bridge site has been selected because of its potential to provide significant quantities of water to meet the needs of the growing population of south east Queensland. Preliminary studies indicate that the storage could hold as much as 230,000 megalitres, boosting available supplies for the growing communities living and working in the Beaudesert, Logan and Gold Coast areas.....".**

**Further in the report under the heading "Does this mean the proposed Wyaralong Dam will not be built?" it states "As part of this process the Government is re-examining the existing proposal for the Wyaralong Dam site compared with the Tilley's Bridge site. A detailed investigation, including geotechnical works will be carried out to determine which site will deliver the best overall results. If Tilley's Bridge proves to be the better site, Wyaralong Dam will not be built."**

Under the heading **“Why has this site been selected?”** the report states **“.....The Tilley’s Bridge site has been accepted for further assessment based on its capacity to deliver very large quantities of reliable water, compared with other potential sites in the area. This is the basis upon which the Government has chosen this site for further detailed geotechnical investigation against the alternatives of Wyaralong and Glendower Dams.....”**

Subsequently, test drilling was carried out at Tilley’s Bridge with favourable results.

On the day the Premier was to announce his choice between Tilley’s Bridge and Wyaralong, a deputation of Rathdowney representatives was invited to be present for the announcement. Curiously no invitations were extended to anyone connected with the Wyaralong Dam to be present but a small group of four, myself included, were literally summonsed in off the street to be told by the Premier, after the announcement had been made to the Rathdowney group and they had departed, “that we have decided to build the dam at Wyaralong”. Our very elderly relatives all residents and landowners at Wyaralong were devastated to hear the announcement reported on ABC Radio before we had the chance to phone them to break it to them ourselves.

Our shock and disbelief was extreme and it seemed at that moment that the nightmare we had been living for over sixteen years had suddenly become a reality. The numbing shock of that day will live in our memories and haunt us forever. **We were aware that none of the investigations on which Mr. Beattie ostensibly claimed to have based his decision had been carried out and the “extensive seismic testing” he quoted was actually three test holes hurriedly drilled in the Teviot Creek bank on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday immediately preceding the 10 o’clock Tuesday morning announcement in Beaudesert.**

(If the Premier’s partial explanation of his decision to choose Wyaralong over Tilley’s Bridge really was based on the fact that the people of Rathdowney ‘had put up a very good argument’ and that ‘he listened to the people’, why then has he not given the same consideration to the people of the Mary Valley in their fight against the Traveston Crossing Dam?)

The ramifications of that decision have taken a terrible toll on the lives and minds of affected landowners many of whom are members of one family, owners of the various properties which are still or once were parts of the original “Wyaralong Station”, one of the oldest and most historically significant properties in the district which has given the locality and the dam its name. “Wyaralong” was originally an outstation of the vast “Dugandan Station,” situated near the present day town of Boonah, which was first settled by the McDonald family in the mid 1850’s.

Although it now appears that the old “Wyaralong” homestead will be spared from inundation, if the dam is built “Wyaralong” as a successful grazing property will be totally destroyed and along with it our family heritage, the livelihoods of several family members and the hopes and aspirations of many others. Our family’s connections with this property span over one hundred years of continuous occupation at “Wyaralong” and with four living generations still bound to it by the strong physical and emotional connection we all share.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

The **Government's decision to build the dam at Wyaralong was flawed**, based on incomplete studies and misinformation eg. The last four years of extreme drought were not factored into the computer modelling when calculating prudent yields and other vital statistics.

**It would be a very expensive waste of money.** Updated costing estimates are not being made available and final costs will not be released until after the project is completed.

The relocation of the main Beaudesert-Boonah Road has not yet been finalised and is still shown on the maps as a proposed road corridor in some instances approximately 250- 400 metres wide and marked "indicative only" which makes it impossible to accurately assess how much land would be affected by the road on individual properties. In some instances work on the road relocation would create more land loss and environmental and property damage than inundation from the dam itself.

**There has been a complete lack of transparency in the Government's decision making process** and information which would clarify the situation, although having been requested on numerous occasions, has never been supplied. It has been impossible to find out details of the suitability factors which were used to determine the choice between the two sites Tilley's Bridge on the Logan River and Wyaralong on Teviot Brook as the preferred site for a dam.

The 'comprehensive' testing which the Premier claimed had done and on which the decision to build the dam at Wyaralong was purportedly based had not been done by 4 July 2006, the date of the announcement in Beaudesert. In fact much of this testing did not commence until late in 2006 and is currently still being carried out.

The Government has not and is not looking for or at any possible alternatives to the Wyaralong Dam despite Deputy Premier Ms Anna Bligh's commitment that she would undertake to do so. Suggestions for alternative schemes have been presented to her. The standard statement is "the Government is committed to building this dam".

The dam would not yield the amount that the Government and the Queensland Water Infrastructure Co. Pty. Ltd are claiming that it would and it can only operate in conjunction with the Cedar Grove Weir and the Bromelton Offstream Storage facility despite the fact that it was claimed to be a stand alone project in the Government's EIS submission.

**There is no pipeline connecting Wyaralong Dam to Cedar Grove Weir or to any other part of the South East Queensland 'water grid' so it is misleading that the Government claims it to be part of this system.** Out -flow from the dam would rely entirely on water being released downstream in Teviot Brook to Cedar Grove Weir and with no means of water getting into the dam other than from substantial rainfall in the catchment area or from flood flows from upstream in Teviot Brook.

Although Wyaralong is obviously a much smaller project than the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam the **social impacts on those affected are no less traumatic than those experienced by members of a larger community but most of the time Wyaralong is the forgotten dam in this regard.** It is frequently overlooked or referred to simply as ‘the other dam’ and the public awareness of the very real problems encountered there are seemingly diminished by virtue of the fact that only a relatively small number of people and properties would be directly affected.

**Teviot Brook is an unreliable water source** due not only to the prolonged drought conditions but because of the amount of water taken out by irrigators upstream. The creek that flowed freely in years past now rarely flows at all and documented salinity levels are high.

The predictions of the effects of climate change are acknowledged and **the probability of continuing altered rainfall patterns in the Teviot Brook catchment area is real and recognised.** The fact that there are already two near empty dams, Moogerah and Maroon, in the close vicinity of the proposed Wyaralong Dam site should be warning enough of the problems which would be encountered.

**Evaporation rates would be very high** as the temperatures experienced in this area are generally several degrees hotter than Ipswich with not uncommon Summer temperatures soaring above 40 degrees.

In such a shallow dam, (more than 40 per cent less than 2 metres deep and more than 20 per cent less than 1 metre) **water quality would be severely compromised and vegetation break down would be a major cause of contamination and emission of green house gasses.** (On parts of our property, the depth of the water at Full Supply Level would be just 0.6m).

#### **General observations:**

This submission is of necessity somewhat narrow in its scope as I do not possess the scientific expertise to extrapolate and present high quality scientific data but I write from the perspective of a landowner who is emotionally and physically connected to our property and to much of the area which the proposed Wyaralong Dam would occupy. I have enjoyed since childhood the creek and the surrounding areas of our property which was originally one of the three dairy farms which occupied parts of “Wyaralong” which my grandfather Colin Philp, son of Queensland Premier Sir Robert Philp, had bought in 1906 . (Ref. “History of Queensland: Its People and Industries”, Vol. 1, P. 314 Published 1919)

I have observed the changes in the creek’s flow due to reduced rainfall and increased upstream irrigation and the degradation of the bed and banks of Teviot Brook and Oaky Creek through the build up and erosion of sandy deposits and the infestation of noxious weeds and aquatic pests such as water hyacinth and carp.

Long term landowners of the area agree that it appears that Teviot Brook would not produce a sufficient supply of water to sustain the proposed Wyaralong Dam. Many highly qualified experts have also expressed this view after conducting their own

research using updated data and the detailed analysis and application of all the relevant scientific facts and findings.

**There are feasible alternatives to this dam worthy of further investigation and study. Several suggestions have been forwarded to Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure Ms Anna Bligh. It is to be hoped that she will seriously consider them.**

The proposed Wyaralong Dam offers no solution to the South East Queensland water crisis. It was decided upon in haste at a politically expedient time with a State election looming and the declaration of a “Water State of Emergency” being declared to allow the Premier to break a promise and facilitate his intention of holding an early election.

The Government through the Queensland Water Infrastructure Co. Pty Ltd has constantly ‘suggested’ to landowners that they consider selling their properties but at no stage have they provided the certainty that the project has reached any real finality in its planning stages. Had we sold the part of our property required for the dam last year we would now have no prospect for the future at all as in the interim period, the buffer zone area has been reduced and land which we would not have been able to retain then is now not going to be affected at all. The road corridor, however, will cause enormous dislocation of our property but at that stage the current road corridor proposal had not been decided upon.

Despite frequent claims to the contrary, only a small percentage of the land required for the proposed Wyaralong Dam has actually been acquired by the Government to date and it was recently acknowledged that much of that land would now no longer be required for the dam and that there is the possibility of it being offered back to the original owners or for sale. It is estimated that approximately only about 14% of the ponded area has actually been acquired which is far less than the 36% which the Government is claiming.

The Wyaralong Dam proposal is still a long way from being ‘signed off’ and there are many processes and procedures to be completed before any final decision can be brought down but we sincerely hope and trust that the Senate Inquiry will thoroughly investigate every aspect of the process and recognise that **the decision to build a dam at Wyaralong was largely political and was based on flawed and incomplete studies** and that governmental ‘transparency’ has been non-existent. The ‘open and accountable’ communications so often quoted by the Premier are now and always have been a total farce in regard to this project.

**In conclusion, my comments are:**

- (a) **That the Wyaralong Dam proposal illustrates a total failure of the decision making process as does that of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam. These are major projects which are linked on common grounds by the lack of consultation and by the callous and seemingly deliberately intimidating tactics employed by the Government and its representatives in times of enormous distress and grief for individuals, families and communities whose futures remain clouded by the uncertainty and the**

- overwhelming sense of frustration and loss which surrounds these proposed projects.**
- (b) That no explanation has ever been supplied despite repeated requests in that regard as to how the decision making process was applied in the decision being made to build a dam at Wyaralong.**
  - (c) There are viable alternatives to the Wyaralong Dam which must be fully investigated.**
  - (d) The social impact of the Wyaralong Dam on the long-term residents and landowners is extreme in this small community which will in essence be obliterated by this dam should construction be allowed to proceed.**
  - (e) The Government's rationale regarding the economic impact of this project is difficult to understand. The cost of half a billion dollars for so little water gained surely can not be validated.**

The construction of either the Wyaralong Dam or the Traveston Crossing Dam would be a travesty for Queensland. The Senate may be able to ascertain and illustrate this from the findings of its Inquiry into Additional Water Supplies for South East Queensland

Then it can only be hoped that for the people of South East Queensland who will ultimately be paying for these flawed schemes should they be allowed to proceed, that governmental sanity will eventually prevail and that alternative methods will be applied in the resolution of the current water crisis and for the ongoing water requirements of this rapidly developing area.

**New dams are not the solution to the problem.** Fixing leaking water pipes in Brisbane and surrounding local areas, desalination, recycling (particularly the retrieval of the hundreds of mega litres of high quality purified waste water at present being pumped daily into Moreton Bay), stormwater harvesting, household rainwater tanks and **all the other methods of creating additional water supply now being investigated by the Queensland Government should all be implemented and fully assessed before any construction is allowed to proceed on new dams at Wyaralong and Traveston Crossing.**

Yours faithfully,

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Wyaralong landowners.

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