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3 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**

Purpose

The purpose of this letter is to provide information for the Senate Inquiry regarding our major concerns about the proposed project.

Submission:

Background

We moved to the Carters Ridge area over 12 years ago, to an acreage block, for the lifestyle and environment. The area hasn't changed much although there has been some development, but the area is still a peaceful rural environment. We, like all the other valley residents are self sufficient with water collected in water tanks and small dams, and as such are frugal users of this valuable resource. Even in the current 'drought' situation, we have sufficient water for our household needs.

Although our property is a few kilometres away from the 'assumed' flood and buffer zone, we feel the proposal is ill-conceived, non-viable and was announced purely for political expediency. To attempt to build a dam to solve a water crisis because other dams are dry is akin to buying a new wallet because yours is empty!

While many of the issues below will have been raised by others, we feel we have to bring them to the Inquiries attention, as we have personal experience or knowledge of many of them.

We have no confidence in the honesty, integrity or transparency of Queensland Government processes. We feel insulted by the way the Government has treated us in attempting to 'bulldoze' this ridiculous plan through regardless of the consequences.

Issues with the methods being used by the Queensland Government

- The first we heard of the Traveston Dam proposal, was on April 27th 2006 on the Channel 7 news, with the Premier flying over the Mary Valley in a helicopter, announcing the building of a Mega Dam to solve SE Queensland's water crisis. Although shocked, because there had definitely been no previous mention of any such proposal; initially, like the Mayor Of Cooloola Shire Mick Venardos, we thought if it was feasible and would be part of a solution to the big water issue, then fine, but we assumed the proper processes would be followed for the progression of a project of this size, and at the time were not aware of the massive scale of the project or area to be inundated. When we saw the DNR&W map of the valley and area of the proposed dam, our opinion quickly changed.
- The only water infrastructure proposals that had been publicised and we were aware of prior to the announcement was a weir at Coles Crossing and raising Borumba Dam.
- If proper and fair practice had been followed, i.e. all cost benefit and analyses, site investigations, alternative sites and options, community consultation and community involvement had been followed, and the Traveston/Mary Valley proposal was shown to be the best and most cost efficient answer to the SE water problems, then maybe we wouldn't be so against it, BUT, the Premier has been acting as a Dictator, not as an elected representative of the people of Queensland, by ignoring due process.
- The Queensland Government is obviously not remotely interested in involving us in the decision making process as the 'decision' has already been made. Mr Beattie and his Deputy Anna Bligh, have and are continuing to lie to the people of Queensland with such statements a 'the Traveston Dam will go ahead' 'people power will not stop this dam', and 'this dam will go ahead whether it is feasible or not', when there are major hurdles such as the environmental impact study to be processed, which should have been completed before any decisions or announcements were made regarding the proposal. What has happened to the democratic processes??
- Numerous requests for information from local groups and individuals have been ignored, including requests for specific information at community meetings, and even though we have supplied our mailing and e-mail addresses at several meetings, we are only now beginning to receive mailed information, much of which has been addressed to the wrong area and post code. It's almost as though this has been done intentionally, surely the State Government can not be that inefficient, can it?
- The State Government appear to be slipping legislation relevant to the dam project, through under seeming unrelated Planning Acts. For example:-

Amendments to the Integrated Planning Act 1997 as introduced in State Parliament on the 14th March under **COMMUNITY AMBULANCE COVER AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

Community Ambulance Cover and Other Acts Amendment Bill

Introduced by: Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure (Ms Bligh) Date: 14 March 2007

General Outline Amendments to The Integrated Planning Act 1997 will be amended to facilitate voluntary agreement for part-takes of land by Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd (QWI) for those projects which that company is directed to undertake under either the Water Act 2000 or the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971.

- The Paradise Dam has been held up by the Government as a model of excellence for the Traveston proposal but the water resource, financial and environmental outcomes promised there have not been delivered, however the Paradise Dam has been condemned as an example of how not to plan and construct a dam, by both the World Wildlife Fund and World Commission on Dams. We do not wish to see the same mistakes repeated on a much larger scale with the Traveston Crossing proposal as the consequences are unthinkable and irreversible.
- After considerable opposition to the initial proposal, the project was Split into 2 phases in a failed attempt to reduce hostility, however, the Government has only referred Stage 1 of the proposed dam under the EPBC Act but is proposing to build the dam wall to its full height as part of Stage 1 and is in the process of acquiring all the land for both stages 1 and 2. As a result, the referral is fundamentally flawed in that the Queensland Government has only submitted Stage 1 of the proposed dam for assessment EIS, when it is clear that the proposal must be assessed in terms of its total and ultimate impact.
- Numerous reports by experts in their field have identified major adverse environmental impacts of international significance, yet the Premier insists that he intends to proceed with the project regardless, again arrogance or just plain ignorance, he seems to have forgotten that he is a Public Servant.
- Refusal to even look alternatives demonstrated to be viable by independent experts but ignored by the government. For example the building of a new dam wall at Borumba, which is an area much more suited to a dam and would affect very few people.

The Queensland Government Self-assessing the proposal with QWIPL

- Queensland Government has a clear conflict of interest of Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd (QWIPL), as it, and the Queensland State Government are effectively one and the same. Premier Beattie is the sole \$1 shareholder and the majority of the Directors are Government employees. QWIPL has been granted State Government powers to progress the proposal which in effect, is the proponent self-assessing its own project on behalf of the State and Federal Governments, so there is no independency or transparency in the process.

- QWIPL has attempted to block any negative media reports relating to the dam project, thereby limiting public awareness of all the issues involved and stifling debate.
- QWIPL is still releasing propaganda about the feasibility and economic benefits of the proposal as though it's already a "fait accompli". The basis of the information in these reports is generally biased towards the proposal, and uses manipulated data to justify its decisions. The latest 'Project Update' document is a prime example of QWIPL spin, and bears no relation to the reality of the local situation. For example there is no mention of water seepage throughout the whole area of the dam, only local to the dam wall.

Unnecessary waste and destruction

- Millions of dollars of public money is being wasted on test drilling in the area when similar work carried out over 10 years ago showed a dam wasn't viable, maybe new rock has formed?? The government has been reporting in the media that 'rock suitable for the foundations of a dam wall have been found' but we know this not to be true (the jungle telegraph is more trustworthy than the Governments media releases!) They are drilling in an alluvial flood plain, what would you expect to find but lots of sand and gravel?
- Destruction of hundreds of thousands of trees and an 80 Sq Km wasteland when the Premier is promoting the planting of trees for mitigation of carbon emissions (which many say are the cause of the drought in the first place).
- As residents of the area, we can see that most of the time the river has low flow with occasional floods (only 3 of note in the last 13 years). The proposed dam has been promoted as providing flood mitigation to Gympie, but this would only occur IF the dam had little water in it prior to a flood event, but water flows down stream would be severely impacted by the dam during the prolonged low flow periods i.e. most of the time.
- Flooding of major roads highways and local infrastructure and isolation of areas not within the Dam footprint, realignment of existing valley roads, infrastructure and services were not initially taken into account, and many landholders will find themselves 'marooned' as access to their land will be blocked. Information about the new roads needed is almost negligible; the proposed routes keep changing and would appear to be many kilometres longer than the distances mentioned, no costs or timeframes for completion of the changes to infrastructure.
- There was an almost immediate impact on local businesses and the community following the announcement and this continues to get worse due to the uncertainty of the situation. A noticeable loss of local services has already occurred.
- It is obvious that dams only work if there is sufficient rainfall and the dam retains the water collected. The majority of proposed dam site is level alluvial river flats, the dam, if built and if it filled, would be an average depth of 5m,

much of it would be less than 2m deep. This would soon leak/evaporate or be piped away, leaving a vast area with nothing but dead trees and degraded land, with serious water quality problems of high nutrient loads, low oxygen, toxic metal contamination, algae and weed infestation, greenhouse gas production and sedimentation. This dam would be the first to dry up. The degraded land exposed will be colonised with weeds: groundsel, thistles etc. Whose responsibility will it be to monitor and manage this? An example of what happens to shallow dams can be seen at the Bjelke Peterson Dam in the South Burnett.

In conclusion, the project should not proceed for the following , and many more reasons:-

1. The decision making process selecting the proposed location is seriously flawed and politically motivated.
2. The cost too high both financially and environmentally.
3. The location is totally inappropriate.
4. Environmental flows in the Mary River would be severely impacted by the proposed dam, with devastating consequences on the communities along the 200km of river downstream of the dam and out into the Fraser Island World Heritage area.
5. Significant loss and destruction of prime agricultural land which is an irreplaceable and extremely valuable resource and the displacement of 100's of households.
6. Long term impact on not only the local, but potentially Queensland's climate.
7. **BASICALLY IS A DAMN STUPID IDEA! AND WE ARE ANGRY AND FRUSTRATED AS A RESULT OF THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENTS ACTIONS.**

The Premier has become proficient at blaming everything and everyone one except for his and his Governments failure to act on the foreseeable water, and other crises. But unfortunately at the moment he is in a win win situation, if the project proceeds he'll be able to stand up there and announce 'look what I have created to save Queensland from disaster' he'll be long gone before the disastrous consequences of the scheme becomes apparent. And if the project is blocked on environmental or other grounds, he again will be able to blame something else for stopping his project.

There are many more cost effective, lower risk alternatives to the proposal, with far less social, economic and environmental impacts, but Mr Beattie has chosen to ignore them. This project must be stopped.

Thankyou for your consideration of our submission.

Robert & Rahima Farnham.