

as is signed copy of this letter has been mailed as well.

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

April 4, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I am the manager for the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group, Kandanga Information Centre. The centre was established within days of the Peter Beattie's announcement of the proposed dam at Traveston Crossing. The Centre was established to help the people in the community cope with the emotional trauma of the announcement and to provide information and education to the community as well as the tourists who visit our valley.

In the initial days of the announcement the centre found volunteer counselors willing to speak with people and help them cope with this announcement. Staffed entirely by volunteers the Centre is open from 10 am -4pm, 7 days per week. In the eleven months since the announcement over 600 people from all over Australia as well as New Zealand, the UK and the United states have signed the Guest Book in the centre offering words of support and encouragement and making donations to our efforts to deal with and stop this disaster.

The appalling lack of community consultation, the lack of information from the government, their callous attitude towards the community and their refusal to answer the simplest questions about the project made our job extremely difficult and worsened the feelings of powerlessness, uncertainty and anxiety that had gripped our community. About 3 and one half months after the dam announcement the government opened the Kandanga One Stop Shop to provide counseling services and information for the community. We were initially relieved that that there would be others helping and happy that the government was playing an active role in dealing with the problems it had created. Unfortunately, this did not turn out to be the case. The one stop shop was an ineffectual solution to what the community needed- it was poorly planned and seemed to be no more than another media opportunity for the Beatty government to show that they were dealing with the community compassionately. The creation of the Community Futures Task Force under Peter Arnison was also initially viewed as a favorable development for the community's needs but that too turned into no more than another media sound bite with a series of bungled meetings and confusing information.

Throughout this whole time period, the Information Centre run solely on donations from visitors and the community, was dealing with the emotional fall out and trying to

provide the best possible factual information. Numerous maps were issued and re-issued by the government with changing boundary lines. Information about water levels and flooding contradicted the community knowledge about the river and flooding patterns. Many people could not figure out whether their properties were even in the dam footprint. These maps were made available to the Center because community distrust of the One Stop Shop was so overwhelming that a reliable distribution could not be counted on from that location. After a few months of receiving the ever being updated maps of the dam footprint, I was advised by the government that they would no longer provide the centre copies – if we wanted them we would need to download the PDF files and copy them ourselves. We were stunned by this turn of events and found it hard to believe that a government which was spending (and wasting) millions of dollars on consulting fees, glossy newsletters and slick presentations would refuse to supply the Information Centre with information for the community. The foolishness of this decision was ultimately recognized but not before providing the community with the real insight to the government's attitude towards us. It seems as if we are just something standing in the way of their grand plans for south east Queensland.

The government “stood in the marketplace” and began acquiring lands for the project even though it still needs federal government approval to build the dam. People felt pressured and threatened by these tactics. Homes were purchased from landowners in the Carter's Ridge area and then the government determined they no longer needed these lands. What kind of planning could possibly have gone on for this project when mistakes of such enormous consequence to the community were being made every day?

I have seen so much pain and suffering in the community because of the government's callous handling of the human aspects of this proposal. The continual portrayal of the community opposition to the proposed dam by Anna Bligh as a case of NIMBY is a cruel and callous way of portraying our close knit communities and a convenient way to deny not only the huge amount of local knowledge which should be taken into account as well as the scientific evidence and data that directly contradicts the government's claims.

Thank you for having this Senate Inquiry. It is important that the people of Australia and the people in government who can stop this proposal become aware of the facts related to the dam and the cruel, callous and unnecessary treatment the people of the Mary Valley have experienced at the hands of the government.

Respectfully submitted

By Sue Smith on behalf of all the volunteers at the Kandanga Information Centre.

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