

123 Allen Road
Gympie
Qld. 4570

01.04.2007



Dear Sir/Madam,

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

The purpose of this letter is to provide information for the Senate Inquiry.

I am a citizen of the Gympie area, with a rural background. I do not live in the inundation area and do not rely directly on the Mary River for my livelihood. Like most in the region, I do feel a strong connection to the river and to my environment and I have strong beliefs in social equity and environmental sustainability. The dam is a bad idea on both counts. Communities and ecosystems from Kenilworth to Fraser Island will be affected by the impacts of inundation, reduced downstream flows, changes to RAMSAR wetland habitats and loss of vital fresh water flow into the World Heritage Great Sandy Straits. The large, shallow nature of this proposed dam subjects it to high evaporation, weed infestation and greenhouse gas emission, seriously reducing its viability for water storage.

I would like to focus my submission on three main issues:

1. The Beattie Government's lack of integrity and genuine concern for the social and environmental impacts of this decision.
2. The Beattie Government's hypocrisy in addressing issues of environmental sustainability.
3. The need to review South-East Queensland's Regional Development Plan in the light of increasing awareness of climate change and sustainability imperatives.

Lack of integrity and concern for Social and Environmental Impacts

It is apparent that the Beattie Government had a political agenda behind its decision to build this dam. The sudden and hastily-conceived decision was made just months before an election, when continuing drought, dwindling dam levels, water restrictions in the city and a continuing population increase was focusing public attention on a looming water supply crisis. The feasibility of the dam and its impacts had not been investigated but this was secondary to creating the public perception that a water solution was already under way. This was demonstrated by the Government's arrogant, undemocratic and intimidating response to the protest from local communities and was characterized by statements to the media from the Premier and his Deputy such as:

"Feasible or not the dam will be built."

"People power will not stop this dam."

"As major projects for SE Qld, they (Traverston Crossing and Wyaralong Dams) necessarily will have some impact on their localities. While this is unfortunate, the Government has an obligation to deliver water security for the people and industry of the region"

"We'll treat them fairly, we'll treat them compassionately, but we need the water."

These dismissive statements were aimed at both the valley residents (traditionally non-Labour voters) and the Brisbane voting public. They did not acknowledge the significant environmental approval process which had yet to take place and they deliberately suggested to voters with no knowledge of the valley or understanding of the impacts, that opposition was simply localized, NIMBY-type protesting that sought to deprive South-east Queensland of their water supply. Furthermore, these statements were intimidating to land-holders who were also told they would get better prices if they sold up sooner rather than later.

Since the election, the government has continued this approach, with devastating effects on the people of the inundation area, despite still not having the EPBA approvals. This perhaps reflects their confidence that they will get approval (since they have the responsibility for the EIS) and makes a mockery of the EIS process. It also means they have succeeded in acquiring many of the properties needed. Their plan to 'stage' the development was dishonestly presented to the public as lessening the social and environmental impact, as they continued to make offers for the land for both stages. It was also dishonestly used as the basis of their EPBA referral, as only Stage 1 was referred while the intention remains to build the dam wall to its full Stage 2 height as part of Stage 1 construction.

Since the announcement of the dam, and prior to the EPBA referral, the State Government adopted a new Water Resource Plan for the Mary River, which it will use as the basis for the EIS. This plan includes unacceptably low flow outcomes - much lower than the recommendations contained in the draft plan, which ensured the continued viability of threatened species and habitats. The Community Reference Group involved in formulating the plan over several years will undoubtedly be making their own detailed submission to this inquiry. This is further evidence of the lack of integrity and lack of concern for the impacts of this proposal.

Hypocrisy in addressing issues of sustainability

This project is being planned in the face of changing world opinion on the damaging environmental and social impact of large dams and their long-term performance. The Queensland Government is well aware of this. Along with special guest, Mikhail Gorbachev, Peter Beattie and other members of the government hosted and participated in the 2006 Earth Dialogues Forum, which focused on resource management and sustainable, ethical and practical development. This important event was promoted to schools and included a Youth Forum also chaired by Mr Beattie. He subsequently nominated Brisbane as the HQ for Mikhail Gorbachev's organisation, Green Cross International, and introduced Education for Sustainability and the Earth Charter into the Queensland Curriculum. As a teacher, I applaud this!

The urgent message to governments from the Earth Dialogues Conference was so relevant to the water management issue - to ensure that economic growth is driven by environmental considerations. While the Queensland government is paying lip service to 'Sustainability', it is being selective about applying it when it interferes with their obsessive vision for economic growth.

While continuing to actively promote SE Qld as a desirable destination, Mr Beattie tells us: "You can't stop people from coming to Queensland." At what point (ie how many rivers later?) *can* a Govt decide growth should be controlled? Given, it's a hard decision when the Government's own company, Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd, quotes as justification, that without the dam (estimated cost \$1.7B) the economic loss to South East Queensland will be between \$57 - \$111 Billion.

As Mr Beattie mentioned in a press statement, the values and principles of the Earth Charter are intended to serve as a code of conduct for a sustainable future. He fails to apply it to development in SEQ where the provision of resources (water, in this specific case) for growth in one region will result in damaging communities and threatening ecosystems and endangered species in another region. Economically profitable – yes, but NOT conduct for a sustainable future.

The Draft Terms of Reference submitted by the Qld Government for the EIS were inadequate and failed to include reference to important and relevant environmental directives including:

- The Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) Charter. This emphasises the need to adopt the precautionary principle where the environmental impact is not known.
- The National Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.
- The Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment (IGAE) and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. The Mary Basin catchment is a priority catchment under NAP for salinity.

This is not surprising, but once again lacks the integrity of sustainable, ethical and practical development.

The need to review the South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005 – 2026

Since the announcement of the Traveston Crossing Dam and the publication of 'Water for South East Queensland - A long term Solution', the continuing drought has focused public attention and Government strategies on more urgent, short-term water solutions that do not include the Dam. Thus, the Armageddon (and more sustainable) solution of introducing recycled water into existing dam catchments is now a plan, residential rainwater tanks and water saving practices, embraced like never before, are proving that alternatives are possible. The recently released, independent study commissioned by the Mary River Council of Mayors details cheaper, better alternatives.

The announcement last week that the Cooloola Shire is drought-declared emphasises the fact that dams are not a reliable water source. With growing awareness of the need to address climate change conditions and the global call to reduce our 'environmental footprint', building more dams remains the least secure and most environmentally harmful supply strategy for a growing population.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005 – 2026 provides for a projected population increase in SE Qld of 1.5 million over the next 20 years and it focuses on sustaining lifestyle rather than the sustainable provision of resources to support this massive growth. The Queensland Government needs to review this plan with an updated definition of 'sustainability', a plan for sustainably managing population growth and distribution and a focus on long-term strategies to ensure a sustainable future. In relation to water supply these strategies would include maximising the potential for

- harvesting rainwater where it falls – the Brisbane area has higher rainfall and better run-off than any of the dam catchments so divert storm water and enforce the installation of *large* rainwater tanks for residential use.
- conserving water as general practice – not just when restrictions become necessary,
- recycling water – nature does it all the time. More storage is not needed as more water cannot be created to fill them. Existing storages can do the job.

The people of the Mary River communities are passionate, salt-of-the-earth, food-producing, tax-paying Queenslanders – and should not be treated as some group of second rate citizens, less important than the anticipated new arrivals being planned for.

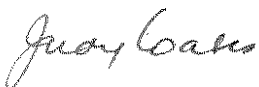
Mikhail Gorbachev says:

"We desperately need to recognise that we are the guests, not the masters, of nature and adopt a new paradigm for development based on the costs and benefits to all people, and bound by the limits of nature herself rather than the limits of technology and consumerism..."

It's as if he was talking about the Traveston Crossing Dam!

Thankyou for this opportunity to express my concerns and my extreme disappointment that the social and environmental issues of the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal are being outweighed by political ambitions and outdated ideals.

Yours sincerely,



Judy Coates.