

42 Blanch Parade  
South Grafton NSW 2460

31 May 2007

Senator Bill Heffernan  
Chairperson  
Special Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
Australian Parliament House  
Canberra ACT

Dear Sir,

**Inquiry into Water Supplies for South East Queensland**

Please find that my submission regarding the above inquiry. In particular my submission relates to any proposed diversion of the Clarence River.

I thank you for the opportunity for my submission to be considered by the Special Senate Standing Committee.

Should you require further information, I can be contacted on 66427782 (after hours) or 0423918602 or by email – [janelleb@manyrivers.com.au](mailto:janelleb@manyrivers.com.au)

Yours faithfully

Janelle Brown

My name is Janelle Brown and I am a proud descendant of the Bundjalung and Gumbaingerri people who have called the Clarence Valley home, for thousands of years. It saddens and concerns me deeply that the government is even considering the diversion of this beautiful river.

The Clarence River is more than just a river to our Goori (Aboriginal) people - it has been the lifeblood of our people – providing food and water – we depended on it to survive. It is called the Clarence River now, but our people knew it by another name – Briemba.

Many of our dreamtime stories involve the Clarence River. The Bundjalung people have a special story about how the Clarence was created – I have attached a copy of the story. It is a significant story to the Bundjalung people. Please note that the Dirrangun (witch) is in the Tooloom area – which is sacred to our people. Tooloom is one of the proposed sites for damming of the river. To us, Dirrangun created this river and it should left as she created it.

While today our people may not solely depend on the Clarence River to survive - we are still connected to this river just as much as we are connected to the land – it is a part of who we are.

While I write this submission on my own behalf and not on the behalf of the Aboriginal community, the many Aboriginal people I have spoken to about the possible diversion of the Clarence, share my feelings that it should not happen.

There are at least 6 Aboriginal communities which would be affected by the diversion of the Clarence River – Tabulam, Malabugilmah, Baryulgil, Grafton, Maclean and Yamba. **There has been no consultation with us Aboriginal people, the traditional owners of the Clarence about this issue. We need to be consulted about this issue - we need to be really listened to!!!**

I have just recently become a grandmother and I wish for my granddaughter that she will grow up to have a strong connection with the Clarence River as I do – and that the Clarence River will continue to flow uninterrupted as it has for thousands of years, during her lifetime and in the lifetime of her grandchildren and their grandchildren and so on.

Following is a story of the creation of the Clarence River

*Somewhere in the mountains near Tooloom, in those forests of tall trees, somewhere in those mountains hidden by drifting mists the old woman Dirrangun kept hidden her sacred spring. This old woman didn't want anyone to know where the water was. It was good water and she used to get it herself. But one day she was sick. There was a young man called a Buloogan. He was a very well built young man, he was handsome. She asked this Buloogan if he would go and get the water and sent him up to this secret spring. She had to direct him and tell him where it was. So the Buloogan set off into the mountains to get some of the water in a bark coolamon.*

*When the Buloogan got to the water, he found that Dirrangun had dammed the water up. The Buloogan broke the dam. The water started to run away.*

*When Dirrangun saw the water coming, she started to try and dam the water. But the water began to come faster and wider. These mountains that you see here are the dams that Dirrangun made to stop the water. But the water broke through them.*

*And at last the water came down and went into the sea, which we call in the language, Burruga. That's how this river, the Clarence, came to be here. Mount Ogilvie, is one of the dams Dirrangun made. The Gorge below Baryulgil is the place of the last dam that Dirrangun made. But the water broke through.*

*When the water got down to Yamba, Dirrangun realised that she couldn't stop it, so she cursed it and made it salt so that no one could drink it.*

*Somewhere in the mouth of the Clarence is the last stand of Dirrangun as she tried to stop the water. She threw herself in front of the water to try and stop it, but the water just rushed over her and she was turned into stone.*

Told by the late Aunty Lucy Daley, Bundjalung tribe, Baryulgil