

C.J. Shephard
PO Box 149
YAMBA NSW 2464

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The Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission to the Inquiry into Additional Water Supplies for South East
Queensland - Traveston Crossing Dam

I am a resident of Yamba, NSW and have resided in the Clarence Valley since 1976. Prior to 1976 I resided on the Northern Tablelands of NSW and other locations on the Northern Rivers of NSW.

In making this submission to the Inquiry I also make a formal complaint to it about the very late notice that was provided about the decision to extend its examination of water supplies to specifically include the Clarence River as an option to be considered. This late notice has put me at a distinct disadvantage in preparing and forwarding my submission.

Until I read an article in *The Daily Examiner* on Tuesday, May 29, 2007 about the Clarence River being included in the Inquiry and also that advertisements about the matter had previously appeared in other national and regional newspapers but not in our local area I was unaware of the Inquiry's inclusion of the Clarence River and its tributaries in its deliberations. Consequently, this submission is made with very little notice (three days) and is, by necessity, quite brief. Although it lacks length I believe the points it makes are none the less valid.

Furthermore, I respectfully inform the Inquiry that it is my belief that there still many thousands of residents of the Clarence Valley who are yet to learn about the inclusion of the Clarence River in the Inquiry's considerations. Aren't they in for a surprise!

The Inquiry's failure to provide adequate notice to all Clarence Valley residents, who are important stakeholders in this matter, will result in the Inquiry failing to receive information from many Clarence Valley residents and organisations and as a consequence its findings and recommendations will fail to reflect those views.

It is my view that the Clarence River and its many tributaries are an important ecosystem that has over time already suffered too many human-related adverse events. Consequently, it is in a degraded condition and is struggling to survive and fulfill the functions it would by way of nature perform.

The view that I hold in relation to any proposals to extract water from the Clarence River can be stated unequivocally.

Hence, I state categorically that **it is totally inappropriate to consider any further extractions of water from the Clarence River's catchment area.**

The area is a natural ecosystem - it provides a vital habitat for flora and fauna that occupy it. From its sources through to its mouth, the Clarence River is a dynamic living thing. Its diversity ranges from freshwater that enter it at its various sources through to saltwater in its estuary.

The Clarence River's survival as a vital part of a healthy, living habitat has already been threatened enough. It can not stand any further human intervention of the type that would be associated with proposals that are in the public arena and are being associated with this Inquiry. Any such intervention has the ingredients to ruin the river by doing irreparable damage to it.

It would be remiss of the Inquiry to overlook the heritage values and significance of the Clarence River for members of local indigenous communities.

As a non-indigenous Australian I state that I am of the firm belief that greater understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture is a significant and necessary component in achieving Reconciliation in our nation. Any proposals that have the potential to impact upon the lands of the traditional custodians of the Clarence Valley must involve thorough consultation with the relevant indigenous community members and organisations.

Present day human occupancy in the Clarence Valley ranges from sole inhabitants, hamlets and villages at the lower end of the demographic scale through to larger service centres and a regional city. The process of local population growth has undoubtedly impacted upon the river and its surrounds and while that growth has not always been harmonious and compatible with the natural environment local communities have generally endeavoured to maintain a positive and healthy environment.

It is not an understatement to say that the Clarence River is the "life and soul" of the Clarence Valley.

The Clarence Valley is both a natural and cultural feature. The physical geographical aspects of the river are the major drawing points for the cultural activities that have developed within close proximity of it. Hence, the Valley with

its relatively small but growing population can be sustained provided stringent controls about further developments along its reaches remain in place.

Governments at all levels have responsibilities to ensure that the changing demographics of the Valley can be sustained in its natural environment. By and large, governments and their agencies have in the past acted responsibly and acted as guardians of the Valley.

Regrettably, the same comment can not be made about governments in other areas/regions where urban, agricultural, mining and industrial expansion has exceeded the capacity of local environments to handle the additional burdens those features have created.

One does not need to look too far south of the Clarence Valley, nor to the north across the border in South-East Queensland, to see the problems that are being experienced because excessive and unsustainable population growth and economic activity have placed inordinate demands upon the natural environments. That growth has occurred whilst there has been noticeable and not insignificant lack of forethought and planning associated with the capacity of the existing resources in those areas to meet the demands that should have been anticipated.

The communities of the Clarence Valley have developed an economic base that is heavily dependent upon the continuation of a healthy river. Among the activities that successfully operate in the Valley and are reliant on a healthy river are agricultural land uses, fishing, shipping and, of course, tourism and the myriad of activities associated with it.

The Clarence River, which is colloquially referred to as "The Big River", has acquired and maintained an excellent reputation and thus is the major draw card for the Valley. Placing the river's healthy survival in jeopardy has major negative multiplier effects for the entire Valley's community. *"To injure one is to injure all."*

All-year-round prosperity in the Valley relies upon continuous strong economic performances in local primary industries and significant seasonal boosts to the service and hospitality sector. Without the continued success of local industry and seasonally-oriented services the viability of other sectors of the services portfolio of the Valley are endangered. Health, education, housing and transport services rely on the existence of a healthy local economy and to damage the Clarence River has the potential to deter further local environmentally-friendly and sustainable investment.

The citizens of the Clarence Valley have every right to expect to continue to live in an area where its communities' members acknowledge and appreciate its significant natural features. The communities should be able to sustain and grow themselves in a manner that does is in harmony with their natural surrounds.

Any further extraction of water from the Clarence River is simply too much of a risk for the Valley to face. The Valley should not be required to pay a price for inadequate, and one might add, over zealous developments elsewhere.

Colin Shephard
15 Cox Street
Yamba NSW 2464