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Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
The Senate
PO Box 6100,Parliament House,Canberra ACT 2600

Water Supplies for South East Queensland – Traveston Dam

This is a personal submission. My qualifications are B Com M Env Sci FCPA FACS. I have designed and operated a successful farm dam of 30 megalitres for 25 years at Alstonville NSW until my wife's ACAT assessment of needing high care necessitated our shifting off the farm to Brisbane where she is now in Bethesda Caring Centre.

Over this time the effects of global warming were progressively reducing rainfall although it was not recognized as such at the time. My relatively deep dam continued to provide for the farm's needs while farms with shallow dams were reduced to purchasing trucked in water at significant expense.

Relocation forced me to take an interest in the SEQ water availability and I was alarmed at what I discovered. While the Queensland government's eventual water plan had many good proposals they lacked an appreciation of the urgency of the situation – their plan was like a motor vehicle manufacturer's "just in time" parts delivery schedule, but seemed to make no allowance for delays. They did not seem to understand that global warming would seriously reduce the available rainfall in SEQ, as shown in Tim Flannery's book "We are the Weather Makers" (a copy of which is enclosed herewith).

The result was that Wivenhoe and the other shallow dams were reduced by evaporation in the warmer than usual weather, they were almost totally without filling rains through yet another "rainy season". The Traveston Crossing Dam proposed is another relatively shallow dam in the SEQ area subject to the same conditions as Wivenhoe, so that if it was built it would not fill either, short of a cyclone – in which case the Wivenhoe dam would fill and the Traveston Crossing Dam would not be needed.

The proposed Traveston Crossing Dam differs from the other big SEQ dams in that their catchment areas were almost completely crown land – Traveston Crossing Dam would be displacing a thriving and well established community – and some infrastructure such as the Bruce Highway. Because of the geological history of the area the catchment area and dam wall area are likely to be more permeable and leak more than existing SEQ dams. The proposal after local protests was to build the full dam wall, but only provide bypasses of some

sort which would allow normal fill initially to one third of the eventual full height, thus justifying only resuming a much reduced number of properties. This shows no concept of the effect if a big cyclone did cover the area – the dam would cause the water to be held back to the full height of the dam wall – the losses of lives and properties would be unthinkable.

The Traveston dam threatens a number of endangered species, notably the lungfish. The Queensland government claims that it will protect the lungfish by construction of fish ladders, but where a previous fish ladder was constructed to protect lungfish they just did not use it. The lungfish is too unique in the genetic history of development to be put to such a risk.

In summary, while the Traveston Crossing Dam might have been acceptable early last century, it would not be acceptable now because

1. it just would not work in the reduced rainfall regime which now exists.
2. it would cause unreasonable disruption of the established community and it would cost the earth if the disruptions were properly included in the assessment.
3. it would be a massive cyclone risk.
4. it is environmentally unacceptable.

The Queensland Government is trying to bully it's way through by buying up many properties concerned before it has the necessary authority to go ahead with the useless project – the Federal Government is the only defence the people of Queensland have – after all, desalination is available and it is certain in it's effectiveness.

Yours sincerely,

N.B. Wheatley

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