

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

Dear Sir,

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

**Purpose:**

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

In summary, the issues I have raised are **social, environmental, the lack of transparency** by the Queensland Government, the **unsuitability** of the Traveston site for a dam and **alternatives**. I have also expressed my own **personal view and comments**.

The **social** impact has been made very public, following the Queensland Premier's announcement in April 2006 that the dam would be built. In this regard, there was a complete lack of consultation with the parties concerned. Specifically, the property owners affected by the proposal were not contacted prior to that announcement. As a result, this proposal has understandably had a traumatic effect on their livelihood and future, because they have made the affected properties their homes. This whole issue highlights the need for State Governments to conduct important infrastructure developments in a proper and timely manner, which is to say that the public is contacted long in advance of such proposals by way of proper planning and development and involvement of all parties concerned. The complete opposite has happened in this case.

The **environmental** issue highlights the impact the dam proposal will have on the Queensland Lungfish (the river is one of the few remaining places where the Lungfish is found in the wild), the Mary River Cod which is only found in this river system and the Mary River Turtle which is also only found in this river system. There is also the impact on the whole river system itself. The Mary River historically struggles with low flows and the Traveston Dam would disrupt or cease those flows altogether. Normal flow of the river is essential to the whole ecosystem and if it is interrupted, silt builds up at the mouth, causing a barrier to fish which navigate up the river to breed (a classic example of the impact of damming rivers is the Murray River system, which has virtually been dammed out of existence and of which the Federal Government is now considering taking control). The building of the Traveston dam will result in the loss of hundreds of hectares of prime agricultural land, a loss which has been estimated as 76 square kilometres and which this country can ill afford. There needs to be a thorough environmental impact study made on the effect the dam will have on these endangered species and the river system, before any proposal can be considered. The Queensland Government has failed in this regard and in its duty to conduct the proper and mandatory investigations. The Government's actions appear to be in conflict with policies of which both the Federal and Queensland Government have mutual obligations, namely the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, the National Water Initiative, the National Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan and the National Agriculture and Climate Change Action Plan.

The **lack of transparency** by the Queensland Government is evident to the public in that the Government refuses to disclose information as to the real reasons why it is proceeding with a project on a site that is totally unsuitable for a dam. I say evident to the public because the unsuitability of the site understandably raises questions, such as;

- Was the Traveston Dam site the first choice? If not, what was wrong with the other sites ahead of Traveston?
- why does a government bureaucrat receive a higher price for his land than a neighbour whose land is very similar in area and locality?
- why does it take publicity for the government to act, such as in the case of the price the government offered for Alan and Jane Sheridan's property, which was a \$600,000 gap to what one of Queensland's leading valuers say it is worth? (see Sunday Mail article, page 12, 11/02/2007). The fact that this particular case had been made public prompted the government to rethink it's offer (see Sunday Mail report in the following week's issue). The Government should not be put in a position where it takes publicity for a review on any issue. They should get it right in the first place.
- Is the Traveston Dam being built to supplement Brisbane's water supply and not for the benefit of the South East Queensland's residents, as Peter Beattie would have us believe?.

The **unsuitability** of this site for a dam is evident by the fact that the dam will be built on a mess of various forms of rock, gravel and slushy shale, which will cause enormous engineering complexity in the dam construction. Bedrock is hard to find. The dam will be too shallow over a wide area. Estimates are that the average depth will be approximately five metres and the annual evaporation rate will be one metre per year. In short, the bad dams are the shallow ones. I saw one Mary Valley resident who was interviewed on TV, stating that it hardly ever rains in the valley. A report commissioned by the mayors of the Mary Valley concluded the dam would be a white elephant and would not resolve south-east Queensland's water supply problems.

**Alternatives** to consider are;

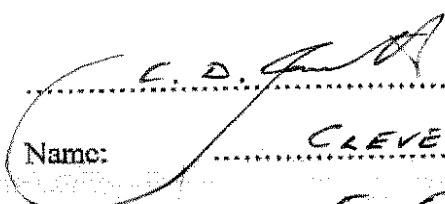
- the raising of Borumba Dam and damming Amamoor Creek, which is mostly Government owned land.
- recycling, which is the public topic of today.
- homeowners installing rainwater tanks, subsidised by the State Government. This would be far less costly than building the Traveston dam and would result in an enormous reduction in town water intake by the residents.

My **personal view and comments** are that the Premier appears to be concerned about political face. In spite of the tremendous doubt about the validity of his actions, as evidenced by public backlash from the Mary Valley residents, the public in general and the new senate enquiry, he feels he has gone too far and expended too much of the public's money to back down. This of course, is an inexcusable reason to continue. In short, I believe he is totally wrong in proceeding with this disastrous plan to construct the dam. This it is not about political face. It is about the livelihood and

future of hundreds of people who have made the affected properties their homes and about the impact on the environment. At this time, there is nothing wrong with Sunshine Coast dam levels. It is the Brisbane dam levels that are the problem and which no doubt has prompted Peter Beattie to take the "quick-fix actions" he publicly instigated in April 2006. Locals in the Mary Valley are angry that although they had survived for years on minimal tank water by actively conserving this precious resource, they would now have to give up their homes and lifestyles so those living in the city could have more water. The reaction by the Mary Valley residents can be best summarised by one protestor when she said "If you thought it was finished, well it's only just begun". I myself applaud her spirit and see this as an understandable and justified reaction to a proposal which, simply put, is a bad idea. Nationals Member for Maroochydore, Fiona Simpson said there was no evidence that the Traveston Crossing plans were the best alternative, arguing that it was a bad choice for the dam site. "It is a dumb proposal," Ms Simpson said, claiming it was more about the next election than addressing water issues. She said it left people in hell for years, wondering if they would lose their properties and it was a death sentence for the local industry and community.

There are far too many questions here, questions which the Queensland Government is not answering and raising doubts about it's competency and actions in this whole affair. I do not own land in the Mary Valley but I wholeheartedly support the Mary Valley residents in their fight to stop the government from proceeding with it's plans to build this dam. This proposal has had a detrimental impact on the lives of the hundreds of property owners concerned and will have a major impact on the environment. Realistically, a government is elected by the people to act in their best interests and welfare, not to cause havoc to people's livelihoods, along with stress and uncertainty. This is what has happened to the people affected by the dam proposal.

Yours sincerely,

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