

Submission to Senate Committee investigating the Traveston Dam and other supply options for South East Queensland.

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No doubt many or all of these issues will be raised by other people. I am a local who is fairly undecided on the dam, but am greatly annoyed by the inconsistencies, and even ignorance, put forward by opponents of the dam.

Increasing the height of Borumba Dam

The advocates of increasing the height of Borumba Dam have pointed out the advantage of the dam being in a steep valley. However, they have consistently failed to mention the problems with this solution.

Borumba Dam is hardly adequate for its current purposes. In 2001 or 2002 the water level in the dam was so low that irrigation was banned from the Mary River downstream of the dam. People in Gympie were on severe water restrictions, to the stage where they had to use buckets to water gardens (I lived in Gympie at the time and was trying to establish new gardens, so the restrictions were very real).

Borumba Dam also has the disadvantage of a fairly small catchment on the drier side of the Mary Valley. Thus, while there are proposals to raise the dam by a moderate amount as part of the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal, the dam could never yield the amount of water that Traveston Crossing Dam will.

Inconsistent statements

One proposal for filling a vastly raised Borumba Dam is to pump water from the Mary River when it is flowing strongly. The very person proposing this complained that the Mary River is not flowing and the Traveston Crossing Dam will never fill. That sounds like a two way bet to me.

Other inconsistent statements have included:

- Opponents of the dam appear to oppose all new dams, while others just oppose this new dam.
- Some claim the dam will never fill because of climate change, while others say that giant floods will wash dam away.
- Coalition MPs argue that the state government should find alternatives whilst at least one coalition MP has refused Commonwealth Government funding the water recycling project.
- Some people want certainty about what is happening, whilst others want to be consulted and involved in planning. Planning and consultation entails uncertainty.

“Dams Do Not Work” and Climate Change

Given that it is estimated the current drought occurs less than once every thousand years, that the current dams are still 20% full indicates to me that dams do work very well.

The counter-argument is that the drought is climate change happening. However, climate has always changed. If it is true we are entering a period of greater fluctuations in rainfall, then maybe more dams will be helpful. If there will be a return to wetter part of a climate cycle, then the dam will ensure water security for years to come.

Social Impact

As a person who works in the human services field I know very well that people do not like change. People also make false assumptions, the most relevant here is that what they have will last forever. A number of people directly (and indirectly) affected by the dam have said they thought they would live where they are for ever, or at least until they die. These people in particular need assistance. From what I can see attempts have been made to put assistance in place by the state government and others. Compensation and early property buyouts have generally been compared favourably to that in regard to the proposed new highway through our area.