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Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
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I am writing regarding the proposed dam on the Mary River at Traveston Crossing.

I moved to the Mary Valley in December of 2005 after numerous visits to the area in the 5 years prior. I moved from California, where I had resided for just over 22 years.

My husband was renting a property with Mary River frontage nearly adjacent to the property where his family had lived for over 15 years. I was excited and happy to begin sharing our life together in such an ideal place.

Beautiful rolling hills and broad flat expanses with grazing cows, countryside filled with wildlife and a community of earnest, hardworking and fun loving people helped ease the sense of loss I was feeling for having moved so far from home. I have grown to love the spirit of the communities of Kandanga and Imbil. There was always something happening – be it a community art project like Farming with Mary, the markets overflowing with locally grown produce, the numerous music nights that occur throughout the valley. I could go on and on... suffice it to say that I really felt as if I had died and gone to heaven.

Since the announcement in April of 2006 of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam I have witnessed a community under siege. A stunning announcement followed by callous communications, inaccurate maps and constantly changing information has etched lines of fear and stress into the faces of my friends and neighbors. State government comments about the impending “Armageddon” in southeast Queensland placed additional pressure on the community and was callously done to portray their opposition to this flawed proposal as a case of “not in my backyard”. The lack of process in this whole decision was incomprehensible.

Coming from California where water issues are an integral part of daily life, I was amazed that a forward thinking country like Australia would be resorting to such a 20th century solution to water management. I was also stunned to find out that water recycling for both potable and non-potable uses was not practiced on an institutionalized scale in Queensland. It was a novelty for me to be drinking, cooking and bathing in water that we had collected in our rainwater tanks and I assumed that in urban areas that large scale recycling as practiced in all of urbanized California (as well as most major metropolitan areas in the US including Washington DC) would be in place. The fact that non-recycled potable water is being used industrially was shocking.

The legacy of dams worldwide and in the US in particular has clearly indicated that they cause more problems than they solve. The cost to fisheries, eco-systems and communities is clearly documented and the costs of attempting to mitigate (I say attempting as large sums of money have been spent yet many rivers, the Colorado included no longer even run to the sea) these impacts have been astronomical for the government. Numerous dams are being de-commissioned in the US now in an attempt to restore the natural flow and revive not only the eco-system but the economies which have been devastated by the impacts of large dams.

One only has to look to the Paradise Dam on the Burnett River to see that these same effects are happening right here in Queensland. Named by the world Wildlife Fund as one of the 10 worst dams in the world in its 5 year review of new dam construction compliance with the principles of the World Commission on Dams, the Paradise has created a weed and algae filled disaster that has destroyed nesting sites for both the lungfish and turtles without fulfilling any of its promises in terms of economic growth for the region. It is frightening to think that the same individuals responsible for Paradise are heading the proposed Traveston team.

Millions of tax dollars have already been spent on the proposed Traveston dam- buying up properties, creating marketing materials and slick presentations showing a post dam community with sailboats on a lake plus diverting hardworking government employees efforts – all dollars which could have been spent actually solving southeast Queensland current water problem. There are numerous alternatives less costly than a dam, which in combination could provide more water than the Traveston Crossing Dam for southeast Queensland. Fixing existing infrastructure (leaky pipes etc), installation of water saving shower heads, better conservation practices, storm water harvesting, sustainable development and recycling (including groundwater re-charging) would solve southeast Queensland's water problems and would not have the social, environmental and economic impacts of the proposed dam.

How a government could inflict such anguish on a community without having studied the alternatives is a terrible use of its powers. I have seen so much pain and suffering at the meetings and rallies I have attended. I have heard stories of people's lifelong dreams being quashed by this unplanned political decision.

My own life has been greatly impacted- I now live on a government owned property and my husband's work (he is a sign writer in the valley) has been adversely impacted. The stress both my husband and I have been feeling has impacted our relationship. We have had to focus harder than ever on maintaining our good humour and a positive attitude when there is so much sadness, grief and uncertainty in our community. We have directed our energies into saving the Mary River and doing all that we are able to do to help educate the community at large as to what a terrible impact this project will have, not only for our community now, but for future generations of Australians. I am trusting that this Senate inquiry will bring forward the truth about this flawed proposal and educate those individuals in the Federal government with the power to put an end to this abuse of state government power.

Respectfully submitted,

Tricia Roth