

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

1 April 2007

Dear Sir/ Madam,

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

The purpose of this letter is to provide information for the Senate Inquiry, particularly in relation to the social and environmental impact of the Queensland Government's proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

We live on a property in the community of Federal within the Noosa Shire, and within the Stage 2 buffer zone of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam impounded area. We manage our own water supply and regulate our own water use: we have no town water supply. Despite recent very low rainfall, our supply from one 10,000 litre water tank is more than adequate for our household needs.

**Available water in the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam catchment**

Middle Creek, which passes through our property has not run since October 2006, and our farm dam is holding around 10% of it's usual amount. Since moving from Brisbane a little over two years ago, we have learned that the water supply to our tank is quite reliable during times of low rainfall because all the water that falls on the roof is captured. We know from living in this area that it takes rainfall of approximately 20mm in one downpour to create any run off at all into our farm dam or Middle Creek, and rainfall events of this magnitude have occurred only twice in the last six months. The water level in our creek would need to rise by about four feet to begin flowing into Skyring Creek and beyond into the Mary River.

**Responsible water use**

We are also conscious that by relying on the tank we are not depriving the other creatures and plants of their water supply. Our property is very close to the Cooloola Shire which was drought declared last week – the majority of the Traveston Crossing Dam impounded area is within this shire. When we moved here, our eyes were opened to how much water we had been wasting, and how much water we could save by making some simple changes. Our biggest water wastages had been not capturing water at all on our own property, and using a lot of water to keep our garden looking lush.

On the other side of the equation, a short list of some of our recent behaviour changes adds up to water savings in excess of 800 litres per week:

- changing from a top loading washing machine (200 litres per wash) to the most water efficient front loading washing machine we could find (36 litres per wash) saves us over 500 litres of water each week

- keeping a bucket in the shower to catch shower water until the flow warms up yields 15-20 litres per day, which we use for our pot plants – a saving of up to 140 litres per week
- not flushing the toilet every time, we estimate 5 less flushes per day at 6 litres per flush – a saving of 210 litres per week
- never leaving a tap running while brushing teeth or washing hands, or rinsing dishes or vegetables, at least 6 litres per day – a saving of 42 litres per week

### **Environmental impacts**

Our creek, along with Skyring Creek downstream and it's flow into the Mary River supports:

- many endangered species, including the Queensland lungfish, the Mary River cod and the Mary River turtle (9 other species are identified as threatened fauna of the Mary River catchment)
- the magnificent Great Sandy Strait wetlands which are included on the Ramsar list of wetlands of international importance and animals in this area including duging, whales, migratory birds and marine turtles
- several communities along the Mary River including Gympie, Tiaro, Maryborough, and Hervey Bay which depend on the Mary River for their water supply.

The stated aim of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam is to secure a more reliable water supply for the residents of the greater Brisbane area, meaning substantial reduction of availability of the waters of the Mary River to communities and ecosystems downstream of the proposed dam. This is unusual in that most dams are built to regulate the supply of water within the river system that is being dammed. The Traveston Crossing Dam would result in redirection of water from the Mary River system to the greater Brisbane area.

### **The actions of the Queensland Government**

Queensland Premier Mr. Peter Beattie announced on Thursday, 27th April 2006 that the Queensland Government proposes to build a mega-dam on the Mary River at Traveston Crossing that will inundate the central Mary Valley in Queensland's Sunshine Coast hinterland and re-direct the water of the Mary River catchment into Brisbane. Until the announcement, no information had been made public about any planning procedures or studies to justify the decision. There had been absolutely no public consultation with any of the local stakeholders regarding this decision before the announcement.

On 27 May 2006, full page public advertisements announced that an additional 230,000 million litres of water per annum needed to be supplied by the year 2050 to meet the needs of the expected population. The solution proposed was to secure an additional 330,000 million litres supply by the year 2011 (see Sunshine Coast Daily newspaper Saturday 27 May 2007, p12). Of the increased supply, 83% would come from dams, 6% would come from desalination, and only 11% from sustainable sources such as recycling. The advertised strategy did not include any demand reduction, water use efficiency, or rainwater harvesting in their calculations.

The advertised strategy proposed little to ensure that water is used wisely, and by 2011, would supply an amount of water far exceeding the needs of the population at

that time. This approach encourages irresponsible water use by oversupplying water, and avoiding behavioural change in relation to water use.

At this time, the government also began acquiring properties within the proposed Traveston Dam impoundment area. The owners of over 900 properties received notification that their properties were required to make way for the dam. Options offered were to sell now, sell later, or risk compulsorily acquisition. A rent back arrangement was also offered. As the acquisitions began, the government still had not made information publicly available regarding planning procedures or studies to justify the decision to build the dam. In the face of public opposition to the dam, Premier Beattie publicly stated that the Traveston Dam would proceed regardless of the findings of feasibility studies or impact assessments.

### **Social and economic impacts**

For us, and many of our neighbours, the plans we had for our property were put on hold pending a final decision in relation to the dam. Our plans to build a shed, a farm stay cabin and establish over 15 acres of farm forestry were shelved, along with any major work on our farm or home. As a consequence many of our friends who are self employed within the valley as tradespeople, earthworkers, and other suppliers of farm infrastructure have faced severe financial hardship, and as a result have sold to the government.

Many of our friends and neighbours have showed signs of stress in the form of health impacts. Sleepless nights, muscle tension, increased blood pressure, and emotional distress are all evident. My own stress manifests in the form of muscle tension. In early June 2006, I was diagnosed with a badly perforated lumbar disc which required back surgery. I was not able to return to full time work until October 2006.

The stressfulness of our circumstances is compounded by the following:

- despite research pointing out to the Queensland Government that the technical feasibility of the proposed dam is highly questionable, the Premier has publicly stated that the dam will proceed regardless
- current water use habits are largely unsustainable, and establishment of responsible water use practices is not a key plank of the Queensland Government's water strategy
- it is highly likely that changing rainfall patterns will further reduce the reliability of dams as a water supply option, and the majority of water supply for South-East Queensland is already sourced from dams
- if it could be demonstrated to us that we were sacrificing our home and our community connections for a worthy cause, we could get with the idea
- without a sound rationale for the dam, we feel as if we are at the mercy of the Queensland Government, which seems determined to build the dam, with the only apparent reason being an election promise made rapidly to deflect the political impact of implementing water restrictions
- despite growing opposition to the proposed Traveston Dam among Brisbane residents, and in the face of strong community opposition from Mary Valley residents, the Queensland Government's attention remains focussed on land acquisition
- the Queensland Government has commenced acquiring land for Stages 1 and 2, proposes to build the dam to Stage 2 height, yet is only referring Stage 1 to the Australian Government for impact assessment

- with no upper house in Queensland, the only review mechanisms available are through the Australian Senate and the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act administered by the Australian Government

Our overall concern with the proposal is that all evidence suggests that there are far more sustainable options for supplying water to south-east Queensland that have far less negative impact, yet the state government seems determined to avoid these options. Other solutions including recycling, urban water harvesting and responsible water use could have a significant impact on available water supply before 2009. the proposed Traveston Dam cannot.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

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# Securing water for *Queensland's future*: Queensland **the Smart State**

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Data sourced from Queensland Government advertisement (titled as above)  
Saturday May 27, Gympie Times (p13), Sunshine Coast Daily (p12)

**Problem:** Need additional water. **230,000 MI<sup>1</sup> by 2050** for expected population.

**The Smart State Solution:** Supply additional water. Provide additional **330,000 MI by 2011**.

- About 83% of total water supply would come from dams (water piped in)
- About 6% of total water supply would come from desalination
- Only 11% of total water supply would come from sustainable sources<sup>2</sup>

**Not included in Smart State calculations:**

- Reduced demand for water (eg. water charges, tax breaks for water efficient appliances)
- Water efficiency requirements for new buildings (eg. building code requirement for water efficient toilets, showers and appliances in all new constructions)
- Wide use of recycled water (eg. for industrial uses, toilets and gardens)
- Rainwater harvesting (eg. household rain water tanks and collection by businesses)

**More problems:**

The Smart State solution proposed in the Queensland Government advertisement:

- Does little to ensure that the water collected is used wisely
- By 2011, supplies an amount of water far in excess of what the expected population needs, and even exceeding what the growing population would need by 2050
- Encourages irresponsible water use by supplying too much water
- Proposes desalination for additional water supply, when this process has major problems unto itself.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MI = Mega litre or one million litres

<sup>2</sup> Sustainable sources are sources that reduce social, economic and environmental costs. Examples are using water more efficiently, minimising waste and recycling.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to <http://www.nodams.org.au/>

The data mentioned in the advertisement cited above is as follows (re-formatted):

In 2006	Water supply available (only dams listed) = 450,000 MI (million litres)
By 2011	<p>Additional damming completed to provide an additional 204,000 MI (million litres) includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Traveston Dam 150,000 MI</li> <li>▪ Logan River Dam 45,000 MI</li> <li>▪ Cedar Grove Weir 4,000 MI</li> <li>▪ Hinze Dam raised 5,000 MI</li> </ul> <p>Desalination plant 45,000 MI</p> <p>Water recycling (Western Corridor only) 30,000 by 2011</p> <p>Regional pressure and leakage reduction 25,000 MI</p> <p>Water efficiency programs 30,000 MI (household, business and industry)</p> <p>Total water supply provided = 780,000 MI (650,000 MI or 83% of total water supply from dams)</p>
By 2026	An additional 1.25 million people expected to be living in SEQ
By 2050	Water supply required = 680,000 MI

## A better strategy: **GET SMART**

### **First**

- Reduce water leakages and water waste (eg. recent leaking mains in Brisbane)
- and**
- Influence behaviour of water consumers through publicity and education
- and**
- Provide financial incentives<sup>4</sup> for water saving technologies at construction
- and**
- Provide financial incentives for water efficient appliances in existing buildings
- and**
- Widespread introduction of rainwater harvesting

### **Then and only then**

Consider major water supply projects **AFTER** the above measures have been implemented

**and**

Only when the social and economic benefit significantly outweigh the likely social and environmental harm

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<sup>4</sup> Financial incentives could be in the form of a government contribution to the cost of installation or tax deductions or both