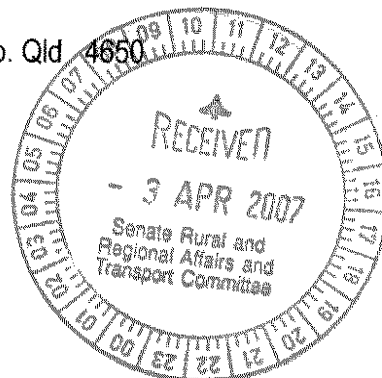




Tiaro and District Landcare Group

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

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 upcoming Senate Inquiry. Our members include a cross section of rural landholders many of whom live on, and manage properties with frontage to the Mary River. Since 2001 our group has been actively involved in the protection of nests of the endangered Mary River turtle in an attempt to increase its chances of survival through an increase in the population of juveniles. Given the experience and knowledge of our members, there are a number of issues which are of serious concern with regard to the likely downstream impacts from the construction of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

- 1. Lack of engagement by the Queensland government with the downstream community.** Our community has been ignored by the Qld Government in relation to advising us as to any downstream effects of the proposed dam. They have not provided us with any facts or figures on any changes to river heights, flows or water quality. If Traveston Dam is constructed our community will have to live with the impacts forever and yet no information sessions, brochures, fact sheets or letters have been sent to landholders.
- 2. Jeopardise the survival of endangered aquatic animals**
The proposed action will construct a barrier (dam wall) with the planned height being 59m in Stage 1. The combination of the barrier and associated modified upstream and downstream habitats will isolate the existing mid and upper catchment populations of the endangered Mary River turtle (*Elusor macrurus*), the endangered Mary River Cod (*Maccullochella peelii mariensis*) and the vulnerable Australian lungfish (*Neoceratodus forsteri*) from the downstream populations. There is no evidence of these species using fishladders or fishways. During the existing dry weather, many downstream pools are connected by very shallow runs of water. A reduction of a few centimetres of water depth will further isolate pools. The reduction in water flow which will occur throughout the downstream reach, will further add to the isolation of populations resulting in gene pool segregation and loss of genetic diversity. Mitigation action such as artificial breeding is not a viable long-term solution to maintain a healthy wild population.
- 3. Increase population and impacts of Aquatic weeds of National Significance and other aquatic weeds.** Each year the population of floating aquatic weeds builds up behind the tidal Mary River Barrage. The dominant species are *Salvinia molesta* (a weed of National Significance) and *Eichhornia crassipes* (water

hyacinth). In 2003, a single raft of aquatic plants was estimated to be at least 800m in length and covered the river bank to bank. The weeds backed up and choked many creeks and gullies. The only control measure occurs when the river height overtops the barrage and the plants are carried into the salty downstream waters. It is expected that the river will overtop the barrage less frequently and the impacts of huge volumes of water weeds will continue over a longer period and more frequently. Threats exist from other water weeds including *Cabomba caroliniana* (Cabomba) and *Egeria densa* (dense waterweed). The Mary River catchment contains 40% of Australia's Cabomba infestation. At present chemicals which control Cabomba are not used in sites which supply potable water. All these species reduce water quality and habitat of all aquatic species.

4. Water quality – blue green algae

In 2003 there was a blue green algae outbreak in the ponded reach of the Mary River upstream of the tidal barrage. This was caused by high water temperatures and low water levels. Blue green algae outbreaks are a serious concern as it is a threat to stock and domestic water supplies. With the extraction of an extra 150,000 mg/l water from the proposed Traveston Crossing dam, such events are highly likely to occur more frequently. The financial and physical hardships on our farming operations and township water supplies are likely to be significant.

5. Reduction in water quality – dissolved oxygen levels.

Dissolved oxygen levels regularly do not comply with EPA Water Quality Guidelines for the Mary River. Reduced water levels will result in less water being oxygenated as it flows through riffles in the river. It is not known what the threshold is for various aquatic species which naturally prefer highly oxygenated water. This includes the endangered Mary River Turtle, endangered Mary River Cod, the vulnerable Australian lungfish, many fish species and macroinvertebrates. Any reduction in these species will have long term impacts on the health and function of the river ecosystem and all the species which depend on it.

- 6. Acceleration in riverbank erosion and loss of toe vegetation and river sediment load.** Twenty-four years after the construction of the tidal Mary River Barrage, the riverbanks upstream of the barrage are still adjusting to the impact of its construction. Reduced water flow will expose the stumps of trees which were cut off at 500mm above ground, expose the toe of the bank which is the most fragile part of the river bank. An invasion by weed species in that area is highly likely. With the drying of the riverbanks, it is expected that some existing species will not survive the drier conditions further exposing the riverbank to slumping. Our Landcare group has worked with landholders and the Mary River Catchment Co-ordinating Committee in the restoration of riverbanks. No compensation has ever been offered to landholders to assist them in rehabilitating and stabilisation of their riverbank resulting from the construction of the Barrage.

- 7. Lack of existing management of the water volume and flow.** In times of high irrigation demand, water is transferred from the Mary River to Tinana Creek, channels and pipelines. There is little or no consideration of any environmental impacts when water is extracted at high volumes in short periods of time from the ponded reach of the river. To our knowledge there is no management plan for providing for environmental flows to occur downstream of Fisherman's Pocket to the upstream limit of the ponded area nor downstream of the tidal Mary River Barrage to the river mouth. In addition, there is no monitoring to record what environmental flows may or may not be occurring between the gauging stations at Fisherman's Pocket to the tidal Mary River barrage, a length well in excess of 60km of the river. The construction of the proposed Traveston Crossing dam can only reduce river flows and further exacerbate the environmental degradation.

Our community observe these impacts daily. How can we have confidence that the health of the Mary River system is a priority of the Queensland government?

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these issues with our Honourable Senators.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lynn Klupfel".

Lynn Klupfel