



Let the Mary flow free!

The Greater Mary
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Inc.

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Roland Trease
Assessment Branch
Department of Environment Water Heritage and Arts

Dear Roland

Re: Change to social and economic impacts of the proposed Traveston Crossing dam

The Greater Mary Association represents communities in the lower Mary Catchment and Great Sandy Strait who are concerned about the impacts the proposed Traveston Crossing dam would have on our economy and our internationally significant ecosystem. We would like to draw your attention to statement made in the Coordinator General's report which we believe entails a significant change to the project from the point of view of local social and economic impacts.

In previous documentation provided by the Queensland Government and the proponent they have suggested that the regional economy would benefit from the proposed dam. A major component of this benefit stemmed from the provision of additional water from the dam. However, the coordinator general clearly states (pg 191) in his report that Traveston Crossing dam is: "*not intended to supply additional water allocations for irrigation locally or throughout the wider region.*" This statement directly contradicts assumptions underlying the economic analysis presented in the Environmental Impact Statement. Below excerpts from Queensland Government reports and analyses commissioned by Queensland Water Infrastructure are provided to illustrate that the economic analyses did in fact assume additional water would be available. Consequently, we argue that the claims made about economic benefits on the basis of this assumption are no longer justifiable.

The Queensland Government [1] suggested in their submission to the Senate Inquiry that they would make available water from the proposed dam for local use. Their submission states (pg 63) that "*The Queensland Government has committed to make available 10,000 ML/a of medium priority water for irrigated production in the Mary Valley from the Traveston Crossing Dam.*" The provision of 10GL/a of additional water would represent a significant increase in water availability for local agriculture¹. In the 2007/2008 year for example, Sunwater made available 57 GL (of which only 12 GL/a [3] were delivered in the Mary River scheme.

Local availability of water from the proposed dam was assumed and used as a justification for the dam in the critique of the ISF/Cardno work conducted Marsden Jacobs & Associates (MJA) [4]. In this critique MJA claim that Traveston will increase security of vulnerable Wide Bay communities, which one can only assume requires that water from the proposed dam could be made available locally. Their report states *"In addition, Traveston Crossing offers vulnerable Wide Bay communities security of supply advantages that cannot be provided by a desalination plant on the Sunshine Coast and provides improved supply security for the region"*.

The assumption that additional water would be available locally also underpins the economic reports commissioned by the proponent and included in Appendix F11.2 of the Environmental Impact Statement. The assessment of social and economic impacts prepared by Synergies Economic Consulting [5] stated that (p76) their analysis was *"crucially dependent on whether or not the Traveston Crossing dam project will increase water allocations"* and that *"[t]he current indications are that there will be a 10,000 ML per year additional allocation of water to the local area around the dam, possibly for use in additional agricultural activity"*. The report prepared by ACIL Tasman [6] on economics futures also assumed that (p13) *"10,000ML water per annum will be released for rural use."* The Price Waterhouse Coopers - Economic development strategy [7] suggested (p 31) *"The impact of land inundation on agricultural businesses may be offset to some extent by the supply of an additional 10,000 ML of water downstream of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam."*

In light of the clear statement by the Coordinator General that there will be no increase in availability of water locally if Traveston were to go ahead, the claims made in the above mentioned reports that the proposed Traveston Crossing dam would benefit the regional economy, and in particular the regional agricultural economy are no longer tenable. The proponent has claimed that these benefits would be felt even by the sugar cane farmers which rely on the ponded area of the Mary River barrage. Any commitments that the proponent may have made to industries such as the Maryborough Sugar Factory have now been completely undermined by the coordinator General's report and we urge that the analyses used to provide an economic justification for the proposed dam be scrutinized accordingly.

The Synergy report also identified the economy of the Wide Bay as being very sensitive to water availability, with water being described as a *"base line economic input"* (p6). The proposed dam represents an additional 70 GL/a extraction, which well exceeds the current level of water delivery (which as mentioned above was only 12GL/a in 2007/2008). The community remains justifiably concerned that, if the proposal were to go ahead, water availability will decrease downstream and this will have a negative economic and social impact on agriculture in the catchment. The analysis by Synergy taken together with the Coordinator General's statement that there will be no additional water provided locally would appear to justify these concerns.

We understand that your department has already been made aware of issues with the validity of the IQQM modeling and baseline data which bring into question the capacity of the flow performance indicators proposed by the Coordinator General to achieve their stated environmental objectives. The same concerns hold for the capacity of the system

to maintain existing water allocations in the catchment. The news that there is no intention to provide additional water for local use compounds the impact of the uncertainty inherent the modeling used to justify the dam.

The purpose of this letter has been to highlight the impact of the Coordinator General's statement regarding local water availability from Traveston on many assumptions already made in the state assessment process. There are numerous issues we have not addressed in this letter related to the impact of the proposed dam on the lower Mary River and Great Sandy Strait environment and economy and we wish to stress that these issues, which have been detailed in submissions from our organization, also remain of great concern.

In relation to the Coordinator General's statement that no additional water will be provided locally, we ask that when the Minister makes his decision on the proposed Traveston Crossing dam that he consider two issues. Firstly, we ask that the Minister takes into account the fact that the conclusions presented in previous analysis by the proponent and the Queensland Governemnt regarding economic benefits of the dam for the regional economy are no longer tenable. Secondly, we ask that the Minister considers how previous suggestions by the Queensland Government and the proponent regarding the increased availability of water in the catchment are likely to have biased certain segments of public opinion by leading individuals and groups to believe the dam would benefit them when in fact it will not. The Maryborough Sugar Factory is one such group.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the assessment process in response to changes to the project outlined in the Coordinator General's report.

Please don't hesitate to contact me on 0405848375 if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



Tanzi Smith
Research Coordinator
Greater Mary Association Inc.

CC: David Blumenthal, Advisor to Minister Garrett
Sofia Koutoulas, Advisor to Minister Burke

References quoted in this letter:

1. Queensland Government, *The State of Queensland Submission - Inquiry into Additional Water Supplies for South East Queensland - Traveston Crossing Dam*. 2007.
2. Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee, *a river for today, a river for tomorrow, a river forever: comments on the Draft South East Queensland Water Strategy*. 2008: Gympie.
3. Sunwater, *Sunwater Annual Report 2007-2008: Key Statistics*. 2008.
4. Marsden Jacob Associates and MWH Australia, *Evaluation of ISF/Cardno report: 'Review of Water Supply-Demand Options for South East Queensland'*. 2007, A report prepared by Marsden Jacob Associates and MWH Australia Pty Ltd for the Queensland Water Commission.
5. Synergies Economic Consulting, *Traveston Crossing Dam: Social and Economic Impact*. 2007.
6. ACIL Tasman, *Scoping Economic Futures - Traveston Crossing Region : Future economic and business development scenarios*. 2007, A report for the Queensland Government
7. Price Waterhouse Coopers, *Economic Development Strategy: Traveston Crossing/Mary Valley Area*. 2007, Prepared for the Queensland Department of State Development.

ⁱ Although we remain certain that the river and estuary cannot sustain any increase in extraction.