



Dam the Mary River? Save the Mary River!

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Save the Mary River Coordinating Group

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Brisbane residents hurting by flawed decision

In an ironic twist, West End residents Anne Stephens and Bill Liley may have their 10-acre organic farm near Gympie resumed to make way for a new water supply capacity for Brisbane.

“Our friends and neighbours in the Mary Valley are devastated. We were not consulted about this. The first we heard was on the news,” an angry Anne said this week.

“This last three weeks have been agony. The Natural Resources and Mines hotline can’t tell us anything. I’ve rung every politician’s office. I’ve sent them all emails asking for details of their environmental, social and economic impact studies and not had a single reply.”

Visiting the property on weekends and holidays, the couple has converted 10 degraded acres into a pre-certified organic farm, but that could all be past history after Queensland Premier Peter Beattie announced plans for a massive dam at Traveston Crossing on the Mary River south of Gympie.

Mr Beattie has said the proposed dam would help solve South-East Queensland’s water crisis brought on by a burgeoning population growth, while at the same time inundating 7600 hectares of prime agricultural land and flooding almost 900 properties, forcing hundreds of people to relocate.

Anne said her property was the world’s second largest organic lillypilly farm, supplying to Martha Shepherd, Queensland’s Rural Woman of the Year, at her unique Cooroy business.

“We’ve planted over 3000 native trees for wildlife to ensure the long-term survival of koalas, micro-bats, owls, wedge-tail eagles, hawks, sugar and greater gliders, just some of the animals we’ve seen there.

“Our neighbours have converted their 30 acres into a macropod release site and together we have a stretch of protected corridor.”

Anne and Bill said they’d given up their search to relocate a suitable dwelling when they stumbled across a 1940’s “Red Rattler” train carriage for sale.

“We transported the train, stumped it, and had it decked and roofed with a unique design to maximize shade and insulation in summer, channel air flow and catch large volumes of water when it rains,” Bill said.

“Our tanks are overflowing, holding 50,000 litres of fresh water, and our recycled windmill pumps 5500 litres of our dam water for irrigation and household washing water.

“We wanted to develop a drought-proof farm, and grow Australian crops, suitable to this climate. All our planning, our dreams and the work that we’ve put into it, could be lost by this dam decision. As West End

residents we want to see tanks on every house in the south-east, and recycled water pumped back into Wivenhoe. The loss of the Mary Valley is too great a loss to contemplate. This is a dumb dam for a supposedly smart State.”

The Save the Mary River Coordinating Group is a Mary Valley-based action group fighting the Beattie proposal. Follow their campaign on www.savethemaryriver.com

Caption: Anne Stephens and Bill Liley at their Mary Valley property near Gympie.

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