



The Dambusters



Newsletter of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group April 2008

From the President

The Queensland Coordinator General has asked the government department proposing to build the dam (QWIPL) to do more work on their Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Public submissions to the draft EIS pointed out many errors, missing and misleading information in the document. It is likely that without the very significant public response the Qld Gov would have already sent it down to Canberra for Federal approval. People Power works! The revised document is unlikely to be ready before June 2008 and we will not get a chance to review it before it is sent to Canberra.

Our visit from the Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett provided us with an opportunity to get across key reasons why we believe the damming of the Mary River should not be approved. We have and will continue to send him and his department important information to back up our points of view. In reality, it is unlikely that the decision to dam or not to dam will be made solely by Garrett. It is more likely that it will also be considered by Cabinet and maybe even the Labor Caucus. In any event, we are seeking consideration of the proposal by a Commission of Inquiry as the decision could otherwise be influenced by political considerations.

We had a very worthwhile visit with Greg Hunt (Shadow Environment Minister) and Warren Truss (Leader of The Nationals) on 2nd April. While Warren is very familiar with the argu-

ments against the proposal, it was Greg's first visit to the Valley and he was stunned and amazed that the Queensland Government were still trying to get up what was always a political decision to dam the Mary. Both Greg and Warren said they will vigorously oppose the proposal and intend to engage Garrett in active debate. It's great to have support from a couple of Federal politicians' who are passionately opposed!

The Queensland Water Commission (QWC) released its *South East Queensland Water Strategy Draft* on 26th March. Several of us attended the Briefing in Brisbane to get a better understanding of its details and implications. If you are interested you can read or download the summary and the actual document from the QWC web site. Follow this link: <http://www.qwc.qld.gov.au/SEQWS>

This is a document that strongly recommends desalination and recycling and while it is a welcome relief to see that at last there is some forward thinking taking place regarding water supply there are two aspects that are of concern. Firstly, the scope of the strategy is to look forward 50 years however the starting point assumes all existing and approved water infra-

structure projects including (unbelievably) the proposed damming of the Mary River. Secondly, while Brisbanites have achieved on average close to 130 litres per person per day, the assumed usage figure has been set at 230 litres per person per day. Public comment closes 31st July so all concerned Valley residents have an opportunity to voice their concerns.

Steve Posselt, the marathon kayaker who last year paddled and pulled his kayak from Brisbane to Adelaide down the Darling and Murray Rivers has thrown his weight behind our campaign. Steve is a water engineer of over 30 years experience who also believes passionately that this dam must never be allowed to be built. To assist, he is undertaking another marathon, on our behalf, to publicise the fight. You can support Steve's epic journey by attending the send off and the return and also at the Mary Valley stop on 27th April, the 2nd anniversary of one of the Queensland Government's worst decisions.

Thanks to all of you who continue to support our efforts to overturn this dumb idea and many thanks to my fellow committee members who work their tails off on your behalf.

Kevin Ingersole

To send a comment on the Draft South East Queensland Water Strategy, write to:

Queensland Water Commission
PO Box 15087
City East 4002

email:
qwcenquiries@qwc.qld.gov.au

Public comment closes July 31.

Qld Gov knows dam is flawed

The Queensland Government's *Climate Change Adaptation strategy 2007-12* cautions that our rainfall and streamflow is highly variable and is likely to get worse. It suggests we need to adapt to this by incorporating predictions of future climate in plans for water infrastructure and should have diversified sources which reduce our vulnerability to climate change! So, the Traveston Crossing proposal fails to comply with the National Water Commission's requirements with respect to consideration of climate change impacts, and it also **does not comply** with the Queensland Government's own climate change adaptation strategy.



Recent fundraising events in Gympie, Noosa and Maryborough raise money, interest and publicity for Steve Posselt's upcoming expedition down the Mary. Details inside.

Steve Posselt, Kayaker, joins the fight to Save the Mary

Last year Steve Posselt set out on an epic journey by foot and kayak from Brisbane to Adelaide via the Murray-Darling.

He paddled and walked, often dragging his wheeled kayak behind him for four months, as he made his way through southern Queensland, western New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

Steve is a water engineer and passionate about rivers and educating Australians about climate change.

He reached Adelaide in September 2007 providing regular updates and reports on the state of the rivers along the way.

Steve is horrified by the proposal to dam the Mary River at Traveston Crossing.

On April 12, Steve will leave Brisbane in his kayak and paddle up the Brisbane River, across Wivenhoe and Somerset Dams, and climb, dragging his kayak, to Bellthorpe at the southern end of the Conondale Ranges. He will paddle the length of the Mary River to its mouth, through the Great Sandy Strait and follow the coast back to Brisbane.

Steve plans to be at Traveston Crossing for the second anniversary of the government's dam decision on April 27.

Save the Mary message heard at National forums

Paul Marshall, who represents Queensland on Landcare Australia's National Advisory Committee, travelled to Adelaide in February to update the Landcare Australia Board and Advisory committee on the status of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

The Advisory Committee is attended by representatives from each state, peak national bodies involved in Natural Resource Management issues, such as Australian Conservation Foundation and National Farmers Federation, and is attended by delegates from federal government departments such as the Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry and Dept of Environment & Heritage. Several leading businesses that support Landcare Australia's activities across the nation also send a representative.

The committee was told of the key flaws in the EIS and given an update on the campaign to Save the Mary River. This is the third such meeting at which Paul has provided a report on this very controversial dam proposal.

In Sydney over Easter, 350 people attended the 9th Australasian Permaculture Convergence with representatives from Noosa, Crystal Waters, the Sunshine Coast, Kandanga and Maryborough.

Bill Mollison, the co-founder of the Permaculture movement spoke against the dam and expressed his concerns for the future of the Australian Lungfish. ABC's Gardening Australia's Josh Byrne, and the Convergence's MC Professor Stuart Hill, University of Western Sydney, also condemn the proposal.

Steve's simple messages

Consider real alternatives: Stormwater harvesting, recycle water across SEQ, more desalination plants using renewable energy would make Traveston Crossing Dam not required.

Rainfall dependent: The Traveston Crossing Dam is supposed to help Brisbane in dry times. It fills when Wivenhoe and Somerset fill, and drains when they drain. The trip will show just how close they are with Steve standing with one foot in each catchment as he crosses the divide.

Diminishing fuel supply: Rising fuel costs, and climate change mean that Brisbane will have to have as much farming land as close to the city as possible. The Lockyer Valley is declining in food production. We will all need the Mary Valley food bowl for our future food.

Bigger picture thinking: This is not only an environmental issue. In the main it is an economic issue. To survive an uncertain future we must take a holistic view and not spend billions on narrow decisions with blinkered vision.

Like the Murray, such thinking can only cause future, irreversible heartache.



Above: members of the Landcare board and advisory committee visiting the Arid Recovery Centre at Roxby.

Below: Bill Mollison views the Save the Mary display. A terrible decision that threatens the world renown Australian Lungfish.



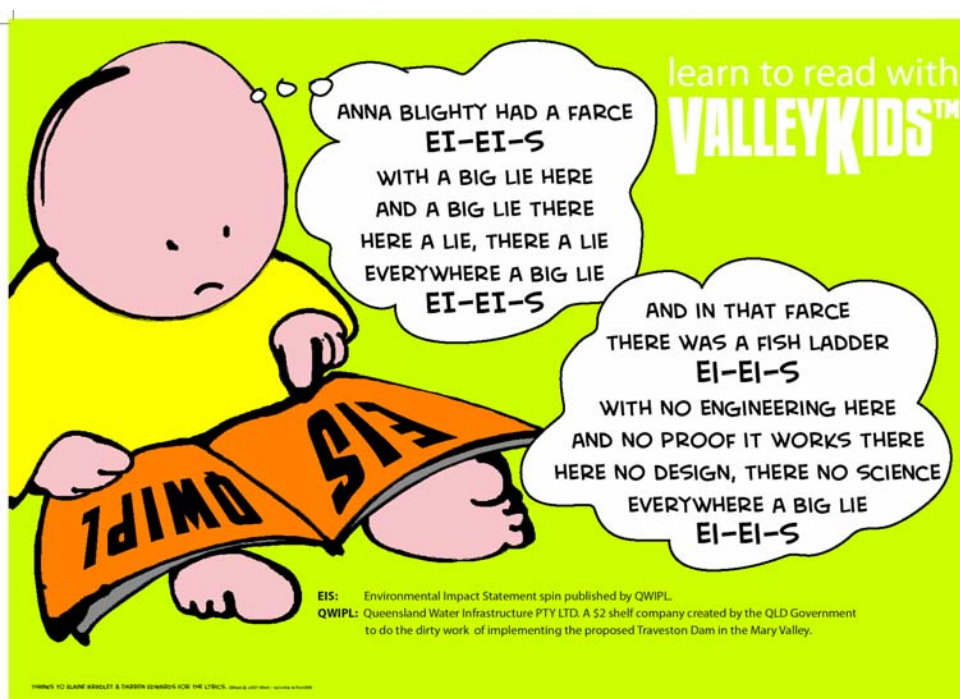
Why the EIS is back to the drawing board

The Coordinator General (CG) received a record number of public submissions (in excess of 16,488) on the EIS prior to the 15th January 2008. The concerns of experts and the community have forced the CG to call for a supplementary EIS because it failed to:

- Show that low cost water security can be provided in the shortest timeframe;
- Address climate change adequately;
- Show that a dam on the Mary doesn't conflict with existing laws or policies relating to environmental protection, sustainable water and land use, including the federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and the National Water Initiative;
- Competently quantify risks to ecosystems in the catchment, the river's mouth and biodiversity in the region;
- Show the likely effectiveness/risks of proposed mitigation and/or offset strategies;
- Address impacts on groundwater;
- Deal with the risks of flooding and dam failure;
- Evaluate alternatives to the project;
- Reach an acceptable professional standard of care and diligence in the preparation and analyses of documents;
- Acknowledge community efforts to improve the health of the river over the last 15 years.



"[There are] significant flaws in the ... EIS relating to the transparency and rigour of analysis and conclusions. Of particular concern is the failure to report basic assumptions behind assessment of water security needs and the inadequacy of analysis relating to the range of practicable alternatives to Traveston Crossing Dam." - Prof Stuart White, Institute for Sustainable Futures



"Right throughout the , there are many cases where the scientific evidence and statistical analyses presented in the EIS document simply do not support the conclusions drawn by the proponent. Anticipated environmental impacts (both beneficial and adverse) are often not adequately quantified or supported by rational argument, and suggested mitigation measures are often very vaguely described, with very little scientific evidence (if any) offered to quantify their likelihood of success. It is thus utterly impossible to make a credible assessment of the environmental risks, or the potential social benefits, of this proposal from the data and arguments presented by the proponent in this EIS." - Steve Burgess, MRCCC

Pro-dam support turns to water

By Ian Mackay

Mayoral candidate Daniel Tabone got a good deal of media coverage for being the only supporter of the dam at Traveston Crossing. He claimed to have been flooded by pro-dam supporters and concluded that a "silent majority" actually supported it but were too afraid to speak out.

The recent election results suggest he may have slightly over-estimated that support.

At the time of writing, Mr Tabone had garnered a mere 2.58% of the mayoral vote, placing him only just ahead of the informal vote. His "silent majority" appeared to have evaporated and the result highlights the on-going lack of support for the project.

In the last 18 months there has been a relentless barrage of glossy pro-dam brochures either from QWI or the Task Force. When print copies of the EIS were difficult to come by, there was no such problem with glossy brochures, booklets or even a very slick DVD extolling the virtues of the scheme.

They claimed that most people were coming to accept the dam but that a small number would never accept it. Daniel Tabone provided the first chance (other than a few pro-dam letters in the Gympie Times) to test the veracity of that assertion. The Mary Valley thanks him for providing the opportunity.

By no stretch of the imagination does 2.58% constitute either "most" or "silent majority". Curra and Gunalda proved to be the strongest areas of support, but with the dizzying figures of just over 5% would still provide even the best spin-doctor with the challenge of a life-time.

Mr Tabone's assertions of the flood mitigation benefits of a having a dam upstream looked pretty shaky after Emerald's recent experiences and the voters of the new expanded Gympie Regional Council certainly noticed it. Similarly his comparisons of the dam to the Gympie

duckponds just failed to hold water. This result amounts to a shire-wide (not just Mary Valley) condemnation. It highlights the fact that an expensive PR campaign (it would have to run into either six or seven digits) and an aggressive purchasing strategy have failed to convince the public of what is plainly a bad idea.

We probably won't read of Mr Tabone's litmus-testing in the next glossy brochure (I think we may have heard a mention of it had he become Mayor!) but then nor did we hear of the huge number of submissions to the EIS. It has taken the Coordinator-General nearly two months to ascertain how many submissions were sent in several formats to ensure delivery by the closing date. The number of submissions now stands at over 11 000 and, while the Coordinator-General points out that a number of these are "form-letter" submissions, they highlight the fact that thousands have taken time to voice their opposition.

If Peter Garrett approves this dam it won't be because the environmental risks are small or that the mitigation measures are certain to work or that the community supports it.

The only thing going for it will be that the Government has his arm twisted up behind his back with the number of properties it has steamrolled and purchased.

It's time that the federal Government lived up to its excellent water policy and told its Queensland counterpart that "enough's enough".

Given the recent death of eminent water scientist and environmental flow advocate Professor Peter Cullen, an action of such national resolve would be a totally fitting tribute.

But in the meantime we wait for the next glossy brochure where the waters are blue, the dams always brimful, the financial opportunities endless and all systems go.

But as Daniel Tabone proved, almost nobody here is conned.

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Postal:

c/o Post Office

KANDANGA Q 4570

"It is contended that the Traveston Crossing dam proposal has become a pivot point in the future of sustainable river management in Australia, and the outcome of the Traveston Crossing EIS process will not only be a watershed in sustainable river management, but a litmus test for the environmental credentials of the new federal Labor Government."

KEEP WRITING LETTERS.

Postcards and form letters available at the Info Centre. Or write your own and send it to:

The Hon. Peter Garrett
Minister for the Environment,
Heritage and the Arts
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Peter.Garrett.MP@aph.gov.au

Go online

Remember the Travestonswamp Forum is a great place to discuss the issues and to keep up to date. Diligent news watchers post the latest media reports. Go to www.savethemaryriver.com and find the link on our homepage.