

Background Briefing on Northern Interconnector Pipeline Stage 1.

(1/05/07)

Time line

1. On 22/03/07 Stage 1 of the Northern Interconnector Pipeline (Landers Chute to Morayfield) was referred to the Federal DEW for a decision as to whether the project required EPBC assessment. The Federal referral document and assessment decision can be downloaded here.

www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=referral_detail&proposal_id=3359

2. On 14/04/07, the project was declared a significant project under the State Development and Public Works Organization Act and an Initial Advice Statement and a draft Terms of Reference for an EIS under the State Development Act was released for public comment. Submissions close on 14/05/07.

General info from the CG department can be found here

www.coordinatorgeneral.qld.gov.au/major_projects/northern_pipeline.shtm

The IAS can be downloaded here

www.coordinatorgeneral.qld.gov.au/library/pdf/mp_northern_pipeline_IAS_13Apr07.pdf

The Terms of Reference for the EIS can be downloaded here

www.coordinatorgeneral.qld.gov.au/library/pdf/mp_northern_pipeline_draft_TOR_13Apr07.pdf

3. On 19/04/07, the Federal DEW decided that an assessment under the EPBC act would not be required. Apparently, no submissions requesting an assessment under the EPBC act were received.

Some important points from an initial scan of these documents.

The EIS and the federal referral only apply to Stage 1 of the project. (Landers Chute to Morayfield) Stage 2 (Connecting Lake McDonald) will be announced soon.

The proposal refers to the purpose of sending 65ML/day of 'unallocated water' down the pipeline from Maroochy and Caloundra Shires to Brisbane. (This is 23.74 GL/year).

The proposal states that much larger pipes (1290 mm diameter) are being used in some parts of the project to allow for another possible "future purpose" (this may be code for the transfer of Traveston Crossing water to Brisbane – pipes of this diameter would be appropriate for this purpose, but complete overkill for transferring 65ML/day).

Although the 23.74 GL/annum of water for this pipeline must come from sources within the Mary Basin Water Resource Plan area, I found no reference the plan, or to the effects of this additional extraction on the watercourses of the Mary Basin. Particularly with respect to the referral to the Federal Government, it would be unlikely that anyone reading the documents would be aware that the project entails the removal of at least an additional 23.74 GL/annum of water from the Mary Basin, or be aware of the likely consequences of this extraction on Matters of National Environmental Significance under the EPBC act.

Most of the water being extracted will most likely come from currently unused Town Water allocations from Baroon Pocket Dam on Obi Obi Creek. (Total TWS allocations from Baroon Pocket are about 36GL/year, of which only about 18.5 are currently used by Caloundra and Maroochy Shires).

Extra information may be obtained from the proponent's website

www.srwpaliance.com.au

Some points from knowledge about the Mary Basin WRP, and studies done on the Mary Catchment.

IQQM modelling studies of the catchment conducted as part of the WRP show unequivocally that taking the full allocation out of Baroon Pocket Dam would have dire consequences for Obi Obi creek from the dam wall to the junction with the Mary. Long-term median flows would be reduced to less than half of the median flows in the current utilization scenario and there would be significant adverse impacts across all flow regimes. The APFD for the stream would be much greater than 2 along the entire length downstream of the dam.

There is no protection of environmental flows in Obi Obi Creek written into the WRP or into the iROL for the operation of Baroon Pocket dam.

Obi Obi creek is one of the most significant Mary River Cod habitats in the entire Mary system. Mary River Cod are a critically endangered EPBC species with a federally listed recovery plan under the act.

Obi Obi creek is also an important habitat for a number of federally listed EPBC species of stream frogs.

A number of State Government-funded Reports (Mary River Stream Processes Report, Mary Rehabilitation Plan, Obi Obi rehabilitation report, WRP hydrological modelling report) outline the severe consequences of taking the full allocation of water from Obi Obi creek.

It appears that the strategic reserve of 150GL/year referred to in the Mary Basin WRP is very vaguely defined and advice from NRW is that it can be taken from any part of the Mary Basin for any project identified as part of the SEQWSS (eg. this pipeline). If stage 1 Traveston Crossing is only taking 70 to 80 GL/year, this leaves 70 to 80 that can be taken at whim from any watercourse in the plan area that SEQ can connect the pipe to (on top of existing allocations). This has worrying implications for the Maroochy, Mooloolah and Mary Rivers and especially Obi Obi and Six Mile Creeks – all of which can be accessed by this Northern Pipeline Interconnector in Stage 2.

There is very little effective protection of environmental flows in upstream reaches of these watercourses in the schedules in the WRP.

Confirmation that the ultimate intent of this pipe is to carry the Traveston Crossing water to Brisbane can be found in Caboolture Shire meeting minutes.

www.caboolture.qld.gov.au/uploadedFiles/council/meetings/2006/Minutes%20OM%20061205.pdf

Suggested Course of Action

As many groups as possible with an interest in the Upper Mary, Obi, Maroochy and Mooloolah catchments familiarise themselves with the implications of this proposal, and co-operate in writing submissions on the TOR for the EIS. (DEADLINE is 14th MAY)

As many groups as possible formulate a case to present to the Federal DEW assessor (Alex Rankin) to reconsider her decision in light of the clear implications the project has for EPBC listed species (particularly the cod) on the grounds that the proponent did not provide any advice at all as to the likely implications of the project on stream flows and subsequent impacts on EPBC matters in the Mary. From the information submitted by the proponent it would have been impossible for the assessor to have any idea of the impact on these EPBC matters.

Start negotiations/lobbying as appropriate to have appropriate environmental flows provisions written into the operating rules for Baroon Pocket Dam, Lake McDonald and Borumba Dam. (in order of priority)

Monitor federal EPBC website for signs of Stage 2 referral and start preparing case for the protection of Six Mile Creek

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