



SAVE THE MARY RIVER COORDINATING GROUP

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This dam will not solve Brisbane's water problems

General facts:

- In prolonged droughts, dams are not reliable sources of water. Most of South-East Queensland's dams are between 0 and 28% of capacity at present. The rain is falling more on the coastal strips and less in the hinterland where the Traveston Crossing dam is proposed.
- Global warming has changed rainfall patterns with 50-200mm less rain on the eastern seaboard of Australia. Climate change will continue to make this region dryer and hotter.
- Premier Peter Beattie and others have publicly said Brisbane will run out of water by 2008. Mr Beattie hopes for this dam to be built by 2011. If it was finished on time and it filled immediately, it would still be three years too late.
- How many years will it take to fill? Mary River flood levels for the past 80 years in 20-year blocks show that between 1986 and 2005, there were 12 floods in total but only four of those were classified as "major". There were eight years in the 20 years with no floods. And none this year. There has only been one major flood of the river in the past 14 years - in 1999.
- The World Commission on Dams (WCD) found that the negative impacts of large dams has been far greater than ever imagined, while failing to provide projected benefits. Further findings of the WCD: "... 70% of dams built for town water supply did not reach their target".
- Stage 1 of the proposed dam would have an average depth of just over 6 metres. Evaporation of large shallow dams can be up to 40% (DNR).
- This huge expanse of relatively shallow water will create optimal growing conditions for aquatic weeds and algae, creating unfavourable conditions for endangered species living in the river. Rotting vegetation in a low dam will create methane gas - 20x more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide - and will cause as much ozone-harming pollutants as a power station.
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- Being such a flat wide area, if the dam is 1/3 full as are the Wivenhoe and Somerset, 2/3 of the total area will be mud flats and mosquito breeding grounds.
- The area has many arsenic dip sites from old farming practices. Project director Scott Smith has said the septic tanks and transpiration trenches will most likely stay under the dam waters.
- Mr Beattie has allowed \$1.7 billion for the dam, yet the resumptions alone are likely to cost \$1.3 billion. This means the 1.3 km dam wall, 90m high saddle dams, 120 km pipeline to the south, pumping equipment, roads, bridges, geotechnical work, environmental studies, aerial surveying etc, are supposed to only cost \$400 million?
- Apart from third world countries, water supply shortage problems are being solved with new technology instead of dams.

Environmental issues:

- Two endangered species, the Mary River Cod and the Mary River Turtle as well as the vulnerable Queensland Lungfish live in the proposed dam site. Although these species can survive within impounded areas, they cannot breed there. The cod and the turtle occur naturally in the wild nowhere else in the world. The Burnett and Mary rivers are the last habitats of the Queensland Lungfish. The Burnett has already been dammed.
- Numerous other endangered and vulnerable species live in the Mary Valley and the river.
- The expected negative downstream effects are many and varied - too many to list here.
- The Great Sandy World Heritage area and the Great Sandy Straits Declared Ramsar wetland area would be adversely impacted upon by changing the flow of the Mary River. Nobody can accurately say to what degree – only later studies will show the impacts.
- The WCD found environmental effects were usually far worse than projected, and attempted mitigation of those effects was usually unsuccessful. The WCD also found many large dams worldwide are being dismantled due to unacceptable environmental degradation and silting. Long-time valley residents know how extreme the silting is when the Mary is in major flood.
- Mr Beattie says the Paradise Dam is an environmental success and has modelled this dam on it. Yet he is not allowing independent research to be done. Considering the longevity and breeding cycles of the lungfish, turtle and cod, it may be years before the reality is known.

Social issues:

- There is a procedure regarding major public works; stakeholders are supposed to be notified and consulted with, prior to announcements. No consultations of any kind were done and Mr Beattie has said he's going to build this dam and he's not going to listen to the people.
- 7600 hectares of prime agricultural land will be lost.
- Up to 12% of Queensland's milk comes from the inundation area, as well as beef and crops.
- The social and economic impacts will be far more extensive than Mr Beattie would have us believe. Those already notified as being within stage one or two are only the beginning, and only time could show just how devastating this proposal would be to the greater community.