

NOMINATION FOR ENVIRONMENT AWARD 2009 SUNSHINE COAST AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

BACKGROUND

The Save the Mary River Coordinating Group Inc (STMRCG) is a community-based group formed two days after the Queensland Government's surprise announcement in April 2006, that it intended to dam the Mary River at Traveston Crossing. The group has received praise from throughout Australia and the International community for the way in which it has gone about supporting the local community and exposing the very serious environmental, social and economic consequences of the proposal.

While the proposed dam wall is located in the Gympie Regional Council area, a significant proportion of the impoundment is located in the Sunshine Coast (in the former Noosa and Maroochy Council areas). Communities within the Sunshine Coast Council area are directly affected by the proposed dam and there are significant consequences for the broader Sunshine Coast region.



The Mary River is the last remaining major river system in the South East Queensland bioregion that has not been irreversibly compromised by water infrastructure development. It supports the marine ecosystems of Hervey Bay, the Great Sandy Strait and Fraser Island, and represents the best chance of survival for the vulnerable Australian Lungfish, and the only chance of survival for the endangered Mary River Turtle and the critically endangered Mary River Cod.

After 2½ years of tireless effort and in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, it is a credit to each and every member of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group, that they have continued to endure and that they continue to fight the good fight.

ACHIEVEMENTS

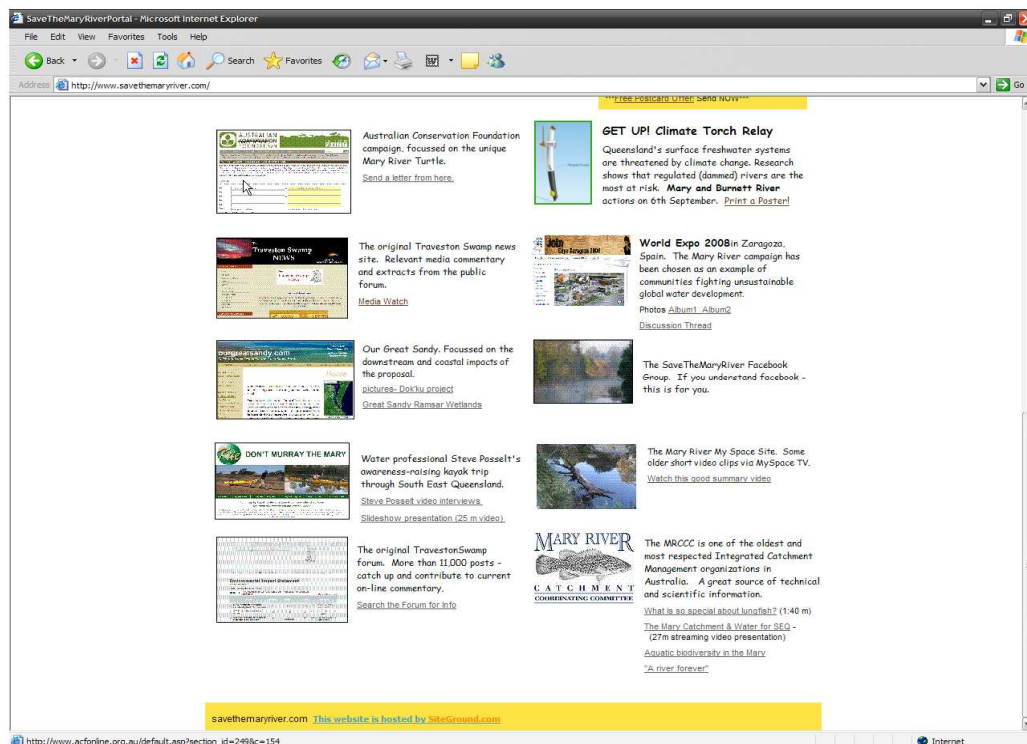
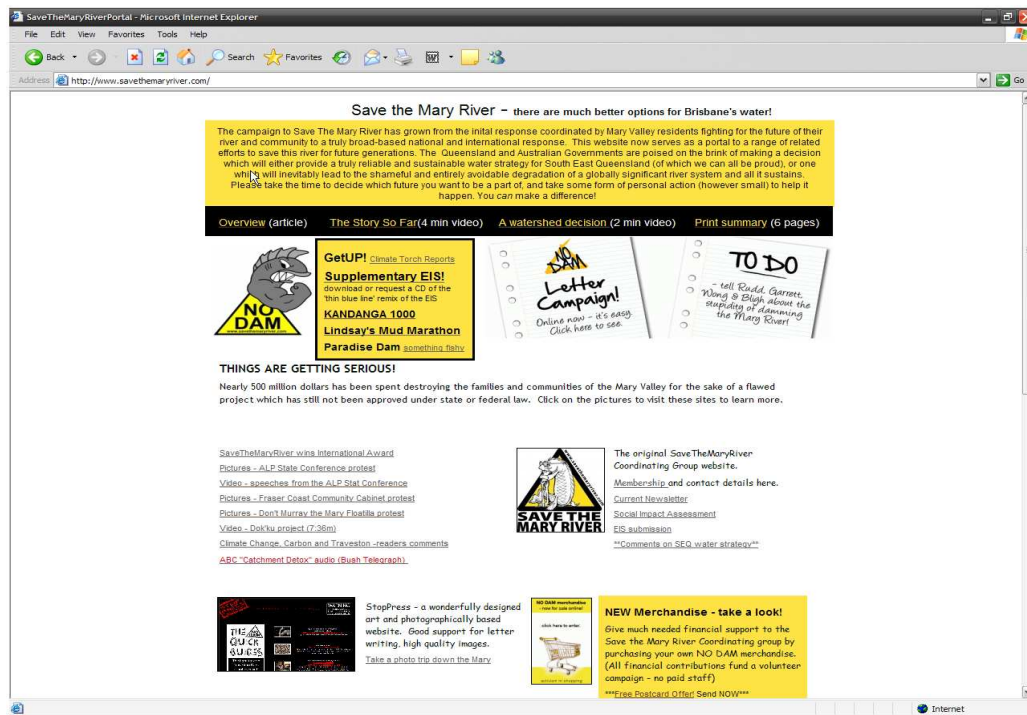
The achievements of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group over the past 2½ years have been nothing short of astounding. The campaign to stop the proposed dam at Traveston Crossing on the Mary River has received wide acclaim as one of the most successful and well respected community campaigns in recent times. The community group has conducted its campaign with great integrity, relying substantially on the work of volunteers within the community to support its case against the proposed dam. At no time has the group resorted to undemocratic or unlawful activities in the pursuit of its case. The group has relied solely on factual information, scientific research and peaceful protest. The major achievements of the group over the last 2½ years are summarised as follows:

Save the Mary Information Centre. Shortly after the announcement, the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group established an information centre in a disused rail building at Kandanga. The Information Centre has operated continuously since the announcement and is manned totally by volunteers. The purpose of the Centre is to provide a focus and support mechanism for the local community which has been gravely affected by the manner in which this matter has been handled and to provide information to the wider community regarding the proposal.



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Save the Mary Web Site. Within two weeks of the April 2006 announcement, the community had established a web site with information about the Save the Mary Group, links to community forums, media commentary, Government websites, photo galleries, facebook and myspace sites and an on-line shop for fundraising activities. The web site is sophisticated and relies totally on volunteer efforts to keep it running. It has been running continuously for the past 2½ years with no down-time. This is an amazing effort for a group of unpaid volunteers. The web site link is www.savethemaryriver.com.



Peaceful Rallies, Protests and Awareness Raising Activities. The Group has been responsible for encouraging and mobilising members of the broader community to be involved in a number of peaceful protests and rallies including the following:

- **Flotilla of Hope - May 2006.** This rally was attended by over 300 canoeist and involved Senator Bob Brown, an inspiration from the successful Franklin River campaign. Paddlers were able to see first hand the proposed wall location, the shallowness of the dam proposal and the riffle/pool/sandbank sequence so necessary for the survival of the iconic threatened species, the Queensland Lungfish, the Mary River Turtle and the Mary River Cod



- **Street March in Brisbane – June 2006.** This rally was attended by 800 people from across the region. By coincidence, the rally was held in the rain, an ironic twist given that the lack of water for Brisbane was one of the drivers behind the announcement of the proposed dam. The community was joined by Local and State Government politicians, indigenous representatives and community leaders.



- **Kandanga 1,000 Horse Ride – October 2006 and October 2008.** This event involved 1,000 horse riders across the region to raise awareness and draw media attention to the plight of the Mary River. The 2007 Kandanga 1,000 was cancelled due to Equine Influenza.



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- **“Don’t Murray the Mary” Flotilla Protest – April 2008.** A community organised canoe on the Mary River in the location of the proposed dam to bring attention to the plight of the Mary River and the 2nd anniversary of the Save the Mary campaign. Attended by 500 people, it involved Steve Posselt who is an experience water engineer and cross country kayaker.



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- **Street March on the Gold Coast – June 2008.** On a warm and sunny June day, hundreds of staunch and vocal 'No Dam' supporters flocked to the Gold Coast to make a statement at the Qld Labor Party Conference for 2008.



- **“Don’t Murray the Mary” Awareness Raising Kayak Trip – August to October 2008.** Water Engineer Steve Posselt embarked on a kayak trip of the Brisbane and Stanley rivers to highlight the plight of the Mary River. To raise awareness for alternatives to damming another river system, Steve paddled up the Brisbane River, across Wivenhoe/Somerset dams, up and over the range into the Mary catchment, down the Mary River to the mouth of the estuary, and back down the coast via the Great Sandy Strait to Brisbane. His efforts were supported and sponsored by the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group. He followed this up by kayaking from Brisbane to Sydney where he delivered 3,000 protest letters to Federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett.

Mary River Trip - Journey Map - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: <http://www.kayak4earth.com/MaryRiver/jmap.htm>

Navigation: K4E Home | Mary Trip Home | Mary Trip Journey Map | Mary Trip Progress | Mary Trip Links | Mary Trip Contact

A journey by kayak up the Brisbane River, down the Mary River returning to Brisbane via the Pacific Ocean

Kayak 4 Earth Steve Posselt's epic kayak trip to save the Mary River April 12 - May 10

Get involved!

✓ **Steve's Return Sat May 10 - 11am West End Boat Ramp**
 Steve Posselt's journey is turning the tide against this dam!
 Let's give Steve Posselt the welcome he deserves when he arrives back where he started his epic journey at West End boat ramp!
 Please tell all your friends and family and encourage them to join us! Come and meet Steve and learn some of the facts about what a dumb idea this dam is!

Get on the protest bus from the Fraser Coast for the journey to Brisbane
 Please contact Cheryl Sutcliffe, bus trip coordinator, as soon as you can on 071 4121 0383 on weekends or after 3:30pm weekdays or leave a message on 0416169467 or email sutys3@ozzy.com.au

Get on the protest bus from the Mary Valley for the journey to Brisbane
 Please contact Helga, bus trip coordinator, as soon as you can on 071 54479288 or email benisoncoony@bigpond.com

Expected cost of the bus is between \$15-\$25 per person. The more people we get, the cheaper it will be!

Map labels: RIVER HEADS, FRASER ISLAND, GREAT SANDY STRAITS, MARYBOURNE, BOONBOOD, TIARO, GLENWOOD, RAINBOW BEACH, GYMPE, TRAVELERS CROSSING, KANDANGA, IMBIL, KENILWORTH, MOOLLOOLABA, CONONDALE, CALOUNDRIA, VILLENUEVE RICEOP, SOMERSET DAM, WIVENHOE DAM, LOWWOOD, BRISBANE, DOUBLE ISLAND POINT, BONGAREE, RECLIFFE, PORT OF BRISBANE.

Done, but with errors on page.

- **“Get-Up” Climate Torch Relay – September 2008.** The plight of the Mary River was the focus for the SEQ leg of an around Australia Climate Change torch relay organised by “Get-Up”. This included events that involved communities the length of the Mary River starting at the Crystal Waters community, continuing with a relay through the night to Traveston Crossing, and then bussing to Hervey Bay for a human formed sign to Save the Great Sandy Strait. The 3 day community involvement finished with the mud runner Lindsey Titmarsh from the Save the Mary downstream group (the Greater Mary Association) completing a gruelling 80 km one day run from the south heads to the north heads of the Mary River. The Save the Mary campaign continued to participate in the Torch Relay to Parliament House in Canberra where Lindsey Titmarsh carried the torch on its final leg to Parliament house.



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Formation of the Mary Council of Mayors. The actions of the group were pivotal to the formation of the Mary Council of Mayor’s, a group of concerned Council’s stretching from Caloundra in the south to Hervey Bay in the north. The Mary Council of Mayor’s represented nine Council’s and over 500,000 people across the region. The Council of Mayors progressed a number of important studies aimed at highlighting to both the Government and the community, the dire consequences associated with the proposed damming of the Mary River at Traveston Crossing.

Fundraising. The Save the Mary River Group has raised over \$160,000 in funds over the past 2½ years. The vast majority of this money has been through donations, although an increasing proportion is through the sale of merchandise. Donations have been used to fund technical research and to raise awareness throughout the community. This has been achieved through media advertising, production of posters, post card campaigns, book publishing, supporting rallies and major events, lobbying the Federal Government in Canberra and a range of other activities. The work of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group has been undertaken totally by volunteers.

Federal Senate Inquiry – April 2007. As a result of lobbying by the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group, the community and the Mary Council of Mayors, the Federal Government commissioned a Senate Inquiry into 'Options for Additional Water Supplies for South East Queensland'. Over 1,600 submissions were received with only one, that of the Queensland State Government, supporting the proposal. Public hearings were held in Gympie and Brisbane in April 2007.

Reports, Submissions and Papers. Volunteers (including engineers and scientists) involved with the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group have directly compiled or been involved in numerous papers, reports and submissions regarding the proposed dam. Following is a brief list of the more substantial bodies of work:

- **Initial Response.** The Group coordinated and published its own report on the State Governments Proposal in June 2006. The report was professionally bound and published and a copy sent to all State and Federal politicians.
- **Study on Dam Alternatives.** The Mary Council of Mayors commissioned a study on dam alternatives from respected water planners Cardno and the Institute of Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney. Volunteer members of the Save the Mary River Group were heavily involved with supporting this study. The study (150 pages in total), completed in 2007, offered a robust and cost effective strategy for providing water without the need to construct a dam at Traveston Crossing on the Mary River.
- **Biodiversity Study.** The Save the Mary River Coordinating Group initiated a comprehensive study titled "Biodiversity/Ecological and Natural History Significance Project". Funding for this study was provided by the Mary Council of Mayors, the Burnett Mary Regional Group and the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group. The study involved fieldwork by the CSIRO and the Save the Mary River Group. The final report includes a 170 page main report and four volumes of supporting information (over 1,200 pages in total).
- **Professional Paper – National Stream Management Conference – May 2007.** Paper written and presented for the 5th Australian Stream Management Conference in Albury SA in May 2007 titled Dam Threat to a Decade of Restoration of the Mary River, Qld.
- **EPBC Act Nomination – May 2007.** Nomination of the endangered regional ecosystem 12.3.1 (Gallery rainforest on alluvial floodplains) under the EPBC Act and 12.3.2 (Eucalyptus grandis tall open forest on alluvial floodplains) in May 2007. Although protected under the state vegetation act, this special ecosystem intrinsically connects to the Mary River and its tributaries has no protection under the Federal EPBC Act. With so many threatened species dependent on this ecosystem and with its continuing decline and the threat posed by the dam, it was nominated but was unsuccessful with its nomination despite the fact that about 20% of the remnant endangered regional ecosystem is under threat of inundation through the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

- **Social Impact Assessment – mid 2007.** As a result of broad community dissatisfaction with the manner in which the community was being treated, the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group commissioned its own Social Impact Assessment using its own volunteer network. The SIA involved community meetings throughout the affected area and ultimately formed part of the group's EIS submission referred to below.
- **Submission on State Government EIS – Traveston Crossing Dam Proposal – January 2008.** The Save the Mary River Group prepared a detailed 187 page submission on the State Government EIS. The submission addressed a range of technical issues associated with the proposed dam. The submission included detailed technical input from environmental scientists, water engineers, water resources planners, indigenous leaders, social experts and others. The report was a highly professional, well researched and credible document.
- **Professional Paper – National Impact Assessment Conference – May 2008.** Paper written and presented at the 28th annual International Association for Impact Assessment conference in Perth WA May 2008 titled "An alternative catchment approach to solve water supply demands of SEQ and save the Mary River". This was presented in the topic stream of "The Effectiveness of Impact Assessment in Addressing “Big Picture” Environmental Issues"
- **Submission to the Draft SEQ Water Strategy - July 2008.** This submission highlighted there was no consideration in the strategy if the Traveston crossing dam was not approved. The governments own figures show that when the Western Corridor recycling scheme and the Gold Coast Desalination facility come on line, yield from the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam would provide a surplus for the next 20-25 years.
- **Professional Paper – International River Symposium – Sep 08.** Paper written and presented at the International RiverSymposium Brisbane Sept 2008 titled "Whats so special about the Mary River and its threatened ecological communities"
- **Submission to the EPBC Act Senate Inquiry - Sep 2008** highlighting the shortcomings experienced through the Traveston Crossing dam proposal and auditing process of the Paradise Dam.
- **Submission to the State Climate Change Strategy - Oct 2008** highlighting the shortcomings in assessment of the Traveston crossing Dam proposal particularly in relation to underestimation of greenhouse gases and unreliability of stream flow.

Awards and Recognition. The Save the Mary River Coordinating Group has been awarded the following in recognition of its efforts in opposing the proposed damming of the Mary River:

- **The Green Dragon Award.** This award was presented to the people of the Mary Valley at the World Expo in Zaragoza Spain in 2008. This international award was in recognition of the efforts of Save the Mary River Coordinating Group in opposing the proposed damming of the Mary River and represents the first time that a grass roots group from Australia has joined forces with overseas counterparts to highlight the adverse impact of damming rivers. The proposed dam at Traveston Crossing was a featured case study at the Expo. The Expo pavilion included displays from 140 countries with attendances of up to 40,000 people on busy days. The Ian Potter Foundation sponsored attendance at the Expo for one of the Save the Mary Coordinating Group Committee members.



- **Sunshine Coast Environment Council Award (the Froggy Award 2007).** This award was presented as a community achievement award to the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group for recognition of the efforts of the group to save the Mary River.

Music CD - For the Love of Mary - 2006. Local musicians and artists produced a collection of songs and bush poetry to express their feelings as people of the Mary Valley after the announcement to dam the Mary River at Traveston Crossing and a tribute to keep the Mary River running free. The Save the Mary River Coordinating Group assisted in producing and marketing of the CD.

Book – Love, Mary, A Love Letter from the Mary River – December 2008. Love, Mary was published by the Save the Mary Co-ordinating Group and aims at raising awareness of issues surrounding the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam. The book was first launched in Brisbane and has gained momentum of the save the Mary River campaign. Editor and project co-ordinator Adele Coombs said her main inspiration for the book was the words of Bob Brown at the September Get Up torch relay. Senator Brown said that “if the rest of Australia knew what damage was being proposed on this river, they would stand up and stop this dam”. The book has been received with open arms and the first 10,000 copies are selling quickly with a further print run being organised for the New Year.



LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Letters of Support for this nomination are attached as follows:

- The Federal Member for Wide Bay, The Hon Warren Truss, MP
- The State Member for Nicklin, Peter Wellington, MP
- The State Member for Gympie, David Gibson, MP
- The State Member for Noosa, Glen Elmes, MP
- The Sunshine Coast Environment Council

CONCLUSION

In terms of the General Selection Criteria for the Sunshine Coast Regional Council Australia Day Awards, the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group has shown an immense level of sacrifice and perseverance in the face of overwhelming odds. This submission demonstrates only a fraction of the selfless dedication and commitment that members of the group have made to the cause. The degree of difficulty has been enormous and the personal sacrifices which individuals have made have been significant. There have been literary tens of thousands of hours of time given by hundreds of volunteers over the last 2½ years. These volunteer efforts include:

- manning the information centre,
- sign painting of banners,
- compiling, editing and publishing newsletters,
- arranging fund raising activities,
- counselling of distressed and broken families,
- technical research by qualified scientists and engineers,
- writing of lengthy technical submissions,
- political lobbying both locally and in Canberra,
- running an incorporated association,
- attending rallies and other awareness raising activities,
- compiling media releases and speaking with the media,
- engaging with the community.

More recently, the efforts of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group have led to a number of independent expert studies by the Federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts which have clearly indicated that it would not be possible to mitigate the environmental impact of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam. This has led to an announcement by the Premier that the State Government will be delaying the construction of the proposed dam by several years while it attempts to address these issues. However, in subsequent comments in Parliament, the Premier has announced that the State and Federal approval process will continue with a Federal decision by early 2009.



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