



Wheezer
the lungfish
says, "Save the
Mary River!"

Dam the Mary River? Save the Mary River!

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Save the Mary River Coordinating Group

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Dam action group conducts independent “residents only” meetings to assess social impacts

DAM opponents will hold their own meetings to uncover the social pain of the shattered Mary Valley community after residents walked out of State Government-run meetings designed to assess the same thing.

Save the Mary River Coordinating Group chairman Kevin Ingersole will head up the four meetings to be held in the Mary Valley next month.

The meetings would collect raw data on the impact that the proposed dam has had, and is having on the individuals and the social fabric of the affected communities, Mr Ingersole said.

And the group would give every member of the public the opportunity to participate in a social impact assessment, not a select few.

“The meetings have a very singular purpose – to record a grass roots response to the question of what were community values before the announcement to build the proposed dam and how those values have been impacted by the announcement and on-going government activities ” Mr Ingersole said.

“They have nothing to do with property sales negotiations, the technical or environmental aspects of the dam.

“Queensland Water Infrastructure is required to do a social impacts assessment and they haven’t asked residents as individuals for their response, well, we are giving the residents the opportunity.

“The responses collected at these meetings on a confidential basis and will be included in the information sent to the Federal Government, which will make the final decision on whether this dam gets built or not.

“This information is part of our group’s response to the public comment on the environmental impact statement.

“We will not let unsubstantiated statements go unchallenged. We are emphasising a complete and accurate picture from the ground up – not top down.”

At the meetings, Mr Ingersole will explain the QWI approach to the social impacts assessment, and why the Save the Mary River group does not support it.

He expects the meetings to be emotional, and the group has decided to have social workers on hand, Iain Watt (churches) and Jo O'Shanesy (independent) should anyone need assistance.

To give residents the opportunity to speak freely, media representatives will not be invited.

If people are unable to speak in public, they can make written submissions as individuals or as local groups of residents.

Meetings will be recorded and aim to collect submissions from as many individuals as possible, but they must relate to the following topics:

- The pre-dam announcement situation: What did you really value in your local friends and associates, your neighbourhood, your living and working environment in the Mary Valley, the landscape in which you live? (Relevant aspects might include animals, privacy, social gatherings, farm and occupational pride, hobbies, your standing in the community, trust, neighbourly cooperation and sharing, tolerance and consideration in your area, country family values, crime rate.)
- Post announcement: What has changed with the above already? Does your local community work the same now? Have you lost contact with former good friends who have moved on? Has the problem of whether to sell or not affected your social group? Do you suffer increased stress, feelings of powerlessness, financial hardship, family problems in an otherwise stable family, pressure from QWI? Are there divisions in the community? Are there good aspects?
- The future: The Save the Mary River group does not believe it is appropriate to look into the crystal ball of what it will be like after a dam is built, but if people have comments they will be recorded.

The meetings will be held at Kandanga Hall on July 10, Imbil Public Hall on July 11, Kenilworth CWA Hall on July 17 and Ridgewood Hall on July 12.

All meetings start at 7pm and all residents are urged to come along and have their say.

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