



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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## **Councils unite to seek alternatives study to proposed Traveston Crossing Dam**

Nine councils along the Mary River, representing almost 500,000 people in South-East Queensland, have joined forces to commission an independent study of alternative long-term water supply options for the region.

Save the Mary River Coordinating Group spokesman, Alan Sheridan, congratulated the councils on taking the initiative and committing \$125,000 to undertake a body of work that he said "will prove beyond doubt that there are cost-effective and sustainable alternatives to a mega dam on the Mary River".

Mr Sheridan admitted that the State Government had done a lot of work in bringing together a drought strategy for the SEQ corner, but said that "they had failed to properly assess all potential longer term demand management and water supply options for SEQ".

"Dams are not part of the drought strategy as the State Government would like the people of Queensland to believe," Mr Sheridan said.

"The fact is that if we do not get useful rain in major catchments by the middle of 2008, Brisbane will be out of water. The Government's proposed dams will not provide water until 2014.

"The need for a proper study of alternatives is all the more important given the dramatic rise in costs for the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam since the Premier's announcement in April."

The capital cost was \$4600 per megalitre when the announcement was first made (not including piping and pumping the water 160 kilometres to the south) and has now risen to well in excess of \$25,000 per megalitre.

Mr Sheridan said the Save the Mary River group team suspected that the true cost was closer to \$50,000 per megalitre.

"That is at least a five-fold increase in cost per megalitre over the last three months, making the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam the most uneconomic of any of the dam options considered by the State Government," he said.

"While the Deputy Premier has publicly stated that the Government has plenty of money and is not worried about the cost, surely the people of Queensland want that money to be spent wisely."

He said the analysis undertaken by the State Government in terms of bulk water supplies had concentrated on mega dams, which were not the solution when climate forecasts predicted extended periods of reduced rainfall for many years into the future.

“We need to be considering solutions which are less reliant on decreasing and highly variable patterns of rainfall,” he said.

Following a briefing by the Director of the Institute for Sustainable Futures from the University of Technology Sydney, Professor Stuart White, the Mary River Council of Mayors unanimously agreed to engage a consultant to undertake a study of alternative water supply and demand management options, with a specific focus on sustainable alternatives to the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

Professor White and his team at the UTS have undertaken similar work on major urban water supplies throughout Australia, including in Sydney, on the Gold Coast, in Alice Springs, Perth and many other locations. Many of these areas have had similar issues to those with which SEQ is now grappling.

Mr Sheridan added: “We are confident that an independent and credible consultant will be able to add significant value to the process.

“More specifically, the study will provide some proper facts and figures about a range of viable alternatives which we are confident will save the State Government hundreds of millions of dollars - money which can be better spent fixing the State's ailing health system.”

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