



Dam the Mary River? Save the Mary River!

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Save the Mary River Coordinating Group

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Senator Bob Brown comes to town

A MAJOR dam is built every two days on a global scale, but there will be no dam in the Mary Valley if Greens leader Bob Brown gets his way.

Amid cheers and chants protesting "No dam, no dam", the Senator and Australian head of the Greens led a flotilla of more than 100 canoes down the Mary River on Sunday, before declaring he would personally take the fight against the proposed Traveston Crossing site to Canberra.

He was joined by world expert on the Queensland lungfish, Professor Jean Joss, who has vowed to alert her international colleagues to the plight of the vulnerable species.

Protestors numbered more than 500 at the Kandanga Hall after the river trip, and included vocal opponents to Premier Peter Beattie's dam proposal - Queensland Greens leader Drew Hutton, Cooloola Mayor Mick Venardos and Noosa Mayor Bob Abbott.

But the real voices were those of the Mary Valley residents who stand to lose properties, heritage and lifestyle and already face the shattering of a community.

Sen Brown acknowledged the strength of feeling he found in the valley and said it was an immensely powerful thing to use against politicians who had expected the community to passively accept the shock dam announcement a month ago.

"This is a badly conceived, wrong-headed proposal; Brisbane has to do what other great cities around the world are doing - develop a much better use of the water available to them," Sen Brown declared.

"Dams are so last century, water efficiency and recycling are the new way forward.

"Take a look at Queanbeyan in New South Wales, where there are rebates for installing dual-flush toilet cisterns and replacing top-loading washing machines with front-loaders as well as buying rainwater tanks.

"Or look at Seattle or even New York"

Sen Brown said 40 million people across the world had been displaced by dams, prompting the World Bank to form the World Dams Commission which returned two major edicts when proposing a dam:

- You must have the people affected support you; and
- You must investigate the alternatives.

"Well Beattie has failed best Third World practice on both counts - no consultation and no studies.

"Just this week the largest dam on earth was completed - the Three Gorges dam in China - which displaced one million people in a Communist regime where no-one was consulted.

"I am amazed that this is happening in Queensland in what is supposed to be a democracy."

Sen Brown referred to his country roots as reason for his defence of the environment and said now was the time for city dwellers to support their country cousins.

"Now is the time for Queensland to step up and become a world leader in water technology," Sen Brown said.

"You are calling for the Government to bring in the (rainwater) tanks, that is exactly what is needed."

He reflected on the successful fight to save the Tasmania's Franklin River, saying that while that campaign was a fight for the wilderness, the Mary Valley fight was for the people.

"Beattie has been shortsheeted, but he is an intelligent Premier and he will be able to change his mind if he is given the right advice and hears the full story of this valley.

“It will be a long campaign and you may be disheartened at times, but it will spread into the living rooms of people right across the nation, and people will heed the strength of feeling of the residents in this valley.”

A veteran campaigner who was instrumental in quashing the Franklin dam proposal against unthinkable odds, Sen Brown urged people to:

- Write letters in their own hand – not computer printouts – to all politicians telling their emotional stories;
- Encourage children to draw pictures about how they are feeling and send them out to all politicians;
- Give input to all Government studies and impact statements – you do not need to be an expert to have a say.

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