



Dam the Mary River? Save the Mary River!

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Save the Mary River Coordinating Group

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“A flawed proposal” key finding of damming report

ANTI-dam campaigner Rick Elliot will launch the Mary Valley’s own report on the flawed Mary River dam proposal on Sunday when Greens Senator Bob Brown takes to the river in a canoe.

He will be joined by the world expert on the Queensland lungfish Professor Jean Joss, who will be among an expected 300 canoeists in the “Flotilla of Hope” in the Mary Valley demonstration against a proposed dam at Traveston Crossing.

Professor Joss, a comparative endocrinologist in Macquarie University's Department of Biological Sciences, has declared she will do anything she can to stop the proposed dam.

The lungfish stands to lose one of its two natural habitats under the dam proposal and Professor Joss has declared the future of the river such a priority that she will speak to anyone influential enough to secure it.

“These fish are so significant, Australia is the custodian of the species for the rest of the world,” Professor Joss said.

In the absence of any State Government reports, the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group has published and widely distributed its own paper on the proposed Traveston Crossing dam south of Gympie.

The paper states that an absence of alternate investigations, the spending of \$40 million tax-payers’ dollars on four abandoned sites, and a range of short-medium term actions waiting for immediate implementation discredit the State Government’s proposed dam on the Mary River.

It will be presented to Greens leader Senator Bob Brown, whose party has taken on the battle to fight both the proposed dam at Rathdowney and the Mary Valley dam.

Mr Elliot said the report findings confirmed the group’s claim that the proposed dam on the Mary River was well and truly flawed.

As leader of the action group, he said the group’s research showed the State Government could meet projected water demand through to 2036 by immediately implementing short and medium term actions contained in the South East Qld Regional Water Supply Strategy released in January this year.

Actions include ground water supplies, desalination, re-commissioning and raising the heights of existing dam walls.

“Improved technologies, water sensitive urban design and appropriate growth planning over the next 40 years will almost certainly extend the life of existing water supply sources without the need for any mega dams,” the report contends.

Mr Elliot called for the government to cease all further investigations on the Mary River, and fully document an investigation into all available alternatives, including recycling, potable rainwater tanks, no-net water impact developments and options for supplementing existing storages.

He said the report highlighted significant public health and environmental issues. Up to 200 arsenic cattle dips would be flooded. Arsenic has been linked to cancer, skin discolouration, nausea, diarrhea, partial paralysis, numbness and blindness.

Economic issues included the loss of the dairy industry alone which was worth \$42 million annually to the economy of the Sunshine Coast Region.

The Mary Valley was rated a moderate to high salinity hazard, prompting the Department of Natural Resources and Mines to advise landowners to avoid building dams in some areas in February 2003.

Salinity, caused when salt levels rise, has contaminated downstream flows by as much as 25 per cent in the Mary River already with the construction of the Borumba Dam and River Barrage prompting over \$400,000 in rivercare and vegetation restoration projects.

“The risk of salinity on what’s left of agriculture downstream of the dam, and on the Great Sandy Straits is too significant to ignore,” Mr Elliot said.

“Recreational fishing brings in \$100 million to Queensland every year. Add to that visitor expenditure from the 200,000 visitors to the region which generates an additional \$366 million per year.

“This proposal risks the extinction of the Mary River Cod, Mary River Turtle, Queensland Lungfish, Giant Barred Frog, Cascade Tree Frog, Coxens Fig Parrot and threatens vulnerable species, the Tusked Frog, Honey blue-eye, Richmond Birdwing Butterfly and the Illidges ant-blue butterfly.

“Endangered and protected remnant rainforest will be destroyed, and all of these species will lose breeding habitat, including whether they are up or down stream of the flawed dam wall,” he said.

“We want to know precisely what are the problems that the Government is trying to solve, because this dam makes no dam sense and is a dumb dam for a smart State”.

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Key events:

7.30am:	Arrival at 1865 Mary Valley Road, Amamoor
9am:	Departure for two-hour trip down-river to Traveston Crossing
Approx 11am:	Press conference, Traveston Crossing
11.30–1.30pm:	Barbecue and film about the Franklin Dam campaign, Kandanga Hall, Kandanga
2pm:	Sen Brown will address a gathering at the University of Sunshine Coast, Lecture Theatre 2, also speaking is Jo Bragg, Environmental Defenders Office, on the EPBC Act and the Mary River

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