



The Dambusters



The e-Newsletter of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group February 2008

From the Vice-President

The Save the Mary River campaign has been ramped up in 2008 with our hopes on Federal Minister for the Environment, Peter Garrett.

The Minister, together with the State Coordinator General Colin Jensen, is the next stop for assessment of the proposed damming of the Mary River, following a record number of scientific submissions that thoroughly discredit the Queensland Government's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Of particular note is the support of thousands of downstream people who are now very concerned that they have not been included in the impact assessment. A big thank you to all who put in submissions and especially our team who worked for weeks on the 180 page STMRCG submission to the EIS. You can download the entire submission from our website. To view our 102 recommendations, use the keyword 'recommendations' in the search function.

Our campaign, now nationwide, has support from both national and international envi-

ronment groups and national media coverage from the January edition of Australian Geographic magazine and the ABC's 7.30 Report. The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) features the Mary River on its website, and is running an online campaign urging the state and federal governments to choose better water supply options for SE Qld. To participate go to www.acfonline.org.au/

On the international front, the European Rivers Network (ERN) has thrown its support behind us by including the Mary River in a major display at the 2008 World Expo in Spain. The exhibit highlights the effects of water infrastructure developments throughout the world on the communities they displace. The Queensland Government's actions in our community have been included in the list of 22 inappropriate water developments to be shamed under an international spotlight.

As former head of the ACF our new Federal Minister for the Environment, Peter Garrett, is a possible sympa-

thetic ear. On paper, the new Federal Government seems to have a very good policy platform on water reform, climate change, biodiversity and ecologically sustainable development. They also seem to have people with the right credentials for making good decisions based on this platform, like Penny Wong and Peter Garrett. From the information in the EIS, and in the many detailed and professional scientific responses to it, it is very clear that the proposal to dam the Mary does not fit into this policy platform.

We will continue to call on and work with the new government to find a political solution that gives a better water security outcome for all Queenslanders, and allows Australians to hold their heads high as international environmental citizens.

Now is the time to continue our lobbying efforts and write to state and federal politicians so they are very much aware of these issues. We will not give up the fight... we have only started.

*Send your letters to
Federal Ministers:*

The Hon Kevin Rudd
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email unavailable for security reasons please send your letter to Mr Rudd

The Hon. Peter Garrett
Minister for the Environment,
Heritage and the Arts
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Peter.Garrett.MP@aph.gov.au

The Hon. Senator Penny Wong
Minister for Climate Change &
Water
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
senator.wong@aph.gov.au

The Hon. Anthony Albanese
Minister for Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development
and Local Government
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
A.Albanese.MP@aph.gov.au

Tell Kevin

By Ian MacKay

As the frenzy of activity of writing submissions to the Traveston Dam EIS abates, many have asked, after drawing a modicum of breath, "What next?"

The response to the EIS was enormous. It seems there have been over sixteen thousand responses. What initially seemed like an incredibly daunting document, proved, on closer scrutiny, to have sufficient holes to permit the passage of Pan-technicians two abreast. (CONT P2)

Tell Kevin (cont.)

Enter our new Prime Minister with an excellent vision for water, posted on his website.

This sounds like a government that has learnt lessons from the Murray and is keen to avoid similar catastrophic and costly mistakes, while seeking to ensure reliable sources of water that are less rainfall-dependent and less impacted by climate change.

And it could have been written by any of us opposing the folly of this dam. The fact is though, that it was written by the man who heads the team that'll have the final say on whether the Mary flows or flounders.

We need to be writing to the PM, to his key Ministers and to federal Labor backbenchers to congratulate them on this far-sighted and visionary statement and to contrast it with the actions of the Old government that not only insists on building the dam but that has done such a cursory examination of all alternatives.

The State Government, and its offshoot QWI, have acted as if there is no impediment to the dam being built; it has thumbed its nose at the possibility that EPBC approval may not be forthcoming, and has embarked on an aggressive process of property acquisition, meetings with contractors etc.

Recent rains have removed some of the urgency of the water "crisis" and allow a breathing space to ensure the wisest water decisions are the ones put into play.

Upcoming events...

Mary River Festival, 2nd March, 2008. Nelson Park, near the Swimming Pool, Gympie. Volunteers are needed. Please contact the centre if you can help.

Spirit of the Mary Photo exhibition 26 Feb—5 April. 10 Artists displaying their work & a Gympie Times photographer. Cooloola Shire Public Gallery, 39 Nash St. Ph 5481 0733 for more info.

We need a lot of letters to do this.

Lots! The bar has been set so high with the number of EIS submissions that many heads turned. Now that they've turned we need them to start to think outside the pro-Traveston briefing they would have received from the Beattie, Bligh, Newton tri-umirate.

Your original letters are always best. Politicians use the rule of thumb that for every letter (or e-mail) received; at least a hundred people share the same viewpoint. That's why sixteen thousand submissions turned more than a few heads. Next come form letters which aren't credited with the same 1 to 100 factor but they're still worth doing.

Call on the Prime Minister and the Federal Government to apply its visionary water policy to override Queensland's ill-advised decision to pursue this dam.

How harshly would the new government be judged if it espoused such a noble and enlightened vision for water and waterways yet failed to deliver at its very first test.

Visit the Save the Mary website <http://www.savethemaryriver.com> or call at the Centre at Kandanga.

The Prime Minister's

National Plan to tackle the water crisis

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth. As the impact of climate change intensifies, Australia faces increasingly acute long-term water shortages both in our cities and regional areas – with lower rainfall, rivers drying up and dam water levels falling. Tackling the water crisis is a major long term priority for the Australian Government.

Tackling the water crisis and securing our future water supply requires all Australians to work together to use water more efficiently, cut water wastage, more effectively capture rain and stormwater, and adapt to the impact of climate change.

The Rudd Government will tackle the water crisis with a national plan to invest in water infrastructure, sustain our farming communities, revitalise our rivers and waterways, secure water supplies in our cities and towns and ensure that we become smarter and more efficient in our water usage.

The Government will invest in greater use of recycled water, desalination and stormwater through a \$1 billion urban water infrastructure fund. The Government will also assist households to install water and energy efficient products, with rebates for rain-water tanks and solar hot water.

The Government will also be working cooperatively with State and Local Governments, farmers, industry and the community to secure Australia's long-term water supply.

(Source: *The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd's website* <http://www.pm.gov.au/>)

Send your letters to State Ministers:

The Hon. Paul Lucas
Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning
PO Box 15009,
CITY EAST QLD, 4002
deputypremier@ministerial.qld.gov.au

The Hon. Andrew McNamara
Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation
PO Box 15155,
CITY EAST, QLD, 4002
sustainability@ministerial.qld.gov.au

The Hon. Anna Bligh
Premier
PO Box 15185,
CITY EAST, QLD, 4002
premier@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Go online...

Remember the Travestonswamp Forum is a great place to discuss the issues and to keep up to date. Diligent news watchers post the latest media reports. Go to www.savethemaryriver.com and find the link on our homepage.

From the River

The recent rain has bought relief to our river, greatly improving the water quality with salinity and dissolved oxygen levels returning to normal range. The flooding has flushed out a lot of the menace of *water hyacinth* and *salvinia* with small remnants remaining in some parts of the river. *Dense water reed* has also been reduced. However stronger currents are needed to really clear this weed (introduced from aquariums!) out of the river. Flooding is essential for the health of our river and the much needed fresh water for fisheries in the Great Sandy Strait RAMSAR Wetlands at the mouth of the river.

There are some excellent opportunities to explore the creeks and the river by canoe. Traveston Crossing is a great place to access the water. Paddle up or downstream. Be safe. You can check water heights and flood warnings by visiting the Bureau of Meteorology.

The numbers in the colony of the Grey Headed Flying Fox, listed as a vulnerable species, have lifted from approx 10,000 in October, to over 150,000 now. This is due partly to a group of migratory Little Red Flying Foxes joining the colony to feed in the endangered riparian rainforest and the adjacent woodlands of the Mary Valley.



For great gifts, the latest news, campaign suggestions, info, or support call in at our Info Centre or call on 54 884 800.

The Centre is open between 10am – 4pm daily.

Got guests coming to the valley? Bring 'em in! All visitors welcome.

Warning...

DPI officers have been visiting homes to discuss post-dam agriculture. Complaints about their behaviour have been made. If you're visited, ask to see their ID. You have a right not to talk to them. Keep written notes of the meeting. Ring the Info Centre to report their visits, seek advice & get support when talking to them..

Your Membership Renewal is Vital

Membership of the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group Inc is important. The group is an Incorporated Association under the Act. This makes the Group a legal entity itself. This means that when a financial member is performing a duty for the Association in the campaign to stop the building of this stupid dam on our special river, his/her private assets are not endangered by any legal action that might be taken. Legal action can be taken only against the Group, and not against individual members.

Membership subscriptions also provide the group with valued funds to produce communication materials for the community and to keep our Information Centre open.

It is time to renew your membership OR CONSIDER BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE SAVE THE MARY RIVER COORDINATING GROUP INC. YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL.

Committee Meetings

The Save the Mary River Coordinating Group meets fortnightly at the Info Centre. All financial members of the Group are welcome to join the committee. Contact the Centre for details of our next meeting.

Did you write a submission to the State Gov responding to the Draft EIS?

Send copies of your submission to the assessors in the Federal Dept of Environment, Water, Heritage & the Arts:

Email: epbc.referrals@environment.gov.au

plus

deborah.cleland@environment.gov.au

Deborah will ensure the referrals section did receive your email. Quote the reference 2006/3150 Traveston Crossing Dam.



Cartoon courtesy of Jeff Douwes