



# Wildlife Queensland

YOUR VOICE FOR YOUR WILDLIFE

## **Address to Senate Inquiry: A submission on Additional Water Supplies for SEQ – Traveston Crossing Dam**

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) was established in 1962 and is a wildlife-focused, Queensland based conservation group. With over 3500 supporters spread across 19 branches throughout the State.

WPSQ is apolitical. In brief our aims include;

- **Preserve** the flora and fauna by all lawful means
- **Educate** the community about conservation and preservation of the natural environment
- **Discourage** unnecessary development of any part of the natural environment.
- **Encourage** rational land use, proper planning of development and appropriate use of the natural environment and its management.

WPSQ works together with other key conservation groups in Queensland for the betterment of the environment and the benefits that brings not only to wildlife but to Queenslanders and our visitors.

WPSQ strongly supports the Senate Inquiry because it presents an opportunity for both supporters and those opposing the development to air their views.

WPSQ recognizes south-east Queensland is facing a water crisis. A broad range of options is required to provide water resources for the ever increasing population of south-east Queensland, primary and secondary industries, flora, fauna and ecological processes. Dams are currently part of the solution and will continue to be. However WPSQ has major concerns about the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam being an appropriate component of the long-term solution

WPSQ prefers governments and other significant decision making bodies to use clear, transparent and accountable processes when arriving at decisions that impact on the community and the environment. Obviously public consultation is a major phase of any acceptable process. On occasions the Beattie Government uses such processes effectively. The Traveston Crossing Dam was not one of those occasions.

WPSQ in its written submission limited its comments to issues of major concern. As indicated by my colleague Toby Hutchens, in the interest of the senate Committee's time WPSQ will highlight its opening statement only two issues raised namely Protocols and Policies that should have guided the Queensland Government's actions that will impact on the environment if this project goes ahead.

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### **Protocols and Policies**

The proposed Traveston Crossing Dam project has become a controlled action under the EPBC Act. WPSQ implores the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources to exercise wisely the powers available to him under the legislation.

It is WPSQ's opinion that there needs to be close scrutiny of compliance by the Queensland Government with the EPBC Act to ensure the intent or objects of particular Chapters are satisfied.

A number of protocols and signed bilateral agreements as well as Commonwealth legislation that should have guided the Queensland Government's actions.

The Queensland Government is a signatory to several bilateral agreements and protocols with the Commonwealth. The Intergovernment Agreement on the Environment commits the Queensland Government to care of the environment. It also advocates ecological sustainable development and the use of the Precautionary Principle when necessary. There is little evidence that the Queensland Government gave due and appropriate consideration to this. The Queensland Government's lack of compliance with other agreements such as the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, the National Biodiversity and Climate Action Plans and the National Water Initiative all should be considered. The outcomes that would arise from construction of the dam appear to conflict with the purpose and objectives of many of these agreements.

### **Impacts on the natural environment**

Impacts will be severe on riverine and in-stream habitats and the wildlife they house or support. It is estimated that some 500 ha of endangered regional ecosystems would be destroyed. In addition, changes to the environmental flows may have significant down stream impact on the Great Sandy Marine Park and associated wetlands. One can only contemplate that salinity problems will escalate.

Should the dam proceed, time will tell the total impact on fauna. There are three species of immediate concern. These include the Mary River cod (*Maccullochella peelii mariensis*), the Mary River turtle (*Elusor macrurus*) and the Queensland lungfish (*Neoceratodus forsten*). The Mary River Cod and the Mary River Turtle are both listed as endangered under the EPBC Act. The Mary River is regarded as the best option for the restoration and protection of the lungfish. Undoubtedly management plans for the conservation of these species will be put in place. However species loss is usually gradual and not dramatic. The species may exist surviving the disruption, but will they breed? Will necessary ecological processes continue after this massive intervention? It is also stressed that there is a lag time from loss of and or devastation of habitat to the noticeable impact on species. Management plans will need the test of time to ensure their effectiveness and the long term survival of the species. There is no guarantee funding to underpin these plans will continue to be provided.

Comprehensive environmental studies, including the required Environmental Impact Assessments are not available to evaluate Government claims that state that no environmental harm will eventuate. So from the data available one can conclude that environmental harm will occur. There is insufficient information available to justify that the Traveston Crossing Dam option is the best fit for that component of the long term

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water strategy. Is the risk to our biodiversity and interruption to ecological processes by selecting this site warranted?

WPSQ thanks the Senate Committee for this opportunity to appear before it.

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