

Re: Traveston Crossing

Dear Editor,

I have just seen a copy of the current magazine and read the article entitled "Valley of potential" about the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

To say that I am appalled is a severe understatement.

Even the headline on the front cover – "South East Queensland's Last Bulk Water Option" – is patently false.

The decision to build the dam was purely political and designed to re-elect the present Queensland government by convincing the electors of South East Queensland that they were about to run out of water and then preying on their fears of a waterless future by promising to build this disastrous dam to save them.

More than 150,000 people of the Mary Valley will be materially and severely affected should it be approved. It will remove a huge amount of life giving water from the Mary catchment with devastating economic, environmental and social effects and it is by far the highest cost option of any alternatives, consideration of which have been given less than lip service.

The environmental impact statement (EIS) conveniently proved what the proponent wanted it to prove. As an example, to use mean annual flows over 109 years in a short coastal river characterised by very short periods of large volume floods interspersed with long periods of little or no flow as the benchmark to justify the construction of this dam is simply meaningless. In fact, for the years 1999-2007 (curiously not included in the flow modelling by the proponent), the mean annual flow has been close to only half the 109 year average, while an analysis of the 109 year average figures proves that, for 54 out of the 109 years, the annual flow has been between 23% and 62% less than the longterm mean. I did not read those facts in the article.

The article mentions that the Mary is a "wet" catchment and that 78% of the catchment is below the dam site. The article does not, however, mention that average rainfall above the dam site is up to 1200mm

greater than the average rainfall in the catchment below the dam site. In fact, in normal years, the river has a net flow deficit below the dam site and out to the estuary.

A dam, in ecological, environmental and social terms, is forever, because whatever damage is done by its construction will have irreparable consequences. We must be very sure that we can live forever with those consequences.

A proposal to build a dam which necessitates nearly 300 mitigating strategies, many of which are untried and unproven and affect up to 18 endangered, vulnerable and rare animals (including the iconic Queensland lungfish), and the EIS which is littered with phrases like "should not have any effect", "is unlikely to have any effect", "needs more detailed research, but", hardly demonstrates the mandatory Precautionary Principle, or a commitment to ensuring that the proposed dam is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.

Darryl Stewart
Chairman,
Greater Mary Association

Dear Editor,

I have been a professional engineer for almost 20 years. I have great respect for Engineers Australia as an organisation, and am proud of my profession's growing commitment to sustainable development and environmental values, and Engineers Australia's role in promoting those ideals.

So I hope you will appreciate that I am absolutely appalled by the cover story "Valley of potential" in last month's Water Engineering Australia magazine. The front cover title "Southeast Queensland's last bulk water option" is patently untrue, and the article itself is similarly misleading.

There is a very real danger that people will misinterpret the magazine cover and the article to mean that Engineers Australia endorses the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam. Indeed, proponents of the project may actually promote such a misinterpretation.

Many independent experts – lead-

ing engineers and scientists – have studied the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam and found it to be unnecessary, at high risk of failure, and environmentally damaging and unsustainable. I am referring to people such as Professor Stuart White (University of Technology, Sydney), Professor David Williams (University of Queensland), Professor Angela Arthington (Griffith University), Professor Jean Joss (Macquarie University), Professor Gene Helfman, (University of Georgia), Steve Burgess (MRCCC) and Steve Posselt (former president, Australian Water Association) – to name a few.

The latter two gentlemen recently presented at another Engineers Australia Queensland Water forum, which is not mentioned or referenced at all in the article.

Darren Edward,
Senior process engineer,
Brisbane

Dear Editor,

With respect to Traveston Crossing, the Integrated Quantity-Quality Model (IQQM) assumptions don't rate. As locals to the area, we know how the river performs.

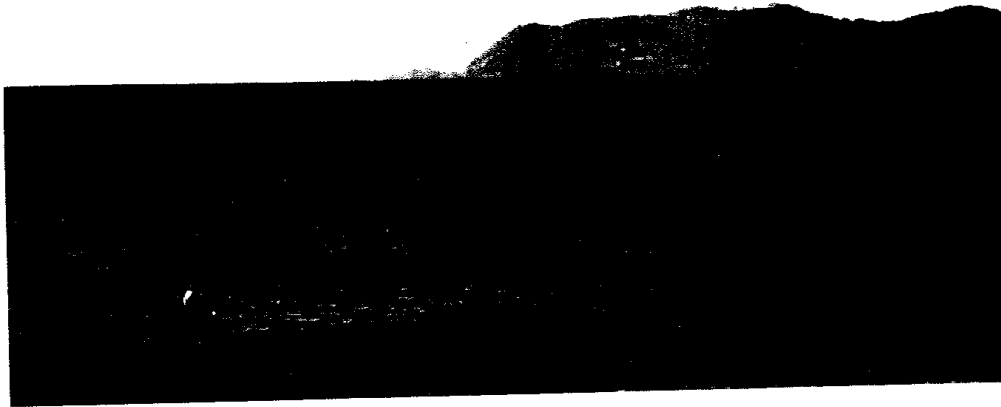
The absence of a compensation package for potential externalities to downstream and receiving environments makes a mockery of the process.

It will be the federal court room and the cabinet "deals", which hold the fate of Traveston.

To read in more detail on the Wide Bay Burnett Conservation Council's submission to the environmental impact statement, which is focused on the potential ecological, economical and social impacts likely to occur to the receiving waters of the Great Sandy Ramsar Wetland and the regional economy, based on inadequacies in the EIS concerning adherence to the terms of reference, go to <http://rogercurrie.wordpress.com/my-submission-to-traveston-dam-eis/>.

Roger Currie
Vice president and water
policy officer,
Wide Bay Burnett
Conservation Council

Paddling a message down the coast



Steve Posselt paddles toward Byron Bay on the NSW north coast.

By the time this magazine is delivered, it is expected that civil engineer Steve Posselt would have completed a kayak trip from Brisbane to Sydney bringing attention to the impending decision concerning the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam.

Prior to the coastal trip, Posselt kayaked down the Mary River upon which the proposed dam is situated. He observed that the groundwater and surface water interactions were quite complex and pointed out that a dam with a curtain to bedrock would affect the groundwater system and the irrigators downstream. He highlighted this as one of his concerns if a dam was built upstream.

Posselt has been in the water industry for 37 years with expertise in mechanical equipment for the water industry, with particular international experience on water control gates. He said the proposed dam was the worst decision he had seen,

because the decision to commence works on the preliminary designs was of a political nature. He was kayaking down the coast calling for a cost benefit analysis of the dam to be completed, confident that much better alternatives would be realised once such a study had been completed.

"One of the interesting water facts is that more water falls on Brisbane than the city actually uses," Posselt said, continuing to explain that with significant infrastructure this rainfall could be captured through alternatives like stormwater harvesting and aquifer recharge.

Also, Posselt said, desalination offers a more secure climate independent source in an uncertain climatic future.

Posselt called for engineering consultants to be given a contract with a considerable time frame to thoroughly investigate what the alternatives are, and what these alternatives could provide.