



Hon Henry Palaszczuk MP
Member for Inala



**Queensland
Government**

**Minister for Natural Resources,
Mines and Water**

Ref CTS 04173/06

05 JUL 2006

Mr N J Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Cnr Alice and George Streets
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie *Neil*

I refer to your letter of 25 May 2006 enclosing a copy of Petition No. 656-06 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The Petition requests that the House do all in its power to withdraw any plans for a dam in the Gympie electorate.

The recent extended drought in eastern Australia is the worst for over 100 years. Compounding the problem of shrinking water supply in South East Queensland (SEQ) is the fact this region is one of the fastest growing in Australia with the population expected to grow by over one million people in the next 20 years and a further million by the middle of the century. Water can no longer be supplied and managed on a local basis so work is under way to develop whole-of-region solutions to the future water needs of SEQ. Managing urban water infrastructure is a very complex issue and over the last decade society has placed increased value on environmental outcomes for water infrastructure.

Future water planning requires the assessment of the magnitude of gains through demand management so that new water supply arrangements to meet any shortfalls can be implemented as the needs arise. For some time the Queensland Government with local governments and other water service providers in SEQ have been developing the *South East Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy* (SEQRWSS) which involves an assessment of a range of options to increase supply and reduce demand, including:

Level 13 Mineral House
41 George Street Brisbane Qld 4000
PO Box 15456 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3896 3688
Facsimile +61 7 3210 6214
Email NRMW@ministerial.qld.gov.au
Website www.nrm.qld.gov.au

- managing demand (for example, targets for reducing consumption, water-sensitive urban design, rainwater tanks, targets for recycling);
- managing wastage (for example, reducing mains pressure and fixing leaks);
- additional storage infrastructure (new storages and/or raising existing storages);
- desalination;
- potential groundwater sources;
- water recycling for urban, industrial and rural purposes.

The SEQRWSS has been investigating numerous bulk water supply options for the region. Upgrading and implementing new dams is part of the long term vision to the region's water supply. Determining an appropriate dam site is dependent on local topography, catchment area and runoff leading to the available yield. To support the demands of a growing population and associated industries there is a need to supply large quantities of reliable water.

Preliminary investigations on possible dam sites within the SEQ, have identified Traveston and Tilleys Bridge as preferred options for further assessment. Accordingly, in order to plan for the region's growing needs, it is important to commence feasibility studies now, as dams involve longer lead times than other water supply options, such as desalination and recycling. It takes several years to complete a full environmental impact assessment and gain the necessary approvals and to complete designs and management plans.

The Traveston dam site has been identified as the only site in the region where a large capacity dam could be constructed. In the Mary Valley, at least four extra storages would need to be built to provide up to a similar annual quantity of water as the Traveston proposal.

A range of detailed investigations on the Traveston Dam site are currently underway to confirm the preliminary information. Although the dam, if it proceeds, would create significant economic and social benefits for the SEQ, it is well recognised that the dam will also affect people living in the area, the local economy and environment. Therefore, the decision to build major storage infrastructure is not taken lightly, and substantial resources are put in place to mitigate adverse impacts as much as possible.

The final go ahead is dependent on various Commonwealth and State Government approvals which are still required. On-ground geotechnical assessments and other assessments all need to be completed before these approvals can be obtained. Further assessment following the preliminary feasibility study would include a rigorous environmental impact assessment and impact mitigation activities and extensive community consultation in accordance with Commonwealth and State environmental protection legislation.

Technical Advisory Panel assessments of the Mary river reaches indicate that the full utilisation of entitlements proposed in the draft water resource plan would result in only minor to moderate changes as a result of the dam, particularly in the natural flowing parts of the river moving further downstream. The Panel concluded that while there may be major impacts close to the dam, substantial recovery is expected further downstream, with limited change in the estuarine and receiving waters, including those associated with the RAMSAR Wetland and the Great Sandy Strait.

Further information is available on www.nrm.qld.gov.au/water. The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water has also established a hotline to address questions about the progress of the investigations and to take advice from the community concerning issues that need to be addressed. The hotline phone number is 1800 243 585.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Henry Palaszczyk MP
**Minister for Natural Resources,
Mines and Water**