

6 December 2006

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat  
Rue Mauverney 28  
CH-1196 Gland,  
Switzerland

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Proposed Dam on the Mary River at Traveston, Queensland, Australia**

The Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC) wishes to draw the Ramsar Secretariat's attention to the Queensland Government's proposal to construct a dam on the Mary River at Traveston Crossing in South-east Queensland. We have grave concerns that the Traveston Crossing dam will severely impact upon the environmental flows entering the estuary of the Mary River in the Great Sandy Strait, a sand passage estuary between the mainland and the World Heritage-listed Fraser Island in South-east Queensland. The Mary River estuary and the Great Sandy Strait were listed as a Ramsar wetland in 1999. The Great Sandy Strait is an exceptionally important feeding ground for migratory shorebirds and important for a wide range of other shorebirds, waterfowl and seabirds, marine fish, crustaceans, oysters, dugong, sea turtles and dolphins, and supports a significant commercial and recreational fishing industry.

The recently released Mary Basin Water Resource Plan (WRP) allows less than 1 megalitre of flow per day at Gympie for 20 years out of the next 110 years. The WRP as legislated for the Mary Basin indicates the impact of the proposed dam will create periods of no flow (less than 1 megalitre per day) for up to six months at a time. Periodic small flooding events will also cease below the dam wall, which will prevent environmental flows reaching the estuary. These small freshes are critical for ecological functioning such as fishing spawning in the estuary. Currently, in the driest month of the year, the average flow at Gympie is 171 megalitres per day, whereas the WRP, as legislated, will permit the operator to reduce this to just 1 megalitre per day if the need arises. Reductions in low and medium flow events will increase salinity levels within the estuarine reach of the Mary River and the Great Sandy Strait. The natural flushing of the Mary River and mixing of freshwater with the seawater that creates brackish conditions will be reduced.

Freshwater flows also help support marine fish production as many marine fish spawn in the Mary River estuary and Great Sandy Strait. The Traveston Crossing Dam proposal is likely to have significant impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance all the way to the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar wetlands and beyond. A decrease in freshwater flow and nutrients due to dam construction will affect the nursery areas in a number of ways, including increasing salinity, allowing predatory marine fish to invade, and reducing the available food supply.

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*The MRCCC gratefully acknowledges the support of  
the Caloundra, Cooloola, Kilkivan, Maroochy, Maryborough, Noosa, Tiaro and Woocoo Shires,  
the Burnett Mary Regional Group, the National Landcare Programme, the Australian Government Water Fund,  
the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Gambling Community Benefit Fund,  
the Australian Government Envirofund, Toshiba Pty. Ltd. and Powerlink.*

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Both the Burnett and the Mary Rivers flow to the Great Sandy Strait, which is one of the five internationally recognised Ramsar wetlands within Queensland. Studies since 1980 show that runoff from these catchments has declined and is only greater than the minimum evaporation rate for the region, in less than 10% of all instances. This period corresponds to an increase in tidal barrage and dam infrastructure, particularly within the Burnett River Catchment. This preliminary research may be revealing the first impacts on estuarine ecosystems (Ramsar wetlands) from infrastructure related flow reductions to the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar wetland. These findings also raise serious questions as to what effect further reductions in freshwater flows will have under the Mary Basin Water Resource Plan.

All these impacts will affect Ramsar wetland species including migratory birds and have flow-on impacts to endangered species beyond the 3-mile nautical limit of the *Commonwealth Marine environment*.

For further information, please find enclosed a copy of correspondence sent from the MRCCC to Australian Government Ministers on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2006 in relation to the referral under the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act (Registered Number 2006/3150) by Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd (QWIPL)/Water Management and Use/Mary River/Qld Traveston Crossing Dam dated 15 November 2006.

The MRCCC is hopeful that the Ramsar Secretariat will be able to contact the appropriate Australian Government authorities, to reiterate the concerns outlined herein.

Yours sincerely,



**Harry Jamieson**

**Chair**

**MRCCC**

cc to Ramsar Secretary General, Peter Bridgewater [pbwater@ramsar.org](mailto:pbwater@ramsar.org)

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