

Joint Statement:

Premier and Minister for the Arts
The Honourable Anna Bligh

Minister for Infrastructure and Planning
The Honourable Stirling Hinchliffe
06/10/2009

Queensland Coordinator-General approves Traveston Crossing Dam report

After three years of environmental assessment, the first stage of Traveston Crossing Dam has today been approved by Queensland's Coordinator-General.

Premier Anna Bligh and Infrastructure Minister Stirling Hinchliffe said the Coordinator-General's final report has now been forwarded to the Federal Environment Minister to assess matters of national environmental significance.

"I have always said that South East Queensland needs this project to deliver reliable water supply for the future and I am very pleased that it has passed independent evaluation," Ms Bligh said.

"I look forward to a prompt decision on Traveston Crossing Dam from the Federal Environment Minister - it will put us on the front foot for climate change and population growth into the future.

"It is the best and cheapest water supply option. It will deliver 770 construction jobs and now we know it will deliver real wins for the environment.

"The Coordinator-General has produced a detailed 378-page report that sets new standards for environmentally responsible dam building.

"There are more than 1,200 separate conditions and requirements which show just how comprehensive the Coordinator-General's assessment has been.

"The Coordinator-General's assessment is based on advice from some of Australia's foremost scientific experts on the Queensland Lungfish, Mary River Turtle, Mary River Cod and Giant Barred Frog - advice that was peer reviewed by the CSIRO.

"The experts believe environmental measures for the Traveston Crossing Dam Project will improve the situation for these species, through extensive work to improve their habitat and research at the \$35 million Freshwater Species Conservation Centre to be run by the University of Queensland.

"But the Coordinator-General has taken a precautionary approach and gone much further with his conditions."

Environmental requirements include:

- Around 2,000 ha of Riparian Vegetation be restored and protected, including about 50 kilometres of instream rehabilitation and a one kilometre section downstream from the dam wall to improve connectivity for freshwater species.
- A \$10 million Catchment Enhancement Program to protect, create and rehabilitate habitat elsewhere in the Mary River catchment, expected to relate to at least 20 km of creeks and rivers, with 250 ha of surrounding riparian vegetation.
- A fishway and turtle bypass system not just on the dam wall, but also retrofitted to an existing waterway barrier in the Mary River catchment.

"The Coordinator-General has required that prior to construction of the dam wall, rehabilitation and enhancement of the area's current degraded environment will have begun to deliver a massive increase in suitable habitat for endangered species such as the Lungfish, Mary River Cod and Mary River Turtle," Ms Bligh said.

"New habitat buffers will be established around the dam to help those endangered species repopulate and improve the connectivity with surrounding wildlife corridors."

She said the scientific experts noted the impact the current state of the Mary River has had on these species.

"The sad reality is years of mining and agriculture have seriously degraded the catchment and the EIS found 85 per cent of the study area was cleared of native vegetation.

"The experts say doing nothing is not an option and the Traveston Crossing Dam offers a unique opportunity to undertake widespread environmental work on a scale that will improve this whole ecosystem."

Minister for Infrastructure and Planning Stirling Hinchliffe said the Traveston Crossing Dam was identified by leading economists from Monash University and consultants Marsden Jacob Associates as the most cost effective and beneficial water storage option for South East Queensland.

"This project will deliver a key part of the water supplies needed to keep the vital SEQ economy moving forward," Mr Hinchliffe said.

"There is opportunity for local businesses to play a key role in supplying goods and services to the project and the Coordinator-General has also made it a condition that \$20 million be spent to help sustain the local economy, especially its agricultural sector and also to create new recreational tourism opportunities.

"There will be hundreds of new construction jobs created by the project and indirectly approximately 1,745 extra jobs across SEQ at the peak of the project.

"Subject to approval from the Federal Environment Minister, early habitat rehabilitation and enhancement work could begin within months."

Traveston Crossing Dam is scheduled for completion by 2016/2017.