

The Phantom Water Crisis

We understand there is a water crisis. A small group of people are being asked to make a sacrifice to allow the building of the Mary River Dam so the majority of the people can have access to water.

This may be reasonable if the dam was really going to provide the extra water needed however there is a basic flaw in the logic. Dams work well in cold wet climates, but in dry arid climates the soils dry out and absorb small rains. Runoff only occurs in major storms which occur infrequently and at random. The current shortage of water is totally predictable; it had to happen some time, it just happens to be now. It is totally ludicrous that we should be dependant on freak storms to provide our water.

Yet there is plenty of rain, just 1 mm of rain falling on a square kilometre gives a million litres of water. Almost a million litres of rain fall for every man, woman and child per day. Even in the densely populated Coolangatta, to Bundaberg, Toowoomba coast zone there is some 50,000 litres per person per day. Our dams only capture 1 in 2,000 of the litres of rain that fall; 0.05%. Even in the so-called drought there are reasonable falls of the smaller coastal rains which could provide the water we need. This can be cheaply harvested storing some water in tanks but greater amounts in the soil using underground ponds (wicking beds, percolation holes etc as illustrated in the web site).

The water shortage is not caused by some unexpected drought but by a dysfunctional water bureaucracy, which has been asleep while all the symptoms of an impending crisis were obvious, then panics into an ill thought out repetition of a system that has already failed.

There is a great financial incentive for the water bureaucracy to hang onto its privileged monopoly position as sole water supplier. Peter Beattie cannot be expected to have detailed expertise on water; he is manipulated by the water bureaucracy. The Government needs to set up an organisation outside the traditional water bureaucracy, which has so demonstrably failed, to help householders, growers and local communities with setting up micro harvesting schemes to take advantage of the small but reliable coastal rains. This would provide a reliable source of water so we are not dependant on freak natural events.

Then we would not need the Mary dam, we could have green gardens and cut down the amount we spend on water.

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