

SUNFISH FRASER COAST



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19/11/09

Hon. Tim Mulherin
Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and
Rural and Regional Queensland
GPO Box 46, BRISBANE QLD, 4001

Re Funding for Fishway No1 Weir Burrum River

Dear Mr Mulherin,

In a recent article in the Courier Mail [Dec. 10th] you commented on the recovery of two Australian Bass from Tinana Creek, a tributary stream of the Mary River. The author of the article indicated the fish made their way downstream to the tidal barrage on the Mary River, crossed it and thence to the estuary. In all probability the bass used the fish way associated with the Mary River Barrage which does not involve crossing an 8.1 m high wall.

Both the Tinana Creek and the Mary River fish ways are of modern design developed by officers of your depart and represent best practice. Without these fish ways the outcomes may not have been as reported. Their functioning has certainly indicated their success in maintaining a freshwater ecosystem.

When the Government issued an interim Operating Licence for the raising of the wall on Lenthalls Dam on the Burrum River, a condition of the Licence was that a working fish way was to be installed on No.1 weir on the Burrum within 12 months of the completion of the raising of the spillway. Last year there was a massive fish kill below the wall of No 1 weir because Bass, Barramundi and other species could not regain access to fresh water .

Sunfish, along with other organisations, have been pressing Wide Bay Water Corporation, the licensee, to install the fish way. We now find that your Government has withdrawn the guarantee of funding for this project. Minister, we find this act irresponsible in the light of the proven performance of existing fish ways in the region. Furthermore, it shows a callous disregard for sustainability of fish stocks due to the inability of the fish to pass from salt to fresh water and vice versa enabling sufficient natural recruitment for the Burrum River to regain its marine diversity.

Your praise of the tagging program is acknowledged but you have failed to recognise the role that properly designed fish ways play in the maintenance of biodiversity in our rivers, and the Governments withdrawal of funding is reckless and a failure to really to provide infrastructure to make this happen.

We ask what action you will take as soon as possible for an immediate return of the funding guarantee?

Yours faithfully

Martin Bellert
SECRETARY