

IN DEFENCE OF MARY

Site-specific environmental art projects on the Mary River and their role in enabling her defence.

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In recent years, a number of site-specific art projects centring on the Mary River in South-East Queensland have generated a heightened appreciation for the river as an entity of cultural, aesthetic and spiritual significance. This paper will examine the background and content of some of these projects, and look at the extent to which they have increased the social capacity of Mary Valley communities. Using data gathered from questionnaires, it will be argued that these art-based projects have helped generate networks of people who share an awareness of intrinsic values associated with the river. This recent background of greater appreciation of the Mary River has combined with the overwhelming local perception of the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal as a threat to the integrity of the Mary system, to generate an outpouring of creative endeavours in her defence. The campaign to save the Mary River has been characterised from its inception by a strong cultural component which has acted to maintain people's involvement and prevent burn-out. This cultural slant has generated creative, unorthodox tactics and strategies that have enabled a numerically small group of rural residents to mount a national campaign and trigger a senate enquiry. This paper will briefly describe some of these groups and selected cultural events, ranging from launching a CD of songs for Mary, *Artists Saving Mary* printmaking projects to the "situationist"-style theatre tactics of *Sisters of Mary*.

Methodology

To gather information for this paper, artists, viewers and organisers for Bathing with Mary (BWM) were contacted personally where possible and otherwise via telephone or e-mail. Questionnaires were circulated to all artists and hosts involved with the second project, Farming with Mary (FWM). A number of personal and telephone interviews were conducted and a meeting held at the author's home to allow input. Input was also sought through an on-line forum connected to the Save the Mary River website.

Background

Site-specific art emerged in the late 1960s in reaction to the growing commodification of art and the prevailing ideals of art's autonomy and universality (Kwon 2002). Site-specific art, from its earliest formation focussed on establishing an "inextricable, indivisible relationship" between the work and its site and required the physical presence of the viewer (Kwon p. 12). Korp (1997) explains that works of art which are site-specific can not (with rare exceptions) be exhibited in a gallery. Ancient or contemporary, they share common features with sacred places and are intended to evoke universal, trans-cultural responses in the viewer to sacred sites or places of power in the

landscape (Korp 1997). In the 1980s and 1990s, a number of sculpture symposia in Asia and Northern Europe presented artists with the opportunity to have a direct encounter with nature. These new symposia encouraged the strict use of natural elements in artworks, and talked explicitly about ecology (Davin (2005). Such philosophy lay behind the foundation of *Artists in Nature International Network*. Set up in December 1998 and based in Lahaymeix, France, Artists in Nature International Network (AiNIN) represents artists and communities who are interested in using the surrounding natural environment, in a respectful way, as a form of presentation for their work. Their aim is to assist those artists who are already working in the field and to encourage communities who are interested in creating new events and art forms in the environment (Burslem 2001).

In 2002 the group responded to an invitation from *Floating Land*, an innovative project by the Noosa Regional Gallery intended to celebrate the unique natural environment of the Noosa Hinterland. Gallery's then Director Kevin Wilson (2003) recounts

Floating Land 2003 was an event held as part of Noosa Regional Gallery's second major biennial site-specific art project that ended in high drama at 3am on the top of a mountain. The emphasis for this project was on experimentation both in terms of the art and the notion of what constitutes an event/festival that takes place over a period of time.

As a result of *Floating Land*, during 2003 the Sunshine Coast hinterland saw a number of site-specific art projects typical of the hybrid arts/environmental projects at the cutting edge of environmental art in Australia today. Among the international artists involved was Francois Davin, a Frenchman who had been knighted in his home country for his community-building arts practice and who was destined to play a role in preparing the residents of the Mary Valley for an unexpected trial.

The first project concerning the Mary River, *Bathing with Mary*, followed soon after *Floating Land*. It took place in 2004 on a stretch of the Mary in a district called Federal, south of the town of Gympie. The artists involved spent time travelling and experiencing the Mary River before researching the unique aspect they would consider in their pieces. They then engaged in scientific research before constructing the pieces (Sally Spencer pers comm). A series of postcards recording the six exhibits was produced by Gympie Landcare, underlining the project's situatedness in an interdisciplinary area between art and ecology.

The issues dealt with seem uncannily prescient, with the benefit of hindsight. Sally Spencer's ephemeral silk installation with haunting images of the Mary River turtle (*Elusor macrurus*) brought home the closeness of the species' brush with extinction and the need to protect the rich biodiversity of the Mary River. Wendy McGrath's magnificent Camphor Laurel leaf bedspread acknowledged the profound patience, skill and resourcefulness of women, both indigenous and non-indigenous, in managing limited resources and dealt in a creative way with the issue of exotic weeds. Suzanne McLean used the light plane flight over the Mary estuary to conceptualise massive bird's eye

view canvasses which seemed part way between mapping and an amalgam of mud, clay and blood.

The two pieces by Francois Davin seem especially prophetic. The first was an installation of blue poly-propylene ropes falling diagonally from the canopy to the ground, evoking the lost rain of the Mary catchment. The other, a skeletal canoe, called a *piroque*, was suspended from the riparian vegetation at the water levels of years gone by, well above the existing river water level. Both these works spoke eloquently of loss of rainfall and the diminishment of rivers. In a subsequent exhibition based on the Federal installation held at Cooloola Shire Gallery, Francois refused to have his work shown in the gallery space, in keeping with the principles of site-specific art. However he compromised to allow the *piroque* to be suspended in the outside area of the building, where it still remains.

Feedback from participants reveals that for some this was a seminal experience in their relationship to the Mary River. 75% of respondents reported that they have some ongoing involvement with the river through personal art-making or conservation activities.

I believe my awareness became stronger and more conscious. I realised much more clearly how rivers are the life-blood of catchments and that we are all directly dependent on them for survival (viewer)

I've been working for a year and a half on a body of work dealing with the symbolic aspects of water (artist).

My understanding of ecological issues in the Mary river was deepened by this experience. I found the artists' dedication inspirational and motivational (viewer).

A subsequent project, *Farming with Mary* (FWM) in 2005 was co-ordinated by Francois Davin, using his contacts from the Artists in Nature International Network and bore the hallmarks of his community-building emphasis. He describes it as follows:

After moving from France to Kandanga, a small town near Gympie, in Queensland, in 2002, I became interested in offering a site-specific art project with the local community. This project, Farming with Mary, eventuated in June 2005. Ten international artists – from Germany, Korea, Italy, Canada's Quebec province, France and the Netherlands – were hosted in ten farms of the Mary Valley's four rural communities, which in this essay I will refer to as 'villages'. There, within the boundaries of 'their' farms, each artist created an art piece that expressed his or her reaction to the encounter. Simultaneously, four regional artists responded to a bridge in each of the four villages. Each village invited the fourteen artists, ten farmers and all the inhabitants of the villages to celebrate the adventure. It was hoped that Farming with Mary would develop as a direct result of the encounter between the artists, the land and the land's caretakers.

The approach I used for Farming with Mary followed the same principles as my earlier projects. The aim is always to ensure the attention, participation and ownership of the program by the community. These principles are as follows:

- *The artworks are site-specific, reasonably durable but not maintained, and made to be 'taken back' by nature.*

- *The artworks are produced on site and in public view.*
- *The community should participate in the selection of the projects. 3*
- *The artists to be hosted in community members' homes.*
- *Community members to share responsibility for feeding and entertaining the artists.*
- *The community to provide physical and material help in constructing the art pieces.*
- The organisation to be based on 'commissions' managed and staffed by community members.

Social capacity and community-building

Social Capital is defined by the OECD as "...networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups". According to Robert Putnam, a leading exponent of the concept, social capital is a key component to building and maintaining democracy (2000). A Cooloola Shire Council representative from the Mary Valley who was involved in gaining RADF funds for the project testified to the effectiveness of the *Farming with Mary* project in building communication networks and social capital in the Mary Valley. In her report to the RADF committee, a funding body which had contributed towards the project, Cr Watt reported that the art project had more success in building processes of social interaction leading to constructive outcomes in a fortnight than a welfare project which had been running for the previous six months. She wrote:

A comment from the visiting international artists when attending one of the many cultural evenings held, related to the incredibly strong feel of 'community' that they had all experienced in the Valley and one which they had not experienced in other places. 'Overwhelming' was the term used to describe the community input, welcome and celebration of their work.

Of the artists who responded, 4 out of 6 listed working with the community as the best aspect of the experience (see table Question 2). A DVD entitled *Farming with Mary* by digital video artist Joseph Tramacchi, who visited every site at least twice, captures the vibrant community spirit which prevailed at the gatherings in small Mary Valley towns, with home cooking, old-time dancing, local bands and a *capella* choirs.

In environmental education literature, the concept of *sense of place* is often used to describe a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging, a feeling for characteristics that make a place special or unique, (Sobel 1999). Place-based education promotes learning that is rooted in what is local: the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place as a way of forming positive bonds with the natural environment.

The data suggests that appreciation of the landscape and a sense of being part of a catchment or ecosystem were heightened by the site-specific art projects. Adults who spend a large proportion of their time working on the land may be logically expected to be familiar with geographical features such as

soil types, river crossings and mountains and therefore to possess either more “sense of place” or at least have the capacity to acquire it.

(Farming with Mary) helped me appreciate the ‘local story’ that the installation art brought to life through the interaction between the host families/farmers.land/water and the artists (local councillor).

A local artist remarked

I didn’t realize that the valley was so rich in rain forest and vegetation and the views were to die for.

A day visitor observed:

Farming with Mary opened a lot of people’s eyes to the beauty of the Mary Valley and the river.

For the international artists the impact of the country was even more profound and comments from hosts reveal that their responses were at times uncannily preceptive. Some locals were surprised at the fresh insights provided by their visitors. One host commented on her (Korean) artist’s portrayal of her two dogs. A long-time local resident who saw this work recalled the story that the indigenous young men of the area, when embarking on their initiation ordeal, were accompanied by two dingoes.

Another host shared that their guest artist from Holland had stayed an extra week with them, telling them that to her their property was like something she had dreamed about as a child, with creeks, gullies and trees to climb. For artists from Korea, Italy, France and Holland, such things as the scale of the properties, the open space and abundance of resources inspired some wonderful creations. Piles of roughly-heaped dead trees were celebrated by an Asian artist, to whom firewood was scarce and precious. A Canadian artist shared that with no termites in the natural environment, there is no such thing as a hollow tree in his home landscapes. His work, *Cathedral*, involved lavishing many hours piercing and carving a hollow tree with complex mathematical spirals of chiselled holes, creating intricate patterns of light. An abundance of lemons and a Hills Hoist, while common sights to Australians, were novel and remarkable to a German artist. The artists responded by using these things in artworks, thus allowing their hosts to see their own country in a new way.

Because of the rules about the artworks being in public places, the effect was not confined to the host families. A local resident asked about *Farming with Mary*, responded:

I never made it to any of the events, but I spent an afternoon with Francois running strands of blue string to and from a bridge near Gildora for one of his "works".Rain net. Yes, I'd forgotten the name. It was one of those things, at the time I thought "what the hell are we doing"? But the finished product was very striking.

While both parents and seven children from one host family helped in the construction of a bamboo musical device across an entire paddock, inside the

house the dirty dishes and washing were piling up. The whole family became so engrossed in their project that their guest artist commented, "At last, your house looks like an artist's house!" Another artist comments that a special excitement is generated when people are part of something he terms "surreal". Another participant referred to the liberating experience of engaging with something "not connected with survival". For residents, the experience of doing things connected with place yet not imposed by circumstance or economic need, seems to have been curiously liberating. "What an exciting thing to have been part of and what a total departure from normal, everyday life", said one villager to Francois Davin. For hosts in particular, it seems to have moved people to a new level of appreciation of their land. One host remarked:

It allowed 'licence' to relax a bit and get involved in a creative (almost 'spiritual') response to the local landscape and our property. We would not normally have found the time to indulge ourselves in such a thing.

In attempting to define creativity, Hulsman (2001 p. 64) writes that while creativity is the realm of the right brain with its holistic, pattern-generating qualities, it is with the interplay between the right and left brains that creativity reaches its pinnacle. Many scientific discoveries have been made by allowing the right brain to generate the unusual association and the left brain is brought to bear on the problem to test it. It seems the practical challenges of installing and constructing the artworks appealed to the resourceful character of the valley residents, mostly primary producers. Working under the guidance of their artists, who arguably provided the wholistic pattern, the local residents applied their know-how of the country and its qualities towards the practical accomplishment of a new and liberating vision. In helping execute the original ideas of the artists, some residents were able to combine left and right brains in a way that seems to have enhanced their creativity.

Councillor Watt sets the scene:

Community members who had no active or obvious connection to the art world (least of all, installation art) enthusiastically assisted in the creation of these works by providing labor, tools, funds and equipment to assist in the creation of the artists' work. Photos of people in water up to their waists in wet winter conditions just to suspend strangely shaped objects and farmers raising tractor buckets as high as possible to support artists arranging materials certainly stirs the soul.

An arts administrator who helped facilitate the project claimed that:

A camaraderie was formed, respect for fellow residents and acceptance of new ideas seems easier. I have made a lot of friends who are still supportive of various artistic and other projects.

I like the idea that art, like religion, science and philosophy, can help human beings – artists and non-artists alike – to move from mere 'survival' towards life (Davin 2006 p. 72).

It is interesting to note that among the slogans coined for the campaign, many feature the practice of characterising “Mary” as a sentient or feeling entity is also present in the choice of name. This thinking resonates with “Deep Green” discourses such as Eco-Feminism, Gaianism and Deep Ecology which regard the earth as a sentient being (Johnstone 1994). This is a further indicator of the wide-spread nature of the strong “sense of place” concerning the Mary catchment.

When the decision by the state government to dam the Mary at Traveston Crossing was announced in April 2006, families who had participated in the hosting of international artists were among the first to respond, drawing attention to conservation and cultural values of the river, as well as the economic and social considerations. 100% of FWM hosts who responded report that they made like-minded contacts during the FWM and are now involved in some aspect of the campaign to prevent the Traveston Crossing Dam. Examples include one host family who are now running and moderating the on-line discussion forum, *Traveston Swamp*. Both partners now have changed employment and work in some capacity for the Mary River Catchment Co-ordinating Committee (MRCOC). Another is a journalist who has generated media stories and co-ordinated campaigns in the press. Others are concerned with keeping up community spirits with choir evenings and other cultural events. Despite serious depopulation of the affected areas, only one of the 10 host families has sold their property and moved away from the Mary Valley.

Both the intensity of local feeling against the mega-dam and the professionalism and organisational strength of the local resistance appear to have taken the dam proponents, the Beattie government, by surprise. Within weeks of the announcement, a night-time rally in Gympie’s Memorial Park drew a crowd of more than 1000 people. Meetings at the district’s largest venue, the showgrounds Pavilion, have repeatedly drawn crowds estimated at several thousand which have attracted widespread media coverage. Greg Roberts, writing in the *Australian* (December 23 2006) mentions that on the Mary River, ‘the Beattie Government is encountering stiff opposition to its planned \$1.7 billion Traveston Dam’. Representatives from the Save the Mary River Steering Committee have had meetings with Federal ministers including Environment and Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull. Their pressure has also resulted in a Senate Enquiry which propelled the matter to national attention.

In the structure of the Save the Mary Co-ordinating Group, an effective left-right brained complementary relationship exists. While the group does the kinds of analytical work which might be expected such as letter-writing, lobbying politicians and formulating submissions and scientific evidence, the campaign has also been able to foster creative and unorthodox tactics. The artistic connection has been evident in the organisation of voice and performance workshops, costume-making workshops, and a strong tradition of community singing. Plans for a Mary River Festival in March 2008 and an art exhibition on the theme *Spirit of Mary* are already in place. One host who now part of the Save the Mary Coordinating Committee comments

I think participation in the arts has been a great tonic and has had great therapeutic value. For my family the community choir/singing activities have been a wonderful stress-relief.

A FWM host who works in media reports that to her, the significant achievements of the campaign are that

We have maintained the campaign for over a year, and are committed to its longevity. It is important to note the fact that we are recognised as a lobby group and are actually sought out for responses to Government/other decisions and comments etc.

A resident comments, "People are proud that despite a long period of occupation and agriculture, we still have rare animals and haven't destroyed the character and scenic beauty of the area." It is notable that the on-line *Traveston Swamp* Forum has 374 registered users with a total of over 10,000 posts (by August 11 2007). It maintains a constant media watch for related articles and acts as an effective way to co-ordinate protest rallies, information evenings and media campaigns. As early as *Bathing with Mary*, an organiser from Landcare, which was a sponsoring group, noted that "the project has created some good networks/linkages that assist with planning and information dissemination." Another host observes,

I have been amazed by the way the campaign has united people of very different basic political affiliations and has been inclusive across all ages and across a range of very different general social outlooks.

The following section documents some of the many ways in which artistic creative content has permeated the campaign against the Traveston Crossing Dam. It briefly mentions music and performance, visual arts and traditional crafts.

Printing for Mary was a collaborative, large-scale project in March 2006 that involved a series of workshops in block cutting. Printmaker Shirley Strano developed the project in consultation with *Creative Noosa* and *Artists Saving Mary*. Shirley helped guide inexperienced printers through the workshops which involved designing, cutting and finally printing, images. It produced a collection of high-quality prints that related to the Mary River and its environs. Copies of the prints were among the items for sale at another of Artists Saving Mary's projects, the Auction for Mary. Other artworks were donated and auctioned raising a sizable sum for the fighting fund of the Save the Mary Co-ordinating group.



Traditional crafts – the knitted scarf

One of the social costs of the Mega-Dam proposal has been the day-to-day uncertainty about the future faced by local residents. The idea of knitting a scarf which could be used to “wrap” the entire dam wall came up very early in the campaign, and provided an outlet for those with knitting skills and time on their hands to contribute something tangible to the campaign. The huge balls of knitted wool are always on display at the campaign headquarters at the old Kandanga Railway station, growing steadily larger. By the date of the Senate Enquiry’s Brisbane sitting in June, the knitting had reached over 3.7 kilometres in length, and provided an effective visual symbol on the steps of Parliament House.

Sisters of Mary is an example of the multi-stranded groups which have sprung up in defence of the Mary. A group dedicated to the appreciation, celebration and preservation of the Mary River, it was formed in May 2006, within a month of the announcement of the Traveston Dam proposal in April of that year.

Sisters began with a nucleus of women who already knew each other through a range of previous projects concerned with the Mary River, such as *Bathing with Mary* and biodiversity conservation work. As the movement to protect the Mary grew in strength, new members joined the original group, bringing new skills. The name of the River, Mary, provided rich possibilities.

We felt that in taking a name which hinted at religious orders we were not being disrespectful but in fact honouring the mother principle which is represented in many Christian orders by Mary, and a thread of environmental respect which is common to all great religions (Bissett 2006).

Nevertheless a great deal of the impact of the Sisters comes from their audacious choice of outfits based on nuns’ habits. Photos in the Courier Mail of Sisters members with Senator Barnaby Joyce during the Brisbane sitting of the senate enquiry into the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal received wide exposure and caused caustic comment from the Deputy Premier. This prankish or situationist-style performance has helped keep media coverage of the group’s activities strong. An unexpected direction in their work has been the demand for performances at events including River Appreciation Day, Noosa Festival of the Waters, Tin Can Bay Wetlands Day, Gympie Gold Rush Festival and Bethland Arts Festival.



Music

A number of local bands, choirs and a *capella* groups existed in the area before the Traveston Dam proposal, some whose themes dealt strongly with nature feeling and connectedness to land, as shown by Tramacchi's (2005) video documentation of *Farming with Mary*. Before the Queensland state election on September 9 2006, a group of local musicians had already put together the first CD of song and poetry entitled "For the Love of Mary". The musical styles ranged from folk ballads through 12-string blues to vocal choirs and rap, with everything in between. On this CD, the creative legacy of FwM is obvious. Dairy farmers and school teachers recite their original poetry while the local vet sings a song he composed which has been played at every rally and gathering since April 2006 and become a well-known anthem to Mary. The Dutch artist whom he hosted, Ludy, takes credit for inspiring him to write it as her contribution to the struggle to prevent the damming of the Mary:

When I received the first e-mail of the Dennis about these plans I react with the suggestion to Steve to sing a song about this issue and he makes a beautiful song.

Examination of the data combined with extensive discussions and observations suggests that the raising of river-consciousness caused by *Bathing with Mary*, and the organising skills and networks provided by *Farming with Mary* had combined with traditional skills and resourcefulness to create a rare level of social capital in the Mary Valley by 2005. One host asked, "Who would have thought that within one year of this wonderful experience we would be facing this?" The community in which Francois Davin (2005 p. 64) sought to

create the conditions for a communion in art: to emphasise the community's symbolic 'ownership' of its territory; and to initiate, for those community members who take part, a sense of having approached 'another dimension' (possibly a spiritual one) on their own land,

is now a community which has been most profoundly disenfranchised by the spectre of possible compulsory land acquisition by the government. The country which residents have grown to appreciate is doomed to inundation unless this small group of relatively powerless and unsophisticated people can change the will of government.

"If you are to suffer, you should suffer in the interest of the country.," said Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking to villagers who were to be displaced by the Hirakud Dam in 1948. The future of the Mary Valley may depend upon the residents' ability to convince the population centres of the state that their suffering would NOT be in the interests of the country, but that rather a sustainable future must include the survival of not only the rare and endangered creatures such as the Mary River Turtle and lungfish, but also that rare and endangered human variety, the resourceful Australian farmer. What would be the irony if a group of people who have lived on tanks all their lives are displaced for the profligate water consumption of big-city spas and pools?

Moore (2007, in press) writes:

The music and the poetry, together with the brave signs along the highway express openly what we have felt in our hearts and known in our lives: that “our Mary” gives us our sense of identity, our communal understanding of Mary’s central place in our lives, how she shapes our understanding of ourselves, how precious she is to us. They show clearly that for us, the loss of Mary would be a “de-sacration”, and that, for us, Mary and our understanding of ourselves are inextricably connected. She defines us.

These responses provide glimpses of the extent to which heightened appreciation of the Mary River has enabled a profound and diverse array of actions in support of the Mary River in her perceived “hour of need”.

One FWM host sums it up:

It helped create a network of like-minded, skilled, creative, motivated people that had already worked together on a joint project.

Another adds

By the time the FWM project was completed we had strong social contact with other hosts. Personally, the FWM experience has added to my determination to oppose the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal.

It seems clear that art projects centred on the river have enabled an effective resistance to the plans for a mega-dam at Traveston Crossing, through highlighting sense of place, relationship-building, networking and tapping into the creative, lateral-thinking capacity of valley residents. Further, the campaign being waged by the residents to resist the mega-dam that would destroy this small but significant community is characterised by the creative, imaginative edge which has allowed a numerically small group to create widespread concern about an issue that is significant in both practical and symbolical terms for hopes of a sustainable future.

Art Projects on the Mary River

FARMING WITH MARY

Responses to **Please comment briefly about the best aspect of the experience for you:**

Artists total responses 6 (of 14)

Ludy	The inspiring period of working together with the Dennis family of Brooloo.
Irene	There was a lot of effort from each single person which created a very good and friendly atmosphere. For my project at Farming with Mary I received all the help I needed from my hosts and the whole project was so very well organized, what I appreciated very much. I could feel that the realization of our symposium had the effect to communicate with each other and bring people closer together. So I think it was a big success.
Francois	unbelievable enthusiasm of a community put in action
Margaret	working with members of the community to produce an artwork that had meaning for them
Carlotta	I learned about a different farming from Europe, other plants and very friendly and open people and a good function in a community life. Everybody of the valley near my farmers helped one afternoon setting up my work and it became an unexpected event. They liked to help!
Maree	Meeting the valley people of the shire as I live on the coast. Winter in the valley. The artists. The joy of working outdoors on large scale works; the physicality of that. My first Site Art Project. Communicating a topic I am passionate about.

Hosts: 6 of 10

Lyn	Having the privilege of an overseas artist to stay and do a piece of art resembling my two dogs.
Tricia and Keith	Meeting new people in the community and having the opportunity to meet visiting artists. Also opportunity to visit so many great places in the valley.
Steve and Elaine	Increasing a local network of friends and contacts of like mind.

Kaili	It opened up my eyes (and a lot of other people's) to a new world of art, and we enjoyed hosting a visitor from overseas. Being part of a wider community project was a real buzz.
Steve and Kathleen	On the last night the send-off party was held at our place and there were 60 or 70 people there. We had only been in the area a year so it really gave us an accelerated knowledge of the people and places.
Janine and John	Everything – interacting with the artists & other hosts; helping create the installation; co-hosting a community 'Winter Solstice evening' where the community met the artists; having my children participate -and meet folk from other nations and realise that we are all 'just people'

Others 4

Joolie, arts administrator	Interaction with international artists and local community
Joseph video artist	I received funding to video the Farming with Mary event and produced a set of dvds for the participants.
Jan Cooloola Shire Councillor	It was extremely rewarding as someone involved in the initial discussions as to the potential aspirations of Francois Davin for this project to actually see it come to fruition and if I may say so with amazing success, possibly more than the community ever thought possible.
Gail viewer	Meeting the Mary Valley people who hosted the installations on their properties.

Responses Q3 and 4. Did you meet other Mary Valley residents as a result of your involvement? Did you keep in touch?

Ludy (Holland)	During the project I met many people of the whole community. Because our lives far away nowadays, we have our contact by heart and not so practical anymore.
Irene (Germany)	For me the Farming with Mary project also helped me to return this year to Australia, to show my work "lemon tree" in Bondi, Sydney at "Sculpture by the Sea" exhibition in November. This is a very good result for me and I am very happy about it.

Francois (France)	Many. I still am in contact with a dozen of them.
Margaret (local)	Yes. When I visit the area I drop in for a chat.
Carlotta (Italy)	Yes, on the events, evenings and bush dance. I still have contact with my farmers.
Maree (local)	Many in all villages. Contact maintained through RADF; Gympie sports; council functions

Hosts: 3 of 10

Lyn	Yes. It welcomed me into the community as I'd only been here 6 months. Made good friends.
Tricia and Keith	Yes
Steve and Elaine	Yes. Have maintained some contact with about ½ of them.
Steve and Kathleen	Made many great connections Really felt like part of the community
Janine and John	Yes, heaps of them Have become good friends with some, enjoy long chats with others I meet in the supermarket or see around the valley at different events.

Others 3

Joolie, arts administrator	Yes
Joseph video artist	Yes. I made some follow up visits and have had some casual contacts since. The experience was very positive.
Jan Cooloola Shire Councillor	Yes. Continued contact as they are part of our community, but increased contact with some due to the project.
Gail viewer	Yes, say hello if I see them on the street.

Responses to FWM Questions 5 & 6

Did you visit other sites in the valley during the project? (please specify)

Would you say that other sites visited helped expand your knowledge/appreciation of the area?

Artists total responses 6 (of 14)

Ludy	Yes, I did, see our program please. Certainly they did, more of the context become clear.
Irene	No comments
Francois	5. Although I was living in the Valley before, there are many parts of the valley that I would not have known

	but for this project (parts of Imbil creek towards Borumba Dam, Borumba dam itself, the territory south of Imbil, the old sawmill in Kandanga, Dagon station. 6. Yes indeed.
Margaret	5. Yes when viewing the other artists works. Places all over the valley. 6. Yes I didn't realize that the valley was so rich in rain forest and vegetation and the views were to die for.
Carlotta	5. I visited the houses of the other community farmers, I met people in Gympie 6. Yes, very much
Maree	5. All site works; hosts , participants & friends. Stayed with a work colleague at Kandanga. Participated in outings eg bar-bq's dances, canoeing. 6. Yes. Took me a while to learn my way around the winding roads between areas.

Hosts: 6 of 10

Lyn	Yes we had a full day of sight-seeing all the projects. Definitely would not have seen some of the areas without the FWM project.
Tricia and Keith	Visited all the sites, absolutely.
Steve and Elaine	Visited all of them.
Kaili	All other artworks. Yes.
Steve and Kathleen	Explored many new places in Mary Valley. The diversity of the area became more evident.
Janine and John	Yes – we went down roads I didn't know existed All of the other host farms and local artist installations from Dagon through to Brooloo.

Others 5

Joolie, arts administrator	5. I visited the 10 host farms and the organiser's (Francois). 6. Most farms visited were new to me, so I really enjoyed the different aspects of the valley.
Joseph video artist	5. I visited all ten sites at least twice, some several times and traveled all over the valley in the process. Also filmed just down from Traveston Crossing getting Mary River shots. 6. Yes, places like Brooloo Bluff and Coonangibber Creek as well as the Yabba Crk series of crossings. I was interested in Brooloo Bluff, where local legend says a group of indigenous people jumped from the Bluff rather than submit to forced relocation.
Jan Cooloola Shire Councillor	5. Yes - <i>installation sites</i> 6. It helped me appreciate the 'local story' that the installation art brought to life through the interaction between the host families/farmers.land/water and the artists.

Gail viewer	Saw three sites in one day and would have liked to see more.
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Responses to Questions 7,8 & 9.

7. Do you believe that a dam at Traveston Crossing would impact negatively on the Mary Valley?

8. Have you been actively involved with the Save the Mary River campaign since the announcement of the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal in April 2006?

9. If yes, please indicate the area/s of your involvement.

Artists total responses 6 (of 14)

Ludy	7. The information the Dennis family send me makes clear it isn't the wish of the community or nature, it isn't a democratic decision.
Irene	No comments
Francois	7. It would destroy the spirit of a wonderful community, so rare in Australia. 8. Not enough, because I had moved away when it was announced. 9. Made radio program on ABC'S Deep End.
Margaret	7. Of course. It would be a real tragedy and such a waste of beautiful country. 8. yes 9. singing, performing meetings, rallies, lobbying displaying information at other functions and passing info through the internet and through friends
Carlotta	7. Yes, it destroys not only the landscape with its native animals and plants, it destroys a very good farming community where people help and support each other. It tears a slowly grown and important friendship and community. It is often impossible after such a heavy change to rebuild a functional community. This very heavy change will uproot thousands of peoples and may cause social conflicts later. This might cost the state more in future. Besides that such a dam is not very deep, it is in a unstable volcanic region and needs several dams as it is an open valley, which is not really cut into mountains as we have it in Europe 8. Not actively as I am not living there but I followed the sites and the information. 9. I passed it to others.
Maree	7. Yes 8. Not as much as I would have liked too due to other pressures on my time & concurrent coastal environment 9. email surveys, petitions etc

Hosts:

4 of 10

Lyn	7. Yes 8. Kept in contact by e-mail
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	9. Been to rallies
Tricia and Keith	7. Yes 8. Yes 9. (a) Sign-writing and erecting along highway (b) scientific work writing submissions (c) organisational (running committees, meetings, rallies etc) (d) cultural contributions singing, performing, writing songs.
Steve and Elaine	7. Yes 8. Yes. 9. cultural contributions (such as singing, performing, writing songs, poetry or other material), o scientific work (such as writing submissions, wildlife surveying, water monitoring) o maintaining website/s and discussion forums o Publicity, media & lobbying
Kaili	7. <i>Absolutely</i> 8. Yes 9. running committees, meetings, rallies o Moderating website/s and discussion forums o Publicity, media or lobbying o As a member of the crowd at major events, o letters to editor
Steve and Kathleen	7. Yes 8. Yes 9. Cultural (songs and performance), scientific work and organisational steering committee meetings
Janine and John	7. Absolutely-it already has. 8. Yes 9. Attending rallies; some info centre time; Cultural –co-organised & participated in singing workshops and a concert with the intention to help lift the moral in the valley; participated in a Lifeline counselling course held in Imbil - to better equip myself for the many times I find myself talking to distressed friends and acquaintances.
Others 4	
Joolie, arts administrator	7. Definitely, definitely, definitely 8. Yes 9. Cultural contributions
Joseph video artist	7. It would destroy the current balance of nature and niche habitats for all of our species. 8. Yes 9. Filmed the canoe rally, signing petitions and online petitions, writing to premier and ministers,

	attended meetings of Sisters of Mary, helped screen printing signs
Jan Cooloola Shire Councillor	<p>7. Yes 8. Yes 9. choir / art festival compiling submissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o local government committees o discussion forum participation o lobbying, publicity, and media o Other o Dealing with federal and state level politicians and representatives regarding alternative proposals, the negative impacts of the proposal, also dealing with the same level of government to assist the people of the Mary Valley through this tumultuous time o Attending rallies o Attending meetings / workshops o Local Government Representation
Gail, viewer	<p>7. Yes, already has been "dam" destructive 8. Yes 9. Created art works Letters to editor, articles for press, attending rallies</p>
Fiona, viewer	<p>7. Yes 8. Yes 9. supporting endangered species campaign as a teacher Organised Youth environmental forum Lobbying LOCAL MEMBER WITH youth forum LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THEIR WISH LIST, EG. MARY RIVER NEVER TO BE DAMMED.</p>

Responses to Questions 10, 11 & 12

10. Have you worked on saving the Mary with others you met during Farming with Mary?

11. Would you say your networks/connections from Farming with Mary have been helpful in this work? If so, how?

12. Please mention/elaborate on any aspects of the Farming with Mary experience which were significant for you.

Artists 6 of 14

Ludy (Holland)	<p>The friendship with the Dennis and all the others I met during the project. Yes. Because we inspire each other. When I received the first e-mail of the Dennis about these plans I react with the suggestion to Steve to sing a song about this issue and he makes a beautiful song.</p>
Irene (Germany)	<p>For your fight against the dam I wish you all the best and a successful result. And perhaps you could continue to do more projects in the future like Farming with Mary . I am sure there are many artists from abroad who would like to come and participate.</p>

Francois (France)	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes. Although the project didn't take off, it was launched entirely based on contacts established in FwM</p> <p>It was for me another demonstration that art can be a wonderful way of gathering together people who are not necessarily involved in art before. The condition is accepting to share an experience, without prejudice. This happened in Farming with Mary.</p>
Margaret (local)	<p>10. Yes</p> <p>11. Yes, I have made many new friends, am part of a choir and have learnt a great deal about the environment in general and have become part of climate action change as a result</p> <p>: 12. Working with international artists in site specific art which has broadened my knowledge in this field. I have made many new contacts and am passionate in passing this knowledge on to other artists.</p>
Carlotta (Italy)	<p>10. I was informed by two different families. I tried to give advice as much as I did know from an European sight . We did similar mistakes in our continent.</p> <p>11. Yes. I got information from two different farmers and non farmers</p> <p>12. I worked in a very nice family. I met open and interested people who had a heavy interest in cultural information. I would describe it like that: Finally a bit of prosperous times did arrive for this communities, so now the time showed up to look not only for the living necessities but too for their souls. So time for culture did arrive to satisfy the spirit and souls with culture. There was a hunger for it!</p> <p>All this would be destroyed too!</p>
Maree (local)	<p>10. Yes</p> <p>11. Professional Development</p> <p>12. As above. Ie PD in Site Specific art practice- Other than that it was very good for mental health; it seemed to act as a release of an uncommunicated frustration; there was as sense of relief & also camaraderie afterwards I continued on to 2 more projects immediately afterwards & will be doing another in Townsville next month .</p>
Hosts: 6 of 10	
Lyn	12. Getting to know the people in the community
Tricia and Keith	<p>10. yes</p> <p>11. Yes, FwM provided a connection with other people in the community. Many of these relationships have lead to other collaborations and projects in our efforts to stop the dam.</p> <p>12. It was a wonderful way to celebrate all aspects of life in the Mary Valley. The use of materials from the</p>

	<p>immediate environment created a greater consciousness about the environment. The social aspects of FWM (solstice dinner, Dagon BBQ, Amamoor dinner etc) were highlights of the experience, lots of enthusiasm and great positive energy.</p>
Steve and Elaine	<p>10. Yes 11. Yes. It helped create a network of like-minded, skilled, creative, motivated people that had already worked together on a joint project. 12. It allowed 'licence' to relax a bit and get involved in a creative (almost 'spiritual') response to the local landscape and our property. We would not normally have found the time to indulge ourselves in such a thing.</p>
Kaili	<p>10. Not sure of question – indirectly in a community development capacity, yes 11. Yes. It gave us a more developed knowledge of other people in the valley so they became more than acquaintances, but most of us knew each other anyway. 12. The creation and public display of these art works was something new to me; as a result of our involvement I also took my family to visit the Noosa festival of the Waters site specific art. The community involvement was something we were already actively a part of, but we all picked up new strategies and ideas</p>
Steve and Kathleen	<p>10. Yes 11. Yes. By the time the FWM project was completed we had strong social contact with other hosts. Personally, the FWM experience has added to my determination to oppose the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal. 12. Our artist was particularly good at involving our children in her artwork, so as a family experience it was particularly satisfying. We all went gathering bamboo and for a bushwalk in the Obi Obi.</p>
Janine and John	<p>10. Yes 11. Yes. They provide motivation – a reason to be involved in the fight to save our community, to preserve what is precious: they provide emotional and physical support. 12. The whole experience was magical – and exhausting!</p>

Others 5

Joolie, arts administrator	<p>10. Yes 11. Artists A camaraderie was formed, respect for fellow residents, and acceptance of new ideas seems easier. I made a lot of new friends that are still supportive of various artistic and other projects.</p>
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	<p>12. Bringing communities together in a positive way. Learning more about environmental art. Celebrating the Mary River in a creative and meaningful way.</p>
Joseph video artist	<p>10. Yes</p> <p>11. It is really all about the feelings of connection, awareness of lifestyle and being connected with the land, environment and ecosystems and a very special community whose life, breath and spirit is with this country</p> <p>12. Meeting with people united in vision, hospitality and generosity sharing a sense of belonging.</p>
Jan Cooloola Shire Councillor	<p>The main benefit to the community that Farming With Mary provided (in my opinion) was that it was a true capacity building project without actually trying to be.</p> <p>The community came together to welcome international artists by way of hosting their stay; sharing their 'Mary' story to contribute to the art works; providing entertainment by way of community celebrations; opening their community and homes to the artists and visitors to view the works and much, much more.</p> <p>Community members who had no active or obvious connection to the art world (least of all, installation art) enthusiastically assisted in the creation of these works by providing labor, tools, funds and equipment to assist in the creation of the artists work. Photos of people in water up to their waists in wet winter conditions jut to suspend strangely shaped objects and farmers raising tractor buckets as high as possible to support artists arranging materials certainly stirs the soul.</p> <p>A comment from the visiting international artists when attending one of the many cultural evenings held, related to the incredibly strong feel of 'community' that they had all experienced in the Valley and one which they had not experienced in other places. 'Overwhelming' was the term used to describe the community input, welcome and celebration of their work.</p> <p>The project brought attention to the Mary River and its tributaries through the art work, through community events and the ensuing publicity which in turn attracted visitors to the area and also through word of mouth of those involved.</p> <p>The Cooloola Shire Regional Arts Development Fund provided funding towards the project and identified it as their 'Best Practice' project funding for the year which assisted in the committee in gaining full funding the following year for the Cooloola Shire RADF program. The project was also displayed at the Annual Qld conference.</p> <p>Reflecting on the time when I sat on top of a hill overlooking a small Valley with Francois' Percherons thundering through it, listening to his ideas, I did not imagine it would be the marvelous success on so many</p>

	levels that it was.
Gail, viewer	Farming with Mary opened a lot of people's eyes to the beauty of the Mary Valley and the river. It brought people from outside the area, such as the Sunshine Coast people and overseas visitors to the area. Not only did they see beautiful artworks, countryside but they experienced the warmth and friendliness of the local community. Both visitors and locals learnt a lot, about art, about each other and about the significance the Mary river has for the community.

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