



# Mary River turtle could be dammed

By Matthew Backer

THE PROPOSED Mary River dam could damn the Mary River turtle to the brink of extinction if it goes ahead, according to environmental protection agencies and researchers.

University of Queensland student Natalie Mathie, 23, who has researched the Mary River turtle since August 2004 for her PhD doctorate, said the dam's impact on the turtle would "definitely be negative".

"Because the Mary River turtle is so endangered, this dam could potentially push that species over the edge," Miss Mathie said.

Miss Mathie received a support scholarship to study the turtle from environmental protection agency Tiaro Landcare.

Tiario Landcare said their and the Mary River Catchment Co-ordination Committee's view was that "there should be no dams anywhere on the Mary".

"The Mary River turtle only lives in the Mary River, nowhere else in the world, and we've been trying to increase the population by protecting nests and increasing the juvenile population," a



University of Queensland PhD student Natalie Mathie says the damming of the Mary River could have a detrimental effect on the Mary River turtles.

spokesperson said.

"But this dam is going to drastically change their habitat."

Tiario Landcare said the dam would "obviously result in much less water up this end".

This in turn could result in lower oxygen levels and higher water temperatures, which often leads to blue green algae.

Miss Mathie said the slightest change in the Mary River could drastically influence the Mary

River turtle's survival.

"The Mary River turtle is a really unique species because it's one of the few species of turtle in Australia that can respire aquatically and get oxygen out of the water," Miss Mathie said. "Because of that, they are highly sensitive to water quality and water condition and it's changes in water quality and condition that is going to be brought about by the dam."