

# Media Release

## Save Our Gulf Coalition

12.12.08

**Attention News Editor.**

**Desalination Plant design high risk to St Vincent's Gulf says new report.**

An independent expert report prepared by Dr Jochen Kaempf for the City of Onkaparinga finds the risks of the current design are "high with major/severe consequences" and almost certain. It continues to conclude that the "proposed desalination plant might not be operational with the proposed discharge design without severely compromising the health of the marine environment"

It also finds that independent modelling studies "differed significantly from those underpinning the EIS".

Peter Laffan Chairman of the Save our Gulf Coalition said" This independent study supports the concerns of the coastal community about this bandaid solution to Adelaide's water needs.

He continued, "The massive discharge of the equivalent of nearly 2 million tonnes per year of salt back into the Gulf has the potential to be an environmental disaster." He continued, "There is significant concern among scientists that the brine solution will impact on sea life especially eggs and the young of certain species, including squid that breed in surrounding waters."

"The unique characteristics of St Vincent's Gulf mean that water does not move or circulate easily, and it has been identified in the Government's own reports such as the Adelaide Coastal Waters Study, that the discharged brine is likely to move water northward towards Adelaide's beaches and be trapped in a narrow coastal band."

'This has the potential to devastate the already decimated seagrasses that are so important in retaining and generating sand for Adelaide's beaches and this independent report supports our concerns."

"Half the seagrasses in this area have been lost since 1970 with the resulting loss of sea life and erosion of beaches."

"The worry is that once well over a billion dollars has been spent, the Government will not be able to do anything else so we will be stuck with the massive brine discharge and high energy use of the plant for years to come, even if we don't need it, as it cannot be easily turned off."

'The history of governments to get it right in this area is not good, with the Coorong and Lower Lakes of the Murray probably environmentally lost forever, and the river not far behind.'

'How long have we had government administration of the Murray and paid a 'Save the Murray Levy' all of this has not done much to stop the disaster that is now the Murray.'

'We risk all this being repeated on Adelaide's doorstep.'

'There have been local alternatives proposed, such as stormwater recovery, with excellent examples such as Salisbury Council but no comprehensive comparison has been costed or presented to the quick fix of an energy hungry Desalination plant.'

'The Adelaide Coastal Waters Study says that we must stop the stormwater discharge anyway, this can generate more water (50-160 GL) than the desalination plant, but is not being considered as a major alternative with no real explanation of why.'

"We still do not have fully costed alternatives for public consideration after over 3 years of water crisis"

'What is of most concern is there is no Plan B, if the Desalination plant does not proceed, due to a poor environmental report. It appears that the assumption is that it will proceed regardless.'

'Once the ecology of the Gulf is damaged it will take generations to recover, if ever, so it is our one chance to preserve this critical part of our environment for our children and grandchildren to enjoy.'

What the Save our Gulf Coalition wants is a sustainable comprehensive water strategy that protects the environment and uses the minimum of energy, not a massive, energy hungry, environmentally threatening Desalination plant whose costs will rise as energy costs rise.