

Media Release

Save Our Gulf Coalition

31.8.08

Attention News Editor.

WATER WASTAGE CONTINUES UNABATED

A new community group, formed to stop the desalination plant from being constructed at Port Stanvac, will be gathering at the Edwards Street Stormwater drain on Brighton Beach this Sunday at 10.00am to express their concern at the loss of valuable stormwater to the Gulf of St Vincent.

Peter Laffan Chairman of the Save our Gulf Coalition said "The fact that Adelaide is on water restrictions and currently pumping from the River Murray when 400 million litres of valuable stormwater is wasted from this single drain alone, is a disgrace."

"In addition to wasting this water - large amounts of sediment that is never meant to get into the Gulf - is polluting the marine environment, and combined with litter, is causing the loss of valuable seagrasses and as a result erosion of beach sand."

Instead of recovering this valuable resource and stopping the pollution of the Gulf, the Government now wants to add further discharge with a massive desalination plant at Port Stanvac."

"The desalination plant will discharge the equivalent of nearly 2 million tonnes per year of salt back into the Gulf and 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 massive intake of water needed by the plant which contains algae and other organisms also reduces the available food supply for marine organisms in the Gulf."

"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 northward closer to metropolitan 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."

"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 the Government has spent over a billion dollars on desalination, they will not be able to afford to do anything else. We will be stuck with the massive brine discharge and the 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 generally to get it right in this area is not good. The Coorong and Lower Lakes of the Murray are probably environmentally lost forever, and the river not far behind – despite Government administration and a ‘Save the Murray Levy’.

‘We risk all this being repeated on Adelaide’s doorstep.’

The government has not done a comprehensive evaluation or costing of alternatives – particularly stormwater and waste water harvesting. The Salisbury Council Wetland project is a good local example of what can be done. Indications are that this can produce enough water, at fraction of the cost, in an environmentally friendly way. It also stops stormwater polluting the Gulf – as strongly recommended by the Adelaide Coastal Waters Study.

‘Once the ecology of the Gulf is damaged it will take generations to recover, if ever. Now 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.

We encourage all South Australians to protest against this threat to our way of life and our beaches.

When: Sunday 31 August, 2008 at 10.00am

Where: Edward Street stormwater drain, Brighton