

Media Release

Save Our Gulf Coalition

3.7.09 Attention News Editor.

“Feeling good” is just not good enough

“Feeling good but not good enough is the take away from the Water for Good website the latest glossy PR solution to the States dire water situation” says Peter Laffan Chairman of the Save Our Gulf Coalition.

“The plan is a statement of the status quo with no real action on stormwater or wastewater, to reduce the impact on the Gulf and build a long term sustainable water source for SA. Still wasting more than half our stormwater and wastewater after 40 years is inaction not action.”

“A major proportion of the proposed savings is due to reduction in use, which is quite simply allowing our quality of life to drop, while continuing to discharge massive amounts of stormwater and wastewater into the gulf, damaging our marine ecosystems, in addition to the discharge for the 100GL Desalination Plant.”

“It may be better than other states, but that is not a real benchmark as they are not so Murray River or desalination plant reliant.”

“Less than 50% of wastewater and less for stormwater is a disgrace, less than 50% was a fail when I was at school, and it is a fail for this policy, and this Government on water. ‘

“The increase of the proposed desalination plant to 100GL PA means that Adelaide will be Desalination dependant and the water will be subject to the fluctuations in energy prices to run the energy hungry plant.”” There is nothing here towards a sustainable solution just a 2 billion dollar bandaid with a 20 year design life according to the EIS. Water consumers and the environment will be paying for generations for this water factory.”

In addition 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 (now 4) million tonnes per year of salt back into the Gulf from the (now 100GL) plant 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"

'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.

This has not been delivered in the "Feel good" Water for Good report.

Contacts

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