

## **Victorian Water Forum Position Statement**

21 October 2008

**The three key Victorian community water groups – Clean Ocean Foundation, Watershed Victoria and Plug the Pipe - have today united to form the Victorian Water Forum (VWF).**

**The aim of the VWF is to achieve a change in the Victorian Government's current water plan and deliver a real, sustainable solution to Melbourne's water crisis.**

Up to today, each of the VWF participants has argued for their separate causes, being

- The cancellation of the planned construction of a 150 billion litre (150GL) desalination plant at Wonthaggi, estimated to cost well over \$3.1 billion, due to resultant economic, environmental and social damage
- An immediate upgrade to the Eastern Treatment plant at Carrum to cease dumping of toxic waste via the Gunammatta outlet and instead produce 150 billion litres (150GL) of purified, potable water, at a cost of \$1.8 billion
- The cancellation of the north-south pipeline due to the economic, environmental and social damage to Victoria and the Murray Darling Basin

For unknown reasons, the Victorian Government is ploughing ahead with the 150GL desalination plant and north-south pipeline, rejecting solid research into seemingly far more effective and efficient long-term solutions to Melbourne's water crisis, including

- The upgrade to the Eastern Treatment plant, which would produce the same level of purified, potable water as the proposed Wonthaggi desalination plant (150 GL), at approximately 45% less cost and without the massive on-going economic, environmental and social costs of the desalination plant
- Water harvesting
- Flood mitigation strategies, especially the Aberfeldy diversion
- Proper aquifer management
- A continued focus on strategies to reduce water consumption

VWF supports the continued upgrading of Northern Victoria's irrigation system, but without "strings attached"

The formation of the VWF has come at a time of a world economic crisis, heightening the need for Melbourne to find the right, long-term solution at the right price. For example, upgrading the Eastern Treatment plant rather than continuing with the desalination plant would save over \$1.3 billion, which could go towards other water strategies identified by the VWF rather than pursuing the need to take water from Northern Victoria.

The VWF intends raising the profile of alternative solutions to Melbourne's water crisis and is calling on other community, environment and political groups to support this campaign.

For further information, please contact

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***VWF - comprising Clean Ocean, Watershed Victoria and Plug the Pipe***