



Bulletin 4, February, 2009

What's on

Tuesday, 11.30am, Feb 3, Parliament House, Rally for Democracy

Watershed Victoria supporters will join Plug the Pipe campaigners and other community groups on the steps of Parliament to demonstrate for more open and accountable government. The event coincides with the opening of Parliament,

February 6, 11.30am, Springvale

Rally at Tim Holding's electorate office, Suite 3, 387-389 Springvale Road, Springvale. If you can't attend, phone Tim Holding's office on 9547 6262 or email him at timothy.holding@parliament.vic.gov.au to tell him your views.

February 20-22, Federation Square

Victorian Water Forum events at the Sustainable Living Festival. Yarra River & Federation Square, Melbourne.

www.watershedvictoria.org.au/events

They said it

"Recycling and conservation will secure Melbourne's water supply ... The energy generation [of a desalination plant] is enormous, the intrusion on the community is enormous and, of course, it's extraordinarily expensive ... really, what a hoax it is. We're into long-term solutions."

Then Victorian Premier Steve Bracks on the Liberals' election proposal for a desalination plant, November 13, 2006

"The project raises many unanswered questions: about the impact of its high energy demands on greenhouse gas reduction efforts; about water costs, demand management and ownership; and about the Government's rejection of previously preferred alternatives that many experts say could secure supply at much lower financial and environmental cost."

Editorial in *The Age*, January 12, 2009

"It is financially irresponsible and ethically inappropriate to be spending more than \$30 billion on new water supplies in Australia, much of which is unnecessary, in a time of financial uncertainty."

Professor Stuart White, Director of the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology, Sydney, Aquatech Amsterdam, November 2008

"The desalination plant should never have been given approval while 150 billion litres of water continue to be dumped into the sea at Gunnamatta each year. Peter Garrett needs to impel the State to clean up its existing mess at Gunnamatta before allowing it to create a new mess at Wonthaggi."

Flinders federal MP Greg Hunt, January 9, 2009



Calm before the storm

The mouth of the Powlett River, next to the site of the desalination plant.

A still from Jeremy Loftus-Hills' film *Out of the Blue*, Details Page 2.

Send them a message

City voters the key to stopping desal plant

Don't wait until the election to tell the Brumby Government what you think of their water policies – tell them now.

With the Government planning to begin construction of the Bass Coast desalination plant this year, it will be too late to voice your dissatisfaction at the next state elections.

Watershed Victoria president Stephen Cannon says city voters are the key to stopping the desalination plant, but they have to act quickly.

He wants them to write to, email or phone their local MP to tell them they oppose knee-jerk water solutions such as desalination.

"The experts have been ignored; the only thing that will stop it now is public opinion.

"If the Government realises its water policies – including desalination – could cost it the next election, they will think again."

Watershed Victoria is targeting marginal Labor electorates where anti-desalination sentiment could potentially unseat the current Labor MPs.

Sitting MPs (including several ministers) are particularly vulnerable in Melbourne, Richmond, Brunswick, Forest Hill, Mordialloc, Mount Waverley, Mitcham and South Barwon.

If the growing opposition to the Government's costly and damaging water

policies translates into votes, the Greens stand to pick up three seats in the inner city.

In Melbourne, it would take a swing of only 637 voters to unseat Education Minister Bronwyn Pike and in Richmond, 1165 swinging voters would unseat Housing and Local Government Minister Richard Wynne.

The Bass Coast Boardriders Club is also sending the message out to thousands of surfers throughout the state.

Club president John Gemmell says voters in the marginal electorates can make a huge difference by contacting their MPs and telling them they will not trust them to look after Victoria's coastline or their children's future.

"The Labor politicians who hold vulnerable seats are important because they are the most likely to push to stop the desalination plant if they think they'll lose their jobs at the next election.

"We need to make it clear to the Labor party that all the surfers, their friends and family in Victoria will never forget how they trashed a pristine coastline and accelerated climate change when they could have done far better to secure Victoria's water supply.

MP contact details and form letters are available at www.basscoastboardriders.com.

MPs under pressure

Electorate	Sitting MP	Majority, 2006 election	Swing required, 2010 election
Mt Waverley	Maxine Morand	205	0.32% to Liberal
Gembrook	Tammy Lobato	498	0.72% to Liberal
Forest Hill	Kirstie Marshall	511	0.78% to Liberal
Melbourne	Bronwyn Pike	1274	2.02% to Greens
Richmond	Richard Wynne	2329	3.65% to Greens

The fight goes on

I was initially disappointed with the outcome of the EES (Environment Effects Statement). But on reflection, Planning Minister Justin Madden's decision that the environmental impacts of the desalination plant are "acceptable" came as no surprise to any of us.

People have rebounded with a greater determination to fight on.

On the Sunday after the Minister's announcement, at less than 24 hours notice, more than 200 people gathered at Williamsons Beach to protest at a 2km beach exclusion zone. Momentum against the plant continues to build as more people understand how costly and damaging the Government's plans are.

No surprise

The Minister's media release tried desperately to emphasise the "independence" of the EES inquiry and the assessment, but repeating the word four times in the first four sentences doesn't make it so!

When the State Government announces it "will build" the plant, anoints its own department to be the proponent of the project, prescribes very narrow terms of reference for assessment, assigns a government-appointed planning panel to assess that narrow scope, you get the outcome you engineered.

This must be the first time an EES has been conducted for a "concept". In essence, the Minister has given the go-ahead for a project that has not even been designed!

The Minister's assessment report undertakes to minimise, mitigate and manage the environmental impacts of the plant "where practicable", which sounds like an open cheque to the operators.



Colin Suggett's comment on the State Government's edict that a 2km stretch of the coastline will be locked off for two years while the desalination plant is constructed.

Tell us how much

Add up the cost of monitoring programs, the Regional Impact Fund and the recommended augmentation of health services, infrastructure and education facilities and it is increasingly evident this project will never be achieved for the \$3.1 billion at which the Government has costed it.

Given the public are paying for this plant through the initial doubling of their water bills, they have a right to know the real and complete costs of this project immediately.

Don't forget partial privatisation of our water will result from the Private Public Partnership structure that will build and operate this plant. That means profit to a private company (probably foreign) is an element of the cost we will all pay.

There were no surprises in the Minister's decision. The EES process and the assessment of a "concept" were a farce.

The hundreds of volunteer people and groups who participated to try to make it meaningful have been let down.

*Stephen Cannon
President, Watershed Victoria*

The big picture

The Victorian Government spent millions of dollars and years of research to develop a sustainable water strategy for Melbourne.

Nine months later, it dumped the strategy in favour of costly and damaging projects, including the desalination plant and north-south pipeline.

Like many Victorians, Melbourne writer and director Jeremy Loftus-Hills wanted to know why.

The result is his film, *Out of the Blue*, which follows the community campaign in Bass Coast as local activists fight, against the odds, to raise awareness of the issues in the wider Victorian community.

Their story leads on to vital questions about ownership and control of water.

Copies of Out of the Blue are for sale from Educational Television, PO Box 440, Warrandyte 3113. Enclose cheque payable to ETV, DVD: \$20 plus \$7.50 P&H = \$27.50.

Watershed Victoria

Watershed Victoria is a community group that seeks alternatives to the Government's proposed desalination plant on the Bass Coast. It replaces the Your Water Your Say community group, which was forced to cease operating last year when the State Government won legal costs against it.

Together with Plug the Pipe and the Clean Oceans Foundation, Watershed Victoria forms the Victorian Water Forum, which is campaigning for sustainable water solutions for Victoria.





watershedvictoria

Watershed Victoria Inc.
c/- P.O. Dalyston, Vic. 3992
Ph: 0407 811778

Membership

Name/s

Email Phone Mobile

Address

Cost, \$15 individuals, \$30 households. Amount paid: Receipt required?

Please indicate if you would like to help in the campaign, eg. distribution, publicity, fund-raising, manning caravan.

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Give membership form and subscription to a committee member or post form plus a cheque or postal order to **Watershed Victoria, Dalyston PO, 3992.**