

3 Public Consultation

3.1 Background

Keeping the community involved in the preservation and enjoyment of our natural water resources is a vital consideration for the Water Corporation. Everyone in the community, from schools and businesses through to charities and government departments, is encouraged to learn more about the environment and its resources, and assist us in maintaining our precious water supply.

Community involvement is also vital to the success of many of our water infrastructure projects. The help of residents, community groups and stakeholders and their local knowledge is important in ensuring the sustainability of our water supply and the preservation of our world-class water resources.

However, with water resources under significant pressure from climate change and rapid population growth, the Corporation is required to act quickly to secure the next major water source for Western Australia.

When the decision to shelve the proposed South West Yarragadee groundwater proposal in favour of a second desalination plant north of Binningup was made, the local community was understandably surprised and angry, as no consultation on the site selection process had been undertaken. The Water Corporation acknowledged this at the time and has since then undertaken a large number of communications activities (summarised in chapter 3.3) in order to increase the level of community involvement in the process.

Despite divergent views about seawater desalination and the project itself, there are some matters that the Corporation and the local community agree upon:

- Community consultation was lacking in the site selection process and that this has resulted in the community feeling disempowered, frustrated and angry;
- The Binningup and surrounding community identity and sense of place must be retained and supported during the construction and operation of the project;
- The natural environment (marine and terrestrial flora and fauna) should be protected and enhanced for future generations;
- The project's impacts on surrounding communities (such as visual amenity, noise and traffic) should be appropriately mitigated and managed to ensure minimal impact on residents' way of life;
- Public safety of both the community and our workforce are of utmost importance during the construction and operation of the plant; and
- The project will be enhanced through community consultation in its planning, construction and operational phases.

Agreement on these matters highlights that there is some common ground upon which the Water Corporation can work with the community in building and operating a plant that is environmentally socially acceptable.

3.2 Understanding the Community

3.2.1 Telephone research

The Water Corporation has engaged Synovate Research to undertake quarterly telephone surveys to better understand the issues of the local Binningup, Myalup and the wider communities of Harvey and Bunbury.

This research (Synovate 2007a, 2007b) tracks awareness, attitudes and perceptions of the desalination process and project and of the communication needs of the community. Information gathered in this research also allows us to incorporate social considerations into the development of the project. Reflecting our commitment to openness and transparency in this process, research findings are made publicly available on our website and sent to any member of the public who requests it.

The questions asked in the survey relate to the following:

- Community awareness of the desalination project;
- Level of community understanding regarding the project and its construction and operational impact;
- Predicted effects of the project on the local community;
- Level of community support for its construction;
- Extent to which residents are satisfied with consultation opportunities; and
- Communication – community preferences pertaining to communication methods and consultation undertaken by the corporation.

The first wave of research was undertaken in August 2007 (W1) and the second wave was undertaken in November 2008 (W2). The next round of research will occur in July 2008 (W3) and will continue to guide our consultation program. The survey sample was determined randomly (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Social Survey Details

Area	W1 - Sample Size	W2 - Sample Size
Binningup	88	94
Myalup	38	40
Bunbury	203	100**
Pipeline route*	N/A	20
Total	329	254

* Landowners affected by the pipeline were not included in W1 as the pipeline route had not been determined at that stage.

** The sample size for Bunbury reduced during W2 as the sample was redistributed to factor in pipeline landowners.

Some of the key findings from W1 to W2 are:

Positive shift in community views

The most notable shifts in community views from W1 to W2 were:

- An increase in the extent to which Binningup residents feel informed about and support the desalination project;
- A slight increase in the extent to which Myalup and Bunbury residents support the desalination project;
- A decrease in community concern regarding the possible negative impacts of the desalination project; and
- A significant increase in satisfaction with project communication and the opportunities provided to deliver feedback on the desalination project.

Despite these improvements, the majority of residents would still like to receive more information regarding the site, the environmental assessment process and the social impact assessment process.

Regional differences

Compared with other south-west region residents, Binningup residents tend to be less supportive of the desalination project. They are more likely to perceive that the desalination project will have a negative impact on the local community.

Myalup residents tend to be the most satisfied in terms of the information and communications provided to local residents.

Bunbury residents are more likely than other regional residents to perceive that the desalination project will have either no effect or a positive effect on the local community.

Perceived impact

Perceived impacts of the desalination project raised by respondents included:

- Negative impacts on ocean / coastline;
- Noise pollution; and
- Negative environmental impacts.

3.2.2 Social Impact Assessment

Although mostly outside the scope of EPA's assessment, there is some overlap between the social and environmental impacts of this proposal. Accordingly, in addition to Synovate's quarterly telephone research, the Water Corporation commissioned GHD to undertake a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in August 2007 (GHD 2008). The threefold purpose of the SIA was to:

- Identify and assess how construction and operation of the desalination project could potentially affect the community directly and indirectly;
- Identify likely social impacts their significance; and

- Identify mitigation, enhancement and monitoring measures to minimise the negative effects of the project and to maximise positive impacts.

The SIA methodology included:

- **Stage 1:** Gathering information about the project
- **Stage 2:** Developing a community profile
- **Stage 3:** Obtaining stakeholder input via interviews and focus groups
- **Stage 4:** Identifying, assessing and ranking the SIA
- **Stage 5:** Identifying mitigation, enhancement and monitoring measures
- **Stage 6:** Producing the SIA report

The SIA is broken up into two phases:

- **Phase 1:** Conducting the assessment.
- **Phase 2:** Further development of mitigation recommendations (from early 2008)

The SIA drew on information obtained through SIA-specific meetings, interviews with key community members and stakeholders and information from the community research undertaken by Synovate Research. The SIA also drew on data provided by the Corporation on the project.

The SIA-specific meetings were conducted with community members and stakeholders from Binningup, Myalup, Harvey and Australind in October and November 2007. Some of the key issues raised during these interviews were (GHD 2008):

Community consultation and information

The community feel that there was a lack of consultation and information about the project, which has led to a lack of trust in the Corporation. They believe it was a political decision and not one based on the right site with least amount of impacts.

Community identity and sense of place

The Binningup and Myalup communities worry that the desalination plant will compromise their community identity and sense of place. They are also concerned about perceived impacts of a large, transient workforce during plant construction.

Facilities and services

The community is worried about the ability of existing services to cope with a large influx of construction workers.

Environment

The community is concerned about environmental impacts of the plant, and the absence of information on health and environmental effects.

Future development and land values

The community is concerned about the plant restricting future residential growth in the town and the reduction of property values.

Visual impact

The community is concerned about how visible the plant will be from the surrounding communities and is not convinced that the plant will be effectively screened.

Noise

The community is concerned that both the construction and operation of the plant will generate unacceptable levels of noise.

Dust

Dust is not a major concern so long as it is managed appropriately to prevent any impacts on the local community.

Public safety and risk

The community is concerned about the risks of transporting and storing chemicals and the impact of disturbing contaminated soils.

Closure between Binningup and Myalup Beach

The community is concerned about the temporary closure of a portion of the beach during construction and the impact of this on recreational activities in the area.

Equity

The community feels they are bearing the costs of the project while they don't believe they benefit from it.

Traffic

The community is concerned about an increase in traffic and increased travel times as a result of the plant construction and operation.

Powerlines

The community is concerned about the impact of powerlines supplying power to the plant on the visual amenity of the area.

The Corporation's responses to concerns raised at community meetings, in submissions and during the SIA process are provided in Chapter 3.3 below.

3.3 The Consultation Program

The overarching goal of our consultation program is to understand community values and concerns and create opportunities for the community to provide input into the planning for the project.

The Corporation's consultation program will extend to all elements and phases of the project, including:

- The desalination plant;
- The water transfer pipeline route and Harvey Summit Tank;
- The environmental approvals process;
- The Alliance development phase;
- The future construction phase; and
- The future operational phase.

Our consultation program is diverse and includes:

3.3.1 Local advertising of community events and information on the project

Local advertising is an effective way of informing the community and stakeholders of the project. A monthly advertisement has been running in local newspapers and the Binningup Community Newsletter 'Waves' since August 2007. The topics covered to date include:

- Thanks for helping us (report on community research);
- Your environment, Your say (information on the voluntary release of the environmental scoping document);
- Desalination – an important piece of the drying climate puzzle (information on the Corporation's Security through Diversity strategy and the environmental process);
- Understanding the local environment (information on the environmental approval process, research at the Perth Seawater Desalination Plant and Peer Reviewers);
- Meet the new buoy in town – he's looking out for your ocean (information on the marine monitoring buoy);
- What is desalination and how does it work (information on the desalination process); and
- Whale expert joins team (information on the whale expert joining the desalination team).

An example of these advertisements is provided in Appendix E. Other forms of advertising have included local radio and at local venues, such as the Binningup and Harvey libraries and the Binningup General Store.

3.3.2 Participating in local events

The Corporation is keen to attend as many local events as possible during the planning and construction of the plant. Attending these events allows us to talk to people who may not normally attend a community meeting but may have an interest in the desalination project. The Corporation erected an information stand at the Binningup Spring Fair on Saturday 6 October 2007 and spoke to over 100 people about the project. We will continue to identify opportunities to attend local events to reach as many people as possible.

3.3.3 Holding community forums, workshops and open house / 'walk-ins'

The Corporation has been holding community forums, workshops and open house / 'walk ins' since the project was announced in May 2007. A schedule of these is provided in Table 3.2 below.

The two early meetings held in late May 2007 attracted a high number of attendees (over 300 in Binningup and 70 in Myalup). Since that time our forums have had lower attendance (from 15 to 45 people at each session). These sessions are invaluable as they provide us with the chance to hear community concerns and views first hand and factor these into our planning for the project.

3.3.4 Issuing regular community newsletters

The Corporation has issued community newsletters on a monthly basis since May 2007. This newsletter is letter-box-dropped to all Binningup community members, placed at local venues, emailed to over 100 people who are currently registered on our mailing list, and is placed on our website.

The newsletter provides up-to-date project information on the project, informing people of new documents that have become available and reminding people of how they can be involved in the project and seek more information. An example of our newsletter is provided in Appendix E.

3.3.5 Media relations

As with any high profile project, media interest in the desalination project has been high, particularly from the local media. The Corporation continues to proactively inform media of project developments to facilitate accurate and timely media coverage.

3.3.6 Community and stakeholder tours of the Perth Seawater Desalination Plant and Taranto Road site

The Corporation has extended an open offer to all south-west community members and stakeholders to tour the Perth Seawater Desalination Plant in Kwinana. To date many tours of the plant have been conducted for both the general public and specific stakeholders. An open day and barbecue was held on the Taranto Rd site on 2nd December and attended by 35 people.

3.3.7 Presentations and briefings to community groups and stakeholders

The project team continues to brief community groups and stakeholders. Key stakeholder such as the Shire of Harvey, the Binningup Desalination Action Group, Conservation Council, World Wildlife Fund for Nature and the South West Environment Centre will continue to be regularly briefed as the project moves forward.

During 2008 the project team will specifically provide presentations more specific to community groups and stakeholders to ensure a high level of engagement in the environmental assessment process, as well as providing updates on ongoing project activities.

3.3.8 Brochures, fact sheets and other visual aids

The project has a series of fact sheets and a brochure which contains information on the project, desalination and the environmental assessment program. These are available at our events, on our website and provided to interested parties on request. During the release of our Environmental Scoping Document, we produced two program-specific fact sheets to assist people in understanding the document. Refer to Appendix E for these fact sheets.

In addition, the Corporation is using advanced computer technology to visually communicate the aesthetic impacts of the plant, pipeline and the Harvey Summit Tank on the local environment (See Chapter 11 Social Factors – Operational Impacts). Graphical depictions will continue to be enhanced as the design of the plant develops.

Our website www.watercorporation.com.au is regularly updated, providing online access to all relevant documents for community members and stakeholders. Our website is being used as repository for all reports and documents

being produced as part of the project. It also outlines the community consultation opportunities, the environmental program and lists frequently asked questions and answers on the project. We store all community meeting presentations on the website for those with online access.

That being said, our research tells us that not everyone at Binningup uses the internet, so we regularly make documents available at local venues such as the Binningup and Harvey libraries and the Binningup General Store and extend an open offer to post any documents we list in our newsletter throughout the project.

Table 3.2 summarises communications activities to date.

Table 3.2 Communications Activities Undertaken

Activity	Dates
Community Events	
Community Meeting, Binningup	29 May 2007
Community Meeting, Myalup	30 May 2007
Perth Seawater Desalination Plant Tour for Binningup residents	2 July 2007
Perth Seawater Desalination Plant Tour for the Harvey Water - Sports Club	29 July 2007
Pipeline Landowners Workshop, Harvey	5 September 2007
Community Forums, Binningup (afternoon and evening)	25 September 2007
Binningup Spring Fair	6 October
Taranto Road Open Day (BBQ)	2 December 2007
Community Forums, Binningup (afternoon and evening)	3 December 2007
Community Forums, Binningup (afternoon and evening)	21 February 2008
Stakeholder Briefings	
Binningup Desalination Action Group	Ongoing
Shire of Harvey	Ongoing
South West Environment Centre	Ongoing
World Wide Fund for Nature	Ongoing
Conservation Council	Ongoing
Dolphin Discovery Centre	March 2007
Other stakeholder or community groups	On request
Landowners affected by preferred pipeline route, Harvey Summit Tank and near Taranto Road site	Regular one-on-one meetings
Other Activities	
Social Impact Assessment, GHD	2007
Social research (telephone)	Quarterly
Community newsletter	Monthly
Brochures, fact sheets and other materials	Ongoing
Local advertising	Ongoing
Website www.watercorporation.com.au	Ongoing
Dedicated community telephone line (free call)	Ongoing

3.3.9 Environmental communications

Activities already undertaken for the environmental impact assessment include:

- Voluntary release of the Environmental Scoping Document for public comment (28 November – 10 December 2007); and
- Response to 16 public submissions on 31 December 2007.

During the EPA 8-week Public Environmental Review public review and comment period, we plan to continue our comprehensive community consultation program, which will include:

- Community forums in Binningup and Harvey to further clarify information contained in the PER and associated scientific studies;
- Opportunities to access our environmental peer reviewers (QA information sessions);
- Media and newsletters;
- Key stakeholder briefings;
- A public tour of the proposed desalination plant site; and
- Static displays at local shopping centres, Council offices and libraries.

At the completion of the EPA's specified eight-week public review and comment period, the Corporation will prepare a *Response to Public Submissions* document, outlining our response (including how the proposal and/or the Water Corporation's environmental management commitments may change as a result of consultation) to all issues raised during the eight-week public comment period. This will be submitted to the EPA and made publicly available along with any additional information required to clarify/add to the PER.

3.4 Key Issues Raised and Responses

Table 3.3 outlines the main issues and concerns raised by the community to date and a summary of our response and/or the section of this Public Environmental Review document that addresses the issue.

Table 3.3 Key Issues and Responses

Social Issues Raised	Water Corporation Response / PER Section
Community consultation and information	<p>It is recognised that the site selection process occurred without community consultation. Post-decision the site selection criteria were made publicly available, which ranked the Taranto Road site as the optimal site. A report that compared the cost of locating the plant at the Kemerton Industrial Park was also publicly released.</p> <p>The Corporation is committed to consulting and informing the community during the planning of the project and operation of the plant and to remaining open and transparent. The way in which we will continue to consult is outlined in this chapter of the PER.</p>

Social Issues Raised**Water Corporation Response / PER Section**

Community identity and sense of place	Community identity and sense of place can be impacted upon by various factors. See the following PER chapters for more information: Chapter 11.0 Social Factors – Construction Impacts Chapter 12.0 Social Factors – Operational Impacts Chapter 14.0 Environmental Management
Facilities and services	In deciding on the location of the construction workforce, the Corporation will consider the potential impacts on local facilities and services. Recommendations from the Social Impact Assessment will also be considered, such as developing a needs assessment of the workforce.
Environment	The environmental issues raised by the community are addressed in the Water Corporation's Public Environmental Review.
Visual impact	The Corporation has undertaken preliminary sight line and view-shed modelling of the plant. As the design of the plant is not yet determined, this view-shed modelling is based on nominal building heights and revegetation principles. More extensive view-shed modelling of the plant will occur when the design is finalised, which is expected in the second half of 2008. This information will continue to be shared with the community and stakeholders. The Corporation has also undertaken view-shed modelling of the Harvey Summit Tank on surrounding areas. This modelling and a visual assessment is contained in Chapter 12.0 Social Factors – Operational Impacts.
Noise	Auditory amenity (noise) has been assessed for both the construction and operation of the plant. This assessment is contained within Chapters 11.0 Social Factors – Construction Impacts and 12.0 Social Factors – Operational Impacts.
Dust	The Corporation will manage dust suppression as part of its Construction Environmental Management Framework (see Appendix C).
Public safety and risk	The Corporation's approach to public safety and risk is outlined in Chapter 11.0 Social Factors – Construction Impacts. Public safety and risk will be managed in accordance with the management plans in the Construction Environmental Management Framework (see Appendix C).
Closure between Binningup and Myalup Beach	For public safety reasons, the 400 metre stretch of beach immediately adjacent to the site will be closed for up to 18 months during construction of the desalination plant. This beach closure will allow construction of the inlet and outlet pipes. The beach will reopen and be available as normal following construction.
Traffic	The Corporation will manage traffic as part of its Construction Environmental Management Plan (see Appendix C).
Pipelines	The Construction Environmental Management Plan will address the way impacts on landowners will be managed.
Powerlines	The Corporation will work closely with Western Power to ensure that social impacts of the power line construction is mitigated and managed appropriately.

3.5 Future Opportunity for Public Involvement and Information

The Corporation will:

- Continue to organise community information sessions and forums at project milestones to ensure the community is kept informed and provided an opportunity to offer input into the planning of the project;
- Develop a social commitments register and be accountable for delivering on these commitments by making it an open document;
- Continue to develop clear and concise information materials including fact sheets, brochures, reports and visual technology;
- Continue to offer tours of the Perth Seawater Desalination Plant and the Taranto Road site;
- Continue utilising the website and freecall telephone line;
- Continue to issue a monthly newsletter with up-to-date information on the project;
- Continue with telephone research of the local community to track attitudes and perceptions, and make this information publicly available; and
- Continue to advertise information and events to ensure people are kept informed.
- In addition to these opportunities, the Corporation remains open to receiving ideas from the community on the ways they would like to get involved, with an open invitation to submit these ideas on the website, in our newsletters and at our community fora.