

BECKWITH ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

Mr. Nick Churchill
Project Director
Southern Seawater Desalination Project
Water Corporation
Leederville, WA

18 June 2008

Dear Mr Churchill,

Re: Peer Review of the Social Impact Assessment for the Desalination Proposal

As requested, I have completed my peer review of the social impact assessment conducted for the proposed desalination plant. The Water Corporation's decision to conduct a social impact assessment (SIA) of its proposed Southern Seawater Desalination Project, including the use of a peer reviewer, is commendable. In WA, proponents are not required to assess beyond the very limited aspects allowed as part of the EPA's formal impact assessment process. As a result, too often proposals do not undergo social impact assessment.

A peer review is an independent review by an appropriately credentialed third party of the adequacy of the SIA as an evaluation of the proposal. The peer review is not a judgment of the acceptability or unacceptability of the actual proposal. You have already received my detailed technical review of the SIA. The following focuses on the key outstanding issues identified by the peer review.

The SIA recommends the creation of a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG). If well structured and facilitated/chaired, an SAG can be an effective means of ongoing engagement with stakeholders on impact management issues. The recommendation of a Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP) is also supported.

As documented in the SIA, there are issues still requiring further work and consultation. The SAG and the SIMP provide opportunities for this to occur. Key issues requiring further effort or clarification include:

- The location of the construction camp (if needed) and its effects on community facilities and services
- The means of redressing any unavoidable impacts (e.g. access restrictions due to safety issues)
- The potential for enhanced economic activity in the area
- Traffic management during the construction phase
- The potential impact of power lines
- Consultation with stakeholder interests that were not engaged during the SIA (e.g. regional development commission, community services administrators)

There is also the outstanding issue of whether the proposed project would generate positive or negative impacts on property values. Although outside the scope of the SIA, it was a socio-economic issue of concern to stakeholders.

In resolving outstanding impact management issues, the proponent is encouraged to apply objective criteria to the extent possible (e.g. identification of areas of economic impact, any issues of compensation) and to make these criteria public.

Sincerely,



Jo Ann Beckwith BSc MES PhD
Director
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