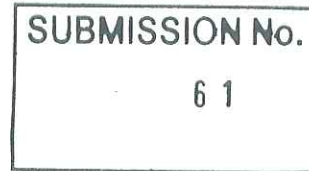


City of Ballarat

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Hon. Mr. John Pandazopoulos MP
Chair
Environment & Natural Resources Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
(Sent via email 29 August 2008)

Date: 27 August, 2008
Our Ref: SUS / UNIT
Your Ref: 17 July 2008
Enquiries: 03) 5320 5897
Writer's
Direct Fax: 03) 5320 5756

Dear Hon. Mr John Pandazopoulos MP

INQUIRY INTO MELBOURNE'S FUTURE WATER SUPPLY

The City of Ballarat's Water Resource Committee welcomes the chance to make a written submission to the Parliament of Victoria, Environment and Natural Resource Committee, inquiry regarding Melbourne's Future Water supply.

While the focus of this inquiry is on the security of Melbourne's water, it must be recognised that there is an interdependency with Victoria's water supply as a whole. Melbourne cannot address its sustainable water needs in isolation from the rest of Victoria or without considering the impact of its actions on rural Victoria.

Residents in the City of Ballarat have been on level four restrictions since November 2004 and varying levels of restrictions since 2000. Understandably this has caused some hardship within the community. There are different values on the use of water according to the location of the community. Unfortunately the disparity in water use may have the potential to create hostilities between rural regional Victoria and Melbourne.

Equally, progressive water management has the ability to enhance the city and country relationship. Grappling with reductions in water supply, rural communities have a wealth of learning and experience to share in developing many strategies for sustainable water resource management. This is an opportunity to work with rural and regional Victoria who are quite advanced in developing water conservation, reuse and education programs. In our experience education remains a key in the sustainable management of water resources and changing community attitudes.

The committee also find the Terms of Reference for this inquiry have resonance with communities outside of Melbourne. The learnings, ideas and recommendations that come out of this inquiry are likely to be relevant and of considerable interest to most Victorian communities, not just to Melbourne. We would however, like to make comment on point 4. the use of groundwater and point 5. small locally based desalination plants.

Point 4: An increasing concern is the unregulated use of ground water. The City of Ballarat respectfully request a change in legislation surrounding ground water use in urban and rural areas to ensure the most appropriate use of this precious resource. Ground water needs to be managed in a Victoria wide approach with a focus based on the connectivity of these systems and a priority of needs such as stock or emergency use, rather than on ability to pay. The committee would also like to recommend a full inventory water of ground water assets to allow for better ground water management.

Point 5: When assessing the impacts of desalination plants we urge the inquiry to promote the importance of stringent, scientific and transparent environmental impact assessments. This assessment should include the long term net sustainability of desalination plants, focusing on areas such as such as energy use, embodied energy, bio-diversity loss and social impact.

We are pleased to see the State Government showing leadership in securing a healthy water future for Victoria. If you require clarification or further input, the City of Ballarat's Sustainability Unit is happy to assist the department on this inquiry. Please feel free to contact Sophie Akers, Manager of Environmental programs on phone (03) 5320 5894 or by email sophieakers@ballarat.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Anthony Schinck
Chief Executive Officer