



Colac Otway

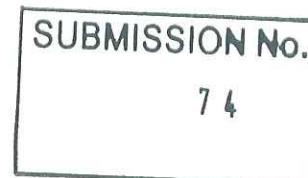
SHIRE

Naturally Progressive

28 August 2008



Hon. John Pandazopoulos  
Chair  
Parliament of Victoria - Environment & Natural Resources Committee  
Parliament House - Spring Street  
East Melbourne Vic 3002



Dear Mr Pandazopoulos,

**RE: Inquiry into Melbourne's Future Water Supply**

In response to your letter of 16 July 2008 seeking submissions for the above inquiry the Colac Otway Shire is pleased to supply the attached submission based on the terms of reference supplied with your letter. Council sees the issues pertaining to water as an issue that will affect all tiers of Government and impact on the future delivery of services to our community whilst at the same time having significant environmental, industrial, economic and social impacts.

It is important to highlight that Colac Otway Shire is a partner in a G21 led project investigating options for securing water for economic development in golden plains shire and the G21 region. The project aims:

- To understand the present and future supply and demand for water in industry, including the associated economics and financial impact. This includes understanding the location of existing and proposed water reliant industries.
- To clarify the role of local government in ensuring water supplies for economic development, town planning controls and provision.
- To identify opportunities for water technology and knowledge transfer including new skills and sciences in reuse, decontamination and desalination.
- To advocate and support planning and investment in new water sources and infrastructure for economic development, both from traditional agencies and new players. This includes a clarification of the new and emerging legal requirements and management responsibilities.

The G21 project has only recently commenced and is not expected to be completed for another six months. The findings of this project will be forwarded to you for consideration in the inquiry.

We are pleased to supply this submission to the Inquiry into Melbourne's Future Water Supply and would appreciate being provided with further information as the inquiry progresses. In the event that any issues are identified that potentially impact on Colac Otway Shire, Council requests that it be notified and included in any detailed discussion on the matter.

Should you require any further information with respect to our submission please contact us at your convenience.

Yours faithfully

Jack Green  
**General Manager Sustainable Planning and Development**







## Colac Otway Shire Submission to the Inquiry into Melbourne's Future Water Supply

This submission makes brief comments in respect to each of the terms of reference for the inquiry. It is important to note that comments are made specifically in relation to Melbourne's water supply and not the water supply in the Colac Otway Shire region.

### **1. Further savings that can be achieved by increased conservation and efficiency efforts**

Council believes this area can be expanded and even subsidised to households and industry to increase the amount of water saving in our community. Individual responsibility for use and consumption is both sustainable and educative if approached in a structured and strategic way. Integration of education and water conservation methods should be at the forefront of initiatives to tackle Melbourne's future water supply.

The dam level trigger points for the introduction of water restrictions should be increased to prevent wastage even when the supplies are relatively full. This will encourage behaviour and attitude change that will become a standard community expectation over time.

In addition individual properties should be given an allocation of water per year and where this allocation is exceeded heavy penalties should be applied. This will further encourage the community to take more responsibility for managing a common resource that has been traditionally undervalued and wasted.

### **2. Collection of Stormwater**

Collection of stormwater should be a priority on two scales. Firstly, collection of stormwater by industry and commercial premises for reuse should be a responsibility for all existing and future industrial developments. Secondly, Government through Catchment Management Authorities and Water Authorities should be encouraged to capture, treat and reuse as much stormwater as possible whilst maintaining necessary flows for waterway health.

### **3. Re-use of treated waste water**

This issue is implicit in point 1 above because education and behaviour change are critical to not only reducing water consumption but also to change attitudes toward using recycled water. Waste water need not be wasted as it has many uses in industrial, commercial and domestic environments not to mention opportunities for health of parks and recreational facilities in our communities. A comparatively small investment in recycling infrastructure now will preserve water supplies and encourage self sustainability into the future.

### **4. Use of Groundwater**

Council believes there is an indivisible link between surface water and groundwater that needs careful consideration in the inquiry. Local residents have raised serious

concerns about using groundwater systems to supplement urban water supplies. The community concerns are focused on the impacts to local waterways that may not have sufficient flows to retain their ecological integrity if the groundwater systems are over used.

Groundwater supplies affect land, waterway and environmental health and therefore require careful management to avoid unintended consequences. Groundwater systems are complex and require extensive research and monitoring to be undertaken to ensure they are managed sustainably. Therefore, groundwater should not be seen as a preferred option for future water supply provision.

#### **5. Small locally based desalination plants**

Council is not yet convinced that desalination is an environmentally sustainable option for water. Desalination demands high levels of energy and produces a significant amount of waste. Therefore, desalination should be seen as a contingent option rather than a primary option for water provision.

#### **6. Any other optional Water source which appears to the committee to be appropriate**

It is clear that no single method will be effective for long term sustainability of water supplies. It is recommended that your committee look at all options to encourage self sustainability within our community to preserve and maintain existing water supplies with a minimal demand requirement for potable water.