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ject Re: Water shortages Melbourne. A Hobart perspective from a Melbournian living in Hobart (As I have a home in Melbourne too, I claim dual citizenship)

For Follow Up: Normal Print

My name is William Dekmetzian and I moved to Hobart 12 years ago from Melbourne. Having experienced pre-1996 water restrictions, I can only imagine what it must be like today for the majority of hapless Melbournians as they prepare for possible stage 4 of water restrictions over the coming summer. The stories that are told to me by family and friends there re the water restrictions are just unbelievable. Unless those in Parliament have forgotten, WATER is one of the major mainstays of a civilization. Without water, there are no centres of civilization. We are no more or no less special than all other civilizations which have perished over the last few thousand years through lack of water. A look at the Saharan landscape with its many abandoned ancient cities should indeed reinforce the need that the same can happen to us.

Recently in the papers and other news I have noticed opposition to desalination plants. Although I personally would not favour this, reality must come to the foreground and we should all take a leaf out of the pages of how the United Arab countries conduct their desalination operations. Unless our rivers miraculously spring back to life, desalination should be fast tracked. This would at least give our rivers the respite needed to get them back to health. Once healthy, we can stop using desalination operations as quickly as we started using them. Of course one could always choose to abandon the city as civilized peoples have done in the past. The point is, if one wants a fully functioning metropolis people MUST be able to use water for their daily needs such as: watering the garden (a favoured pursuit in many civilized societies), washing their cars (woe betide me for even suggesting that one), cleaning their pathways, and other paved surfaces around the outside of their homes to remove perceived dirt etc.

The fact that water can be used for washing, drinking, cooking etc should go without saying. In Melbourne you have taken the route of heavy administration of water use through severe, accumulating restrictions which have a devastating psychological effect on peoples' health, not to mention their wallets. All the funding that has been wasted on a complex and cumbersome water administration would have been better put to use towards finding remedies to increase the water supply. The short sightedness of the Victorian Parliament astounds me as Melbourne water reserves stand at @ 29.0% approximately. In case no-one has noticed, climate change is upon us fast.

The dry is continuing without an end in sight and everyone is squabbling about the political correctness (or lack thereof) of various water "solutions" in Victoria. As I said earlier, one can abandon the city as many have done in the past. No-one in the world will think any less of you.

In Hobart, we chose the path of securing the water supply. Most homes have no water meters and the only time restrictions are placed on us are in the bushfire season and that is not because of lack of water, but to maintain water pressure for firefighting should the need arise. In case you have forgotten, we experience the joys of watering our gardens at any time or day or night, we can wash AND HOSE DOWN our cars too as well as the house (this is important because it removes salt spray). No need for timed showers. If you need only a short shower, you have one. If you want a longer shower, you can have that too. Amazing to have lived here in Hobart without water restrictions except for firefighting only. No Excess Water Bills. In fact, no water bills at all. Where there is a

charge for excess water, it is minimal. My partner and I run a 32 room Motel here and last year our total excess water bill came to 500 dollars. Yep, 500 dollars for the whole year.

We all are facing problems in today's times of financial and other uncertainties. The last thing that people should have on their minds is how, when and why to use water. The ancient Romans managed to supply their whole empire with water for hundreds of years. What is the problem today? If Parliament looked beyond their borders they would notice a place called Hobart, and they would also know that the fresh water that flows down the Derwent River in ONE day is enough to supply Melbourne's water needs for a year. Lest we forget, WE are ALL Australians first and foremost and that Victoria is in a state of water peril. It may sound simplistic, but the water is here and it is ready to be used to alleviate the water situation in Melbourne, whilst at the same time actively assisting in restoring the health of the rivers in Victoria. Our forefathers built the snowy mountain scheme. We can meet that same challenge head on with respect to our water in the way our forefathers responded to the needs of their day. Are we less capable than they were? Only time will tell.

But for the moment, let me remind you of the joys of watering beautiful gardens for hours, washing the car in the drive at any time, washing down one's patios, short or long showers, the filling of a swimming pool (without having to sell the house to do it) sprinklers on the lawns with children playing under them etc etc etc. Of course, there is also the option of moving the whole population of Melbourne to Hobart! Think of the jobs it would create, the stimulus to the Australian economy and it would only take the one day's fresh water run down the Derwent to bring water joy for a whole year.

Wake up guys, you are all ARE living in waterless suburban hell.

Bill.

p.s.

Just because water is free here DOES NOT mean we waste it. For example I wash my car around once a month (even though I can do it more regularly, I don't). Shorter showers are the norm here as well. But just knowing that one can go out and get wet from top to toe and NOT feel guilty or carted off to jail makes life a bit more bearable. If we don't use the water here, it just goes back to the river. Water conservation is also a big thing here believe it or not. In the Clarence Council (2nd Largest and on the Eastern Shore, comprising half of Hobart's population) all waste water is recycled and used for irrigation purposes in the Coal River Valley for crop growing and other requirements. I believe that will also occur in the Hobart Council area (Largest and on the Western Shore, comprising the other half of Hobart's population) in the near future.