

MUNDARING RESIDENTS & RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION (INC)

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7 June 2006

PERSONAL AND URGENT

Dr Jim Gill
Chief Executive Officer
Water Corporation
629 Newcastle Street
LEEDERVILLE WA 6007

Dear Dr Gill

This letter is sent to you personally because, unfortunately, I have no confidence in your officials, and community dissatisfaction on the consultation process for the proposed water treatment plant at Mundaring is close to exploding. I respectfully suggest that the time has come for you to take control of the project.

Some time ago, your corporation made a promise not to proceed with its proposal for a water treatment plant in the Mundaring area until there had been full community consultation on all potential sites. The promise was given to government and the community. There is no ambiguity in the wording and the commitment was accepted at face value by our association.

The first "consultation forum" has now been held and a number of complaints have been expressed by our members, e.g.

- The forum was held in Midland but should have been held in Mundaring, which is central to the potential water treatment plant sites and the community which is directly affected;
- The forum started late and ended late;
- Time was wasted by re-presenting material already given at the previous public meeting and detailed in the mailed out information package;
- Overheads were displayed and then read word for word, using up valuable time;
- Question time was not tightly controlled;
- There was a failure to adhere to time frames;
- The "consultation" process has been structured by the corporation for its own purposes;
- The community is not getting what it asked for e.g. full access to documents and information. There is no justification for a public monopoly to conceal the facts from the community;
- The corporation had promised that the information package would be sent to all Mundaring Shire residents, but some of our members in the suburbs of Glen Forrest and Darlington received nothing. The full extent of this omission is not known;
- The main presenter for the corporation behaved like an irascible schoolmaster addressing school children;
- The corporation's strategy resembled a war of attrition;
- The facilitator was not truly independent and did not effectively control the corporation representatives;
- The corporation declined to answer crucial questions (please see further comments below)

This sample of complaints will give you an understanding of the community's mood. I am sure that the facilitator is doing his best in a difficult situation and I do not personally endorse all of the criticisms. However I am obliged to faithfully reflect the views of the membership.

We take the process of "full consultation" to mean the seeking and sharing of information and advice in their totality. How can the corporation justify less than that?

The crucial questions which your representatives did not answer were:

- How were the costings for a WTP at various sites calculated - what was the methodology and what assumptions were made?
- What were the "prudent commercial principles" which led to the corporation's initial decision to site the WTP at the Mundaring Weir?
- What were the principles that led to the corporation's subsequent decision to site the WTP at Mundaring Hill?
- What principles will be applied in the current round of deliberations?

If you consider these questions unreasonable please let me know why. From our point of view, the questions must be answered before site selection criteria can be established. There seems to be no point in setting criteria first and discovering later that they are inconsistent with the legally binding obligations of your enabling legislation.

I have today viewed the corporation's website for a list of questions asked from the floor taken from the verbatim record of the last forum. I was shocked to see that the corporation has put its own spin on both the question and the answer. At best this could be regarded as a "Dorothy Dix" technique. At worst it is dishonest. Those who attended the forum, including corporation representatives, know the truth but the wider community which is relying on the integrity of the website report is being deliberately deceived.

I have sent a copy of this letter to the forum facilitator so that he may consider the issues listed in paragraph 3, and have written to Ms Jaye Radisch, MP advising her of this letter.

You might also note that I recently met and exchanged correspondence on these matters with the Minister for Water Resources, the Honorable John Kobelke, but only in broad terms. I have offered him a copy of this letter on his request.

I would appreciate your prompt reply.

Yours faithfully

Sandra Bentley
President