



Clean Ocean Foundation Media Release

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Light at the end of the Pipe

The Gunnamatta Outfall closure has finally reached tipping point. Melbourne Water has submitted the Works Approval Plan to the EPA for the upgrade of the Eastern Treatment Plant to Advanced Water Treatment, meaning that Class A water will be produced instead of the current Class C.

While this does not mean that the outfall will be closed in the foreseeable future, the right path has finally been taken to REDUCE the ecosystem degradation and public health risk Melbourne Water have finally admitted to causing at Gunnamatta after 34 years EPA licence guideline breaches.

This means the hard work and pressure from Clean Ocean Foundation has paid off. In particular the plans for the outfall extension made by Melbourne Water back in the 2001 Works Approval have been officially omitted.

“Melbourne Water say that scrapping the extension will save Victoria \$400 million. In reality the extension was kerbed during Clean Ocean Foundation intervention in 2003/4, after Trade Union alliance, VCAT and Supreme Court action and a change in SEPP guidelines. It was proven to be a ridiculous idea 5 years ago, so to re-wrap the Works Approval now as a ‘\$400m money saver’ is diluting the positive outcome of upgrade.” Reflected Clean Ocean Foundation CEO Anton Vigenser.

The ETP upgrade will allow smaller localised projects to use recycled water, and the flow of 450 million litres a day currently being pumped out at Gunnamatta will slowly start reducing from 2012.

“The government MUST start locking in these smaller recycling projects to use the resource created after upgrade. The cheaper and sustainable option of recycled water MUST NOT be pushed to the back of the line when current expensive water projects; Desalination and N/S Pipelines, come online in 2012 as well.”

“The government has finally caught up with the campaign that Clean Ocean has been pushing for ten years. The momentum needs to be kept up.”

With this momentum needs to be upgrade of Melbourne’s forgotten Mt Martha Treatment Plant which has no plan to produce anything better than Class C, and will still be discharged at Gunnamatta after 2012.

“Upgrade for Melbourne’s major treatment plant should now become the National benchmark for ALL treatment plants that discharge into Australia’s 144 outfalls. The answer for water security during climate change is not in ‘silver bullet large scale infrastructure’ but in integrated water planning.”

Thankfully Melbourne Water is future proofing the upgrade; the option to create Purified Recycled (drinkable) Water can be easily plugged in to the system at a later date.

“Upgrade to Purified Recycled Water for Melbourne should have come before Desalination at a lower cost to environment and society. The upgrade to Class A is FANTASTIC, but a lost opportunity for Victoria to become truly water sustainable.”

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