

SFI NEWSLETTER

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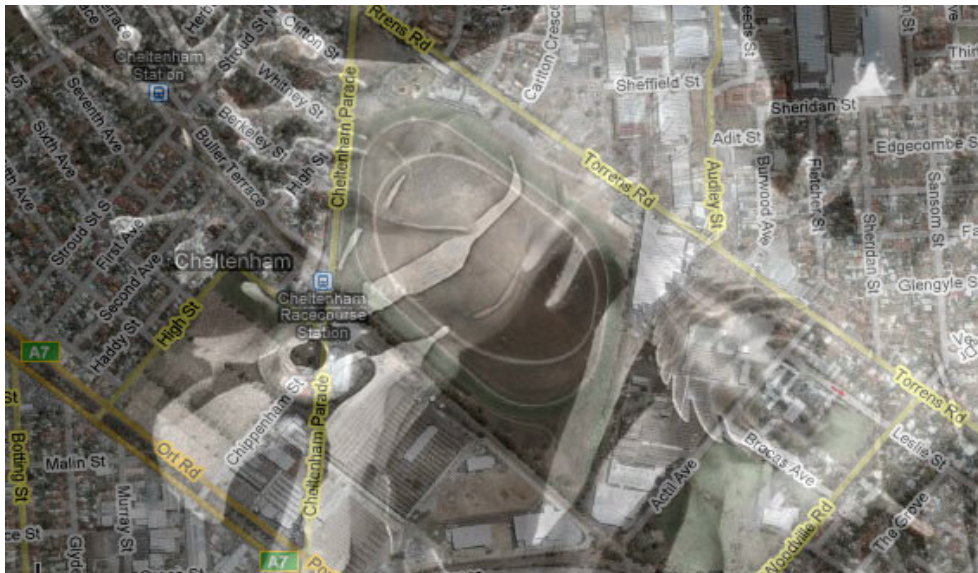
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Experience the sustainable management of the Leafy Seadragon through the Seadragon Foundation Inc. tailored for the conservation challenges of the 21st century.

CHELTENHAM RACECOURSE SPECIAL





The development of the Cheltenham Racecourse offers a wonderful opportunity to provide a model of sustainable development in South Australia and an improved environment for the Leafy Seadragon - the state's marine emblem.

The currently proposed development and rezoning of the site should not be approved by the South Australian Government. Properly developed the Cheltenham Racecourse site offers South Australia the opportunity to be a world leader in sustainable management.



The Seadragon Foundation Inc. has written an open letter for presentation to the South Australian government pleading for the proper management of the Cheltenham Racecourse. The Seadragon Foundation Inc. feels strongly about this issue and this letter will be sent registered to listed recipients and our newsletter to a majority of informed members of public marine conservationists and organisations in South Australia and Australia – numbering many tens of thousands.

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SEADRAGON FOUNDATION OPEN LETTER

From:

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05/02/2008

To:

Hon. Mike Rann MP, Premier. GPO Box 2343
ADELAIDE SA 5000.

Hon. Gail Gago MLC, Minister for Environment and Conservation. GPO Box 1047
ADELAIDE SA 5001.

Hon. Paul Holloway MLC, Minister for Urban Development and Planning. GPO Box 2832
ADELAIDE SA 5001.

Hon. Karlene Maywald. MP, Minister for Water Security, GPO Box 645
ADELAIDE SA 5001.

Hon. Kevin Foley. MP. Treasurer, GPO Box 2264. ADELAIDE SA 5001.

Martin Hamilton-Smith MP. Liberal Party, Leader of the Opposition. Shop 2, 212 Belair Road Hawthorn SA 5062.

Hon. Mark Parnell. MLC, C/O Parliament House, North Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000.

Alex Gaut, Marine Program Co-ordinator, Conservation Council of South Australia Inc., 1/157 Franklin St., Adelaide 5000.

The Seadragon Foundation Inc. is devoted to the conservation of the Leafy Seadragon, and is the most expert organisation concerning the conservation of the Leafy Seadragon. The SFI have recently discovered several new species in the Leafy Seadragon family in South Australia, have been recognised by collaborating in the writing of major reviews on the Leafy Seadragon, and works internationally through collaborations with esteemed international marine conservation institutions including the Californian Academy of Science, Cal Teck and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

The Seadragon Foundation Inc. is proudly an incorporated community association based in South Australia. The membership of the Seadragon Foundation Inc. includes world experts on biodiversity and seadragon conservation, local experts in Leafy Seadragon conservation, and reaches to wide variety of professionals from many countries. The Seadragon Foundation has more than 50 financial members and 350 associate members.

The Seadragon Foundation Inc. is independent of any political party or politically partisan conservation body, and incorporates the maxims, Independence, Transparency and Accountability.

The Seadragon Foundation Inc. considers the approval of the currently proposed Cheltenham Racecourse development would be a major threat to the survival of the leafy Seadragon, and a negation of South Australia's commitment to the sustainable management of the environment.

The Leafy Seadragon is one of the most beautiful and unique marine animals in the world. In recognition of this the Leafy Seadragon is the marine emblem of South Australia and has the highest level of protection.

However, the survival of the Leafy Seadragon depends on its preferred habitat of healthy seagrass beds. There been massive destruction of seagrass beds in South Australia, particularly off metropolitan Adelaide shores. This has significantly reduced the habitat for the Leafy Seadragon in Gulf St. Vincent and substantially reduced the Leafy Seadragon's effective population size. Any loss of seagrass beds in South Australia poses a threat to the future survival of the Leafy Seadragon.

The current development proposal for the Cheltenham Racecourse does not support the reclamation of stormwater, which poses a significant threat as a pollutant to the seagrass habitat of the Leafy Seadragon. The stormwater which could be reclaimed at Cheltenham currently pollutes and silts the seabeds off Adelaide's shores so necessary to the survival of the Leafy Seadragon.

More broadly the current development proposal does not support the sustainable management of water resources, the environment in general, or a healthy cultural environment for sustainable management. The current development proposal also does not appear fiscally responsible in consideration of the predicted burdens for water costs to be borne by the citizens of South Australia.

Alternatives to the current re-zoning and development plan offer reclamation of stormwater, more recreational area at the site, and no loss of development potential, profit to developers, or revenue to council or state government. The amount of water that could be reclaimed at Cheltenham is equivalent to \$68,000,000 spent on desalination infrastructure and has far lower energy needs and running costs. Its greenhouse footprint is therefore significantly lower than the equivalent desalination to provide an equal amount of water.

In terms of environmentally and modern urban development, rather than providing a model of medium to high density occupation with large amounts of open space – as the ideal to reclaim stormwater and provide wetlands and recreation – the current proposal presents the building of numerous individual small houses on small allotments. Medium density development has been shown to provide better potential for cultural developments. The current proposal also does not meet the minimum good environmental design or aesthetic principles.

The environmental management of the marine environment of South Australia is increasingly dependent on international co-operation. For instance the work of the Seadragon Foundation Inc. in South Australia has been greatly facilitated because of our global reach, and the looming environmental problems caused by anthropogenic climate change require international co-operation.

In a global sense the current proposal, because of its relative disregard of the principles of sustainable development, can not be favourable for the harmonious industrial and urban development of South Australia. The approval of the proposed development will not only cast doubt on the State Government's ability to manage environmental issues linked with developments – and especially major developments – but will be considered negatively by corporations and other countries including trading partners. Countries including China and India are becoming increasingly sensitive to environmental issues and policies.

The survival of the Leafy Seadragon is by no means secure. In addition to the Leafy Seadragon's conservation dependence on large scale habitat protection and restoration has recently been increased by the appearance of other ominous threats to the Leafy Seadragons survival. These include the large scale mortality of seahorses closely related to the Leafy Seadragon from unexplained causes. The same major climate linked environmental changes that may be causing the current drought are predicted to further threaten the survival of the Leafy Seadragon.

In conclusion the Seadragon Foundation Inc. advises the South Australian government that the currently proposed Cheltenham Race course development poses a threat to the survival of the Leafy Seadragon through inadequate stormwater reclamation, and a further threat to the survival of the Leafy Seadragon through not conforming to the development of sustainable management of the environment in South Australia.

The Seadragon Foundation Inc. is dedicated to work with the South Australian government on this or any future proposals that may affect the survival and habitat of the Leafy Seadragon.

Dr Robert Browne
President

HOW YOU CAN INDIVIDUALLY HELP

The ways that individual citizens can support the appropriate development of the Cheltenham Racecourse are to

- Get on talk back radio shows and express your concerns.
- Write you own (not cover letters) to politicians, particularly to the Premier.
- Support the Friends of Gulf St Vincent.
- Keep in touch with environmental matters and vote appropriately at the next election (remember the Howard Government was voted out partially on environmental issues).

BACKGROUND TO THE OPEN LETTER

Some thought from the Seadragon Foundation Inc.

Government has the final say on the re-zoning and therefore development of the Cheltenham Racecourse.

The development of the Cheltenham Racecourse offers a wonderful opportunity to provide an improved environment for the Leafy Seadragon - the state's marine emblem - and to provide a model of sustainable development in South Australia.

It offers a chance to reclaim stormwater and prevent its negative effects on the seagrass habitat of the Leafy Seadragon. This habitat has already suffered from 200 years of pollution and neglect, which is reflected in loss of vast areas of seagrass, polluted swimming and dirty water at the beaches, and increased coastal erosion.

Alternatives to the current re-zoning and development plan offer reclamation of stormwater to the equivalent of \$68,000,000 spent on desalination, more recreational area at the site, and no loss of development potential, profit to developers, or revenue to council or state government.

The current re-zoning and development plans offer South Australia the opportunity to be backward and regressive in the sustainable management of resources. Properly developed the Cheltenham Racecourse site offers South Australia the opportunity to be a world leader in sustainable management.

The South Australian government must act in concert with developers to revise the current plans for the site. Failure to do this will expose South Australia as a state that is insincere and disingenuous in its commitment to sustainable development and to the conservation of the marine environment.

In particular, failure to protect the marine habitat of the Leafy Seadragon by the simple measure of the appropriate development of Cheltenham Racecourse casts great doubt on the ability of South Australia to sustainably manage the large industrial development projects planned for the benefit of the state.

Because of these concerns the Seadragon Foundation Inc. has written an open letter for presentation to the South Australian government and other players pleading for the proper management of the Cheltenham Racecourse.

Friends of Gulf St Vincent

The Friends of Gulf St Vincent is a sister organization to the Seadragon Foundation Inc. and has been very active in opposing the currently proposed development at Cheltenham. They are a fantastic group of well informed and well meaning people and the SFI is surprised that are not directly consulted by the State Government about any proposed developments that can affect the Gulf.

Cheltenham Racecourse Links

Unfortunately, what can be seen from the following links is a difficulty by the State Government for proper management of the environment and an inability to address the wishes of the citizens of the local area, Adelaide and South Australia. Hopefully this will improve.

Save Cheltenham Racecourse

This is a dedicated community group, which has been against the proposal from the start.

<http://www.savecheltenham.info/latestnews.htm>

Help save the Adelaide Parklands

HTTP://WWW.GDP-RESEARCH.COM.AU/PARKS_1.HTM

FROM THE JANUARY 2008 SFI NEWSLETTER

WATER RECLAMATION, SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AND THE ADELAIDE DESALINATION PLANT

The desalination plant as outlined on December 5 by the South Australian Government is a part of the problem, not a solution to the sustainable management of the environment. As the main solution to the water shortage crisis the desalination plant represents a poor alternative to the environmental crisis.

The actual notice from the Government was for the summary report of the Desalination Working Group, and a pricing structure to fund a reverse osmosis plant at Port Stanvac, 'dependent on environmental considerations'. A later item in 'The Advertiser' for December 20 quoted Minister Maywald as saying the plant was likely to be built at Port Stanvac, 'regardless of environmental issues'.

The SFI pleads for the government to reconsider water reclamation, home storage of rainwater, and alternative horticulture and agriculture, as the first option to address that water shortage in Adelaide.

At a recent meeting of Friends of Gulf St Vincent the issue of the proposed desalination plant for Adelaide was canvassed. This plant concerns the welfare and sustainable management of the seadragons and other syngnathids not so much in respect to direct threats to the marine environment of the desalination plant – even though these must be considered - but through the responsibility and attitude of the government to the total sustainable management of Leafy Seadragons environment, through decisions that affect both the land and sea.

As presented by the South Australian Government, the proposed desalination plant *per se* in Adelaide DOES NOT support the sustainable management of Leafy Seadragons and other syngnathids or their environment. Citizens who want to see the sustainable management of South Australia's marine environment should ask the government to consider desalination as a last industrial resort when other more parsimonious and sustainable water conservation and management measures have been exhausted.

The government should also respect the vast reservoirs of knowledge within the various conservation groups before making announcements concerning decisions of environmental importance. Would the current environmental crisis even have occurred if this had been previous policy? No!

As a long term, representative and credible supporter of sustainable management of the environment, the Conservation Council of South Australia, and other credible and dedicated conservation groups such as the Seadragon Foundation, should have mandate to scrutinise documents and measures in respect to major developments considered by the South Australian Government before these are publicly presented as *fait accompli*.

The current practice of the government of presenting water management technologies and projects as *fait accompli* – especially when supported by media campaigns blindly supporting the government's position - is a destructive and divisive use of public funds for propaganda to support a particular political policy. This practice particularly when applied to issues of sustainable management is inappropriate and should be discouraged. If the government cannot control this practice at the least equal funding should be provided to present alternative views.

The real question presented by the desalination plant issue is whether South Australia should spend a vast amount of money on a huge industrial development with little benefit to the development of South Australian local industries – particularly small businesses – and with clear environmental costs.

Or is South Australia going to adopt an environmentally and economically beneficial multi-faceted approach that uses available water resources and develops new technologies and industries.

Recently the government gave long overdue recognition of the effects of global warming on rainfall in South Australia, and particularly the immediate effects of drought, by proposing the construction of a desalination plant for Adelaide and increasing the capacity of the Mt Bold Reservoir.

Environmentalists have been presenting problems of global warming through atmospheric changes for over 10 years, and scientists the possibility for much longer. In both Australia and the USA this concept was actively suppressed by government. Now the world is reaping the terrible costs of the resulting destruction to the environment.

Threats to the marine environment through poor management of the freshwater resources of South Australia have also been repeatedly presented to the government for over 20 years. These have attracted little real response from the government, with continued damage to in-shore ecosystems particularly reef and seagrass systems. In Gulf St Vincent this has resulted in increasing and continuing costs to protect foreshore areas. In contrast we should be rehabilitating the metropolitan marine environment to support the habitat of the Leafy Seadragon, marine recreation, tourism and fishing.

Below are some considerations in respect to the proposed SA Government 'drought proofing' measures – particularly the desalination plant - presented to the Friends of Gulf St Vincent. This document refers to the proposed desalination plant in Gulf St. Vincent (GSV). The proposed plant in Spencer Gulf to supply water to the Roxby Downs Mine located in central South Australia on the rim of the Lake Eyre Basin is subject to completely different considerations to the Adelaide Plant. This document assumes a 50 GL per year plant or an intake of 410 ML daily intake = 136 ML fresh water. Energy use would be about 25 megawatts. However, this is not intended to be a technical document but a plea for the better management of resources for protection of the beautiful and unique Leafy Seadragon, South Australia's marine emblem.

The benefits of the proposed desalination plant should be balanced against what could be achieved with similar expenditure on numerous other means to reclaim water or reduce water usage and the corresponding increase in environmental benefits. It is certainly going to be better to build a smaller less costly, desalination plant and put a proportion of the expenditure into other projects and policies. Where this balance lies is the question.

This could be 10%, 30% or even the total expenditure.

It could be better simply to put much of the \$1.4 billion (the cost seems to escalate every time the project is reconsidered) proposed for the desalination plant into water reclamation and saving schemes.

The South Australian community – and consequently the government - should support local industrial and technological development to harvest storm water, coupled with increased environmental, cultural and cost benefits.

The cost of the plant should be balanced against other investments in water provision, biodiversity conservation, and environmental quality in the Gulf St Vincent.

The issue is really whether you just keep pouring more and more resources and use energy to support massive industrial developments, or use smart technologies with positive environmental and social consequences. South Australia could provide global leadership in this area and simultaneously develop associated industries and small businesses.

One good example is the Cheltenham Race Course redevelopment. This could provide a model for many other projects across Adelaide. How much water could be harvested from large scale industrial parks with their huge roof areas and carparks?

In respect to water provision the proposed plant is predicted to cost \$1.4 billion and provide 50 GL a year. That is a capital cost of \$28 million a gigalitre. One instance of water reclamation – using the Cheltenham Race Course redevelopment could provide 2.4 GL of water or the equivalent of \$56 million of capital cost or 4% of the desalination plant, and the side benefit of increased recreational area.

The Cheltenham Race Course development if done responsibly the proposal would enable the State Government, developers, local business and technological innovators to work together on a realistic and achievable goal.

This wonderful opportunity for the use of state of the art environmental technologies, architecture for medium density housing, and associated resource usage, could make this site a model development to showcase the support of South Australia for fiscally responsible application of global standards for sustainability in urban development.

The benefits to the marine environment from reduced siltation and pollution from the reclaimed storm water include:

- 1) improved water quality for Adelaide metropolitan beaches - translating to recreational, health, and tourism benefits.
- 2) increased ecological health for inshore seagrass and reef communities - translating to improved commercial and recreational fishing and boating.
- 3) increased ecological health for inshore seagrass - translating to long term remediation of the sand drift and erosion problems and costs along the metropolitan coastline.

There are many other similar sites across Adelaide, ways to reclaim water from private and industrial properties, and ways to reduce water use.

Why can't large car park areas have sumps of sand or gravel constructed beneath them to capture the water? Some industries – such as large supermarket chains - may even do this as a public relations exercise. Why can't private residences build sumps under garage floors to capture water? Why not make similar technologies mandatory on all new developments?

This approach and the sourcing of water through bores into the aquifer also reduces increased piping costs associated with one central water new source.

A major environmental issue is the ecological damage to seagrass in GSV and degradation of public use areas of Adelaide's foreshores by siltation and pollution from storm water runoff. Why not reclaim this water which much more than the amount to be supplied by the proposed desalination plant, make our beaches clean, and eventually enable seagrass recolonisation and reduce beachfront erosion and the associated costs?

Summary

The proposal for a desalination plant in Adelaide as presented by the South Australian Government is ill considered and does not *per se* support sustainable management of the environment. All water conserving measures, including storm water reclamation and dry climate landscaping, should be considered before allocating resources to expensive and energy demanding large scale industrial processes. The desalination plant as presented is a part of the problem, not a solution to the sustainable management of the environment. Without adequate biodiversity surveys by independent organisations, particularly for conservation dependent groups including syngnathids, how can environmental assessments be properly performed.

The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily represent the attitudes of the Seadragon Foundation Inc. or any individual members of the SFI. Articles concerning the sustainable management of the Leafy Seadragon are welcome for publication in this newsletter as long as they do not contain material that is defamatory, offensive, or personal in nature. Please submit to seadragonfoundation@gmail.com