

To the Honourable Members of the Environment, Resources and Development Committee,

RE: Inquiry into South Australia's population strategy

In relation to part II of the Committee's terms of reference in relation to this inquiry, namely, to inquire into:

"The capacity of existing energy, water and arable land sources to provide for these projected (population) targets",

I submit the following information for your consideration.

1 This submission centres on the capacity of our most valuable resource - water - to sustain the Government's population targets. Put simply, the Government is unable to guarantee that future water supplies can sustain the population targets set out in the State Strategic Plan.

2 The Government's own water blueprint, *Water for Good*, acknowledges that:

"The State Government has put in place measures to ensure that the water demand and supply needs of Greater Adelaide are met in the short to medium term." (*Water for Good*, page 52)

3 This contradicts the Hon Ms Zollo's claim that:

"The government has put into place planning mechanisms and processes to accommodate a growing population that are integrated, comprehensive and long term." (Hansard, Legislative Council, 21/7/10)

4 Ms Zollo further stated that:

"Plans such as *Water for Good* and the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide provide a sound basis to sustain this population growth." (Hansard, Legislative Council, 21/7/10). Given that *Water for Good* only ensures our water needs are met "in the short to medium term", it is simply wrong to assume there is a "sound basis" to sustain the Government's long term population targets, as far as water supply goes.

5 Even with the new desalination plant running at full capacity (100GL), the *Water for Good* plan "assumes that Adelaide still receives its full licence entitlement from the River Murray". (*Water for Good*, page 52)

6 Mount Lofty storages on average supply 60% of Adelaide's (*current*) water needs, with the remainder being met by the River Murray. (*Water for Good*, page 34).

7 Government advertising tells us that at 100GL capacity, the desalination plant is capable of producing approximately half of Adelaide's (*current*) water needs. Therefore, the need to retain our full licence entitlement from the Murray is directly attributable to proposed increases in water consumption arising from the Government's population growth targets and the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide.

8 This is inconsistent with the intent of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan to make water cuts *across the system*. SA Water recently confirmed that all river water users would face cuts, with former SA Water Chief Executive Anne Howe saying, "it is only right and proper that we make our contribution from our licence, along with what everyone else has to do" (*The Advertiser*, "City will share Murray pain", 19/10/10).

9 It is disingenuous for the SA Government to decry upstream states for resisting water cuts, whilst going full steam ahead with growth plans that will result in increased water consumption, meaning no respite for River Murray usage in this state.

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10 I acknowledge that there are tax-base problems associated with our ageing population, but assert that the Government must investigate other solutions before committing to unsustainable population growth strategies. I suggest funding be made available for in-depth research into how other cities of the world have dealt with the problem, and that Adelaide's next 'Thinker in Residence' be sourced with that goal in mind.

11 I, like many other South Australians, fear that there are other forces driving the population growth agenda. If any of the Honourable Members of the Committee have not already done so, I suggest they view Dick Smith's informative documentary, *Population Puzzle*.

12 I suggest it is highly inappropriate for members of the private business sector, especially those who will benefit commercially from government policies promoting population growth, to purport to be authorities on the subject.

13 By example, I quote the ubiquitous Nathan Paine, executive director of the Property Council of Australia (SA division). After surmising that SA's imminent population growth has led to "bulk orders of sackcloth and ashes", Mr Paine said:

"It's not population, but consumption that shapes environmental impacts." (*The Advertiser*, "Strategies needed for growth of population", 20/2/10)

14 Is Mr Paine suggesting that an increase of 560,000 people (*The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide*) will not have resultant consumption impacts? That is simply not logical. Such a marked increase in population would result in a marked increase in consumption of the basic commodities of water, food and energy. Of course, there would also be a marked increase in the need for housing, prompting the Property Council's interest in this matter.

15 In summary, I reiterate that, even with the desalination plant, the SA Government cannot guarantee an adequate water supply to sustain projected population targets as per the State Strategic Plan, without compromising the health of the River Murray. Until such time as the Government is able to give such a guarantee, the current population targets should be abandoned.

Regards,

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