

## **Barwon Downs Licence Renewal Application: Summary of public submissions**

### **Background**

On 10 December 2018 Barwon Water submitted an application to Southern Rural Water (SRW) to renew their groundwater licence for the Barwon Downs borefield.

As part of the renewal assessment SRW advertised the receipt of the application and called for public submissions from Monday 10 December 2018 until Friday 1 March 2019. This period was extended until Tuesday 12 March 2019 after a minor, temporary technical issue that affected the SRW website during the original submission period.

SRW also hosted a community drop-in information session for interested people on Monday 18 February 2019 at the Barwon Downs Public Hall. This session was attended by about 40 people, most of whom had concerns about the renewal of the groundwater licence.

Barwon Water have since withdrawn their application to renew this groundwater licence, and it has now expired. Given SRW were unable to proceed through the application assessment process, the community group working with SRW felt it would be valuable to prepare a summary submissions received and provide this to Barwon Water. Barwon Water separately approached SRW and requested that this information would be beneficial.

This document provides an overview of the submissions received with regard to the groundwater licence renewal application. The original submissions have been recorded and retained in SRW's document management system. This summary document has been reviewed and endorsed by the community group working with SRW.

### **Basic stats and facts**

- SRW received 1044 written submissions on this matter and all but two opposed the application.
- Nearly 80% of the submissions used a standard "proforma" circulated by local advocacy group/s.
- Where address information was provided, about 98% of submissions were from local individuals or business, however a small percentage (~1-2%) were from Melbourne, interstate or overseas.
- One submission made reference to a Change.org petition which recorded 1736 signatures as at 2 March 2019. There is no way to ascertain what percentage of these signatories also provided a formal, written submission.

## What we heard

The number of submissions received easily exceeded submissions made to SRW on any other licence application or renewal, indicating a high level of interest from the community.

The high percentage of “proforma” submissions provided a high level of consistency to the feedback received.

The individualised submissions demonstrated a high level of personal investment, and in some cases incorporated information and evidence indicating a deep, historic understanding of the issues associated with the groundwater licence.

The clear message from the submissions is that there was strong objection to the renewal of the groundwater licence and a common belief that the system would take at least 50 years to recover.

Many submissions made reference to the s78 notice currently imposed on Barwon Water by SRW and the importance of allowing the positive impacts of any remediation works to be realised before a renewal could be considered.

Two key themes were consistent across nearly all submissions:

- The need to act to protect the environmental values of the region; and
- The belief that Barwon Water have sufficient alternative water supply solutions to service Geelong

More specifically, the most common views expressed through the submissions suggested that the past water extraction had caused, and would likely continue to cause:

- Reduced river and creek flows, particularly in summer
- The drying of springs and wetlands, particularly Big Swamp
- Acidification of soils and acid flow events
- Fish kills
- Reduced fish and platypus populations
- Reduced access to groundwater in D&S bores
- Negative impacts on local farming communities
- Impacts on recreational fishing
- Regional drawdown of aquifers
- Continued and reoccurring peat fires

All individual submissions have been recorded in SRWs data management system and can be retrieved and provided upon direct request.

**Attachment 1: Copy of the standard proforma submission letter**

 15/2019

To:  
Barwon Downs Licence Submission  
Southern Rural Water  
P.O. Box 729  
Warrnambool 3280



[www.stopgroundwatermining.com.au](http://www.stopgroundwatermining.com.au)

Southern Rural Water,

**Re: Groundwater Extraction Licence renewal for the Barwon Downs Borefield.**

The Barwon River, Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems, the Gellibrand River and agricultural land are in crisis. The Barwon River at Winchelsea stops flowing; wetlands continue to suffer & farmland is ruined from the creation of acute acid sulfate soil contamination. The area of impact has now expanded into the Kwarren and Gellibrand region and the question is how far will it extend before it stops. What other damage will be done even if no more extraction is carried out. Do not grant this licence renewal to take place.

The deplorable and harmful effects on just **one** of our iconic native species, the **Platypus**, must not be allowed to continue. You have it in your power to stop this continuing.

The Melbourne – Geelong interconnecting pipeline and water kept in storage is sufficient to meet Geelong's future requirements for decades.

I submit that Southern Rural Water refuse the licence renewal and that there be no further extraction applications considered until the Lower Tertiary Aquifers return to normal.

REDACTED – PERSONAL  
INFORMATION

**SAVE PLATYPUS JO**



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