



### What's on

**Thurs, Jan 22, 7.30pm, Kilcunda Hall**  
Find out where the project's at, where we're at and what you can do. Music, refreshments & preview of the documentary *Out of the Blue* about the long community campaign against the desalination plant.

**Sunday, January 25**  
Lobster Festival at Kilcunda - Watershed caravan stall.

**Mon, Jan 26, 12.30-2pm, Wonthaggi**  
Australia Day premiere screening at Wonthaggi Cinema of *Out of the Blue*, the story of the Bass Coast community's campaign against the world's biggest water factory.

**Jan 26, 5pm, Williamsons Beach**  
Australia Day barbecue, BYO food, drink and furniture. We plan to mark out the exclusion zone and photograph the beach for listing as an Australian icon.

**Sunday, February 1, Churchill Island**  
Chill Island Music Festival - Watershed stall.

**Tuesday, February 3, Melbourne**  
Rally for Democracy, Details this page.

**February 6, Wonthaggi**  
Support desal arrestee Kimberly Neave in Wonthaggi Magistrates Court.

**February 20-22, Federation Square**  
Victorian Water Forum events at the Sustainable Living Festival. Yarra River & Federation Square, Melbourne. Saturday evening concert featuring The Conch. Sunday Forum, 10-11.15am, Clean Ocean Foundation, Watershed Victoria, Plug the Pipe.

**Sunday, March 1**  
Brunswick Music festival - Watershed stall, plus our own Bass Strait 12 will be playing nearby. Information: [www.brunswickmusicfestival.com.au](http://www.brunswickmusicfestival.com.au)

[www.watershedvictoria.org.au/events](http://www.watershedvictoria.org.au/events)



### Beach blues

Keen fisher folk from the city joined a protest on January 12 against the planned closure of Williamsons Beach. The Government has announced a 2km stretch of beach will be closed for two years for desalination works.

## Last call to action

The Rally for Democracy in Melbourne on February 3 will be a pivotal event in the campaign against the desalination plant.

Watershed Victoria supporters will join Plug the Pipe campaigners and other community groups on the steps of Parliament to demonstrate for more open and accountable government.

Rally organisers are hoping for a massive show of strength to command attention from a government that has so far ignored requests for answers about a sudden switch in government policy from a sustainable water policy.

Watershed Victoria president Stephen Cannon says the rally, timed to coincide with the opening of Parliament, is shaping as "our Waterloo".

'This is our Waterloo.'

*Stephen Cannon*

"This is our one chance to impress on the Government that there is massive resistance to their costly and damaging water plans.

"I know it's a week day and it will be hard for some people to make it, but there won't be another rally like this.

"It is vitally important that we get as many of our supporters there as we can.

"This is our chance to take our message to the city, where it really counts."

*Rally for Democracy, February 3, 11.30am, Parliament House, Melbourne. Buses leave Wonthaggi at 8am, cost \$10. Book a seat on 0407 811 778 or 0419 556 381.*

## A chance to see the big picture

*You've marched in the streets and manned the barricades. Now see the film.*

The Victorian Government spent millions of dollars and years of research to develop a sustainable water strategy for Melbourne.

Nine months later, it dumped the strategy in favour of costly and damaging engineering projects, including the desalination plant and north-south pipeline.

Like many Victorians, Melbourne writer and director Jeremy Loftus-Hills wanted to know why the sudden change of direction.

The result is his film, *Out of the Blue*, which follows the community campaign in Bass Coast as local activists fight to raise awareness of the issues in the wider Victorian community and pressure the Government to abandon its desalination plan.

The film features the voices of prominent water activists including Australian Senator Bob Brown and Canadian author Maude

Barlow, local campaigners and water experts.

Loftus-Hills says he was attracted to the story of the anti-desalination struggle because it raises so many issues.

"Is the Victorian government still serious about sustainable water strategies, or is it following an unspoken agenda that transfers responsibility for Melbourne's water resources to global water corporations and the management of water shortages to the free market?"

*Out of the Blue* is independently produced and funded by ETV.

*Out of the Blue, Wonthaggi Cinema, Australia Day, Monday, January 26, 12.30pm for a 12.45pm start. Admission: a can of pet food in aid of the PAWS Galore Thrift Shop, Wonthaggi. DVDs for sale, \$20.*



# Labor MPs targeted

After its very successful celebrity surf challenge, the Bass Coast Boardriders Club is spreading the message with city surfers.

The club is targeting marginal Labor electorates where anti-desalination sentiment could unseat the current Labor MPs.

Sitting MPs (including several ministers) are particularly vulnerable in Melbourne, Richmond, Brunswick, Burwood, Carrum, Forest Hill, Mordialloc, Mount Waverley, Mitcham and South Barwon.

Club president John Gemmell says we can make a huge difference by urging friends and family in the marginal electorates to contact their MPs and tell them they will not trust them to look after Victoria's coastline or their children's future.

"The Labor politicians who hold vulnerable seats are important because they are the most likely to push to stop the desalination plant if they think they'll lose their jobs at the next election.

"We need to make it clear to the Labor party that all the surfers, their friends and family in Victoria will never forget how they trashed a pristine coastline and accelerated climate change when they could



have done far better to secure Victoria's water supply.

"If you don't live in these seats it will still be a great help to send the same message to your sitting member of parliament as they may be part of the push in early 2009 to get rid of Brumby's water policy."

Details: [www.boardriders.com](http://www.boardriders.com)

## Media wipeout

The Celebrity Surf Challenge at Inverloch on January 3 couldn't have been better timed, with television channels and newspapers desperate for news over the summer silly season.

Richmond star Matthew Richardson proved the main attraction, but former Hawthorn great Dermot Brereton wasn't far behind. Crowded House's Nick Seymour and Glenn Robbins (Kel the Butcher in *Kath and Kim*) added a touch of show biz glitz.

While out of their depth in the surfing comp, the football greats made up for it with their grasp of the issues.

"A beautiful coastline like this just seems a stupid place to put a (desalination) plant," Brereton said. "I think there are other options that should be looked at first."

Channels 7 and 9 sent helicopters to film the Desal Wipeout human chain on the beach and ABC News had a reporter on the ground. All ran substantial stories, with pertinent sound bites by the celebrity contestants.

Even *The Age* was coaxed into action. It ran a front-page article on the issue, focusing on Olympian Drew Ginn, who launched the surf challenge.

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## President's report

### The fight goes on

Like most of us, I was initially disappointed with the outcome of the EES (Environment Effects Statement). But on reflection, Planning Minister Justin Madden's decision that the environmental impacts of the desalination plant are "acceptable" came as no surprise to any of us.

People have rebounded with a greater determination to fight on.

On the Sunday after the Minister's announcement, at less than 24 hours notice, more than 200 people gathered at Williamsons Beach to protest at a 2km beach exclusion zone. Momentum against the plant continues to build as more people understand how costly and damaging the Government's plans are.

### No surprise

The Minister's media release tried desperately to emphasise the "independence" of the EES inquiry and the assessment, but repeating the word four times in the first four sentences doesn't make it so!

When the State Government announces it "will build" the plant, anoints its own department to be the proponent of the project, prescribes narrow terms of reference for assessment, you get the outcome you engineered.

The Minister's assessment report undertakes to minimise, mitigate and manage the environmental impacts of the plant "where practicable", which sounds like an open cheque to the operators.

The report reiterates the need for more studies and monitoring, including social impact studies of the local affected areas.

Add to this the monitoring programs, the

"The project raises many unanswered questions: about the impact of its high energy demands on greenhouse gas reduction efforts; about water costs, demand management and ownership; and about the Government's rejection of previously preferred alternatives that many experts say could secure supply at much lower financial and environmental cost."

Editorial in *The Age*,  
January 12, 2009

establishment of a Regional Impact Fund and the recommended augmentation of health services, infrastructure, education facilities and emergency services, you have to ask how much it's all going to cost.

It is evident that the scale of this project will never be achieved for the \$3.1 billion at which the Government has costed it.

Given the public are paying for this plant through the initial doubling of their water bills, they have a right to know the real and complete costs of this project immediately.

Don't forget partial privatisation of our water will result from the Private Public Partnership structure that will build and operate this plant. That means profit is an element of the cost we will all pay.

There were no surprises in the Minister's decision. The EES process and the assessment of a "concept" were a farce.

The hundreds of volunteer people and groups who participated to try to make it meaningful have been let down.

Stephen Cannon  
President, Watershed Victoria