



Where? I can't see it



Southern right whale near Waratah Bay, August 2010.
Photo by Geoff Glare

Scrap the Desal

Rally on the steps of Parliament
Midday, Wednesday, October 6

The Brumby Government is under intense scrutiny over the financing of the desal fiasco.

This is a crucial time, coming up to the state election - Parliament is sitting and politicians are listening.

Bring your outrage at the money we will be paying for the next 30 years to fund a wasteful energy-guzzling project that even Labor insiders are now questioning.

Listen to speeches on canning the desal contract.

If you can't come, you could contact your MP and the Premier john.brumby@parliament.vic.gov.au or (03) 9651 5000 calling for the Government to scrap the desal plant and replace it with sustainable cheaper alternatives.

**More information 0407 811 778 or
answers@watershedvictoria.org.au**

According to the Department of Sustainability and Environment and federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett, Bass Coast is not an important area for migrating whales.

Try telling that to the whales.

Since locals and visitors began a whale watch in late April, then there have been 133 humpback whales spotted and 18 southern right whales.

Another 93 whale observations were unable to be identified.

On top of that, now nervous surfers have spotted a handful of killer whales and a great white shark, and some 220 dolphins have been seen in pods up to 50.

A pod of 8-10 southern right whales lazed about near Waratah Bay for two weeks,

including the one captured in Geoff Glare's beautiful photo above.

Whalewatch co-ordinator Mark Robertson said there had been an exceptional response from the community, with reports of sightings coming in to the phone hotline.

Some enthusiasts have sent in maps with sightings detailed by coded data when species identification was possible.

The whale count shows the temerity of DSE and its "hired guns" who failed even to conduct a field study to back up their dubious claims.

Watershed president Stephen Cannon said the hundreds of sightings showed the need to reopen the environmental effects study for the plant.

Mind your own business, police ordered

Victoria's police files watchdog has blasted a police deal to share information on desalination protesters with AquaSure, the company building the desalination plant.

The watchdog's scathing report, released in September, found the agreement failed to comply with privacy and human rights laws.

Following its release, Victoria Police said it would no longer make deals with private companies over the exchange of personal police information.

Chief Commissioner Simon Overland said police would no longer enter into

memorandums of understanding with private companies.

"I do accept the criticisms that are being made," he told a Melbourne radio station.

Last year, *The Age* revealed that police and the government had signed a memorandum of understanding with AquaSure to "manage security threats" at the desalination building site.

Several members of Watershed were seeking the release of their personal police files under freedom of information legislation.

Shearwaters at risk

The Greens candidate for Bass, Neil Rankine, has called on AquaSure to turn off the lights to avoid imperilling the shearwater returning for summer.

"In late September the Bass Coast welcomes back the short-tailed shearwaters after their annual 15,000 km journey from the Aleutian Islands near Alaska.

"These birds make this amazing journey to return with their life partner to lay just one egg each year in their own burrow, in colonies along the Bass Coast.

"Will the appearance of the desalination construction site, effectively a new town on the coast to the bird's eye, disorient the arriving birds? We know that the young fledglings are particularly confused by bright lights when they leave their nests to set off for Alaska in April."

Mr Rankine said the Bass Coast Shire Council, VicRoads, Phillip Island Nature Park and SP Ausnet had put in place a series of measures to restrict lighting dangerous to the young birds as they left the island and to rescue those that did fall onto roads.

"Good research has not been done to assess the impacts bright lighting shining into the sky will have on adult birds arriving, tired from a 15,000-kilometre journey and in gale conditions.

"However, anecdotal evidence from puffin research says there likely will be an impact and birds may not be able to find their burrows or mates."

He said there were also concerns about the impact of the huge jack up barge due to arrive offshore any day now. Parent birds may be attracted to lights on the barge and killed by colliding with an intrusive structures while returning from collecting food.

Mr Rankine said AquaSure's responses to his request were concerning.

"AquaSure stated that the nearest colony is 14 kilometres away at Cape Woolamai, but locals know that these birds have nests as close as Kilcunda.

"This is a bit reminiscent of the desalination EES saying there had been only one whale sighting in five years, when this years alone there have now been over 200 whale sightings on our stretch of coast.

"AquaSure have committed to treat injured birds on a case by case basis, 'taking injured birds to a vet or PINP wildlife hospital', but these aren't open at night and so they can't do much without on site experts and facilities.

"We call on AquaSure to turn off the lights while these birds return and again when the young fledglings leave in April."

Mr Rankine said AquaSure must act quickly to assess the danger and put in place appropriate measures to reduce the risks of losing any of these birds.

"Addressing the lighting issue might make driving on the Bass Highway a bit safer for us too. I've been known to be distracted from the task at hand by the bright lights as I've been going about my business."

In short

- Short-tailed shearwaters mate for life and lay only one egg each season. The parents take turns of two weeks each sitting on the egg.
- In April the parents leave the nest first on their eight-week journey to the Aleutian Islands near Alaska. A few weeks later the young fledglings have grown their wing feathers and, after some practice flights, they also leave for Alaska. It is on this first flight that they are most in danger.

They said it

The Wonthaggi desalination plant is a monument to bad government and financial chicanery.

Kenneth Davidson, The Age, September 26, 2010

This week a senior government insider told *The Age* that with its time again, the government would probably not opt for such a large and costly desal plant. Victoria's is the largest plant of its type in the world.

Taxpayers will be liable for an annual security payment for the project, regardless of whether the government buys water from the plant.

The government has refused to disclose the size of the payment but *The Age* believes it will be at least \$300 million [now estimated at \$570 million] annually.

"Brumby's Giant Money Pit", The Age, August 28, 2010

Victoria still needs you

Watershed Victoria will continue to oppose the desalination plant because there are sustainable alternatives that would do the job better.

We will also do our best to "keep the bastards honest".

That is, while they proceed with this monstrous plant, we will continue to monitor their actions and to lobby to minimise the damage to our environment and the Bass Coast community.

See membership details below.

Watershed Victoria

WATERSHED Victoria is a community group that seeks water-supply alternatives to the north-south pipeline and desalination plant. It replaces the Your Water Your Say community group, which was forced to cease operating last year.

Together with Plug the Pipe and the Clean Oceans Foundation, Watershed Victoria forms the Victorian Water Forum, which is campaigning for sustainable water solutions for Victoria.

Visit www.watershedvictoria.org.au



watershedvictoria

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Membership

Name

Email Phone Mobile

Address

Cost, \$15 individuals, \$30 households. Amount paid: Receipt required?

Please indicate if you would like to help in the campaign, eg. distribution, publicity, fund-raising, manning caravan

Give membership form and subscription to a committee member; OR

Post form plus cheque or postal order to Watershed Victoria, Dalyston PO, 3992; OR

Direct deposit to Bendigo Bank. Account name: Watershed Victoria. BSB: 633 000. Acc No: 134 991 850. Reference: Your name