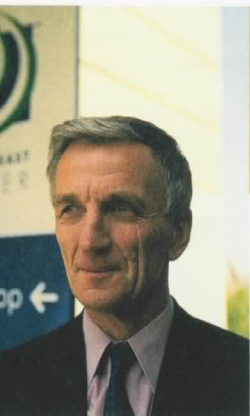


...er, Sewage Treatment and
Protection, South East Water

...three options for the
...Eastern Treatment Plant
...rove the condition of the
...around Boags Rocks.

...o reduce the quantity of
...charged by increasing water
...second is to increase the
...e discharge by filtering the
...and the third is to extend
...mitted to increasing recycling,
...ely to deliver significant
...e short term. The sheer
...f the schemes required,
...what is a fairly wet area,
...he outfall will be here for
...even with the best will in

...culated that it would cost
...on to establish schemes
...cycle 50 per cent of the
...ment Plant discharge.



...mean that recycling should
...ed but it does mean that it
...ult to improve conditions at
...y recycling.

...tion might not address
...mpacts or solve odour and
...n problems. These problems
...ly arise because of a slime
...inisms living in the pipe.
...d be some residual nuisance
...even if we improve
...ity.

...e outfall, with a properly
...user system, could solve
...ms associated with the
...vided there was effective
...the plants. However, we
...o continue with recycling
...gorous monitoring to
...were not having a
...effect off the coast.

...tcome is decided for the
...ment Plant upgrade will
...n South East Water and
...ton, Hastings and Rosebud
...ants, which also discharge
...cks.

David Fox

Program leader, Sustainable
Catchment and Groundwater
Management, CSIRO Land and Water

“We have to be careful that in our attempts to solve one environmental problem, we don’t create others.

As part of our environmental impact assessment at Boags Rocks, CSIRO investigated 14 options to reduce the discharge, even treating the effluent to drinking water standard and then pumping it to Cardinia Reservoir. Apart from cost implications, some people could not imagine the thought of pumping treated wastewater back



into reservoirs. So it’s often the least tangible issues such as community perceptions that have to be managed.

The community is justified in demanding best practice when it comes to effluent disposal. Melbourne Water is doing that, especially with the monitoring program we’ve recently developed. It’s the sentinel that provides an early warning mechanism and makes explicit the link between the treatment plant operations and environmental response.

Extending the outfall is an option but the effluent is a valuable commodity. We simply cannot afford not to get greater use out of it. At the moment, the greatest impacts are well contained within a zone of about 600 metres. While there are benefits in taking the effluent further offshore, you risk creating a “smearing” effect over a much wider area that is very hard to detect.

Upgrading the effluent treatment process should help reduce the incidence of floatables and grease. But the conundrum is that such an upgrade will not ameliorate the biological impact of freshwater.

Decisions about our environment are characterised by trade-offs and competing risks. The trick is to understand those risks and make informed choices based on the level of risk and the consequences of planned and unplanned outcomes. While risk assessments are not perfect science, they provide a rational way forward.”

...ally Mitchell
Environmental Engineer,
Clean Ocean Foundation

“We want the outfall to close – and we believe that should be possible within 10 years.

The plant should be upgraded to the highest possible treatment standard as quickly as possible. Tertiary does not go far enough – we want the effluent to be of potable (drinkable) standard. That does not mean that we think people will want to drink the water, but it should be of a quality that minimises risk to end users and maximises recycling opportunities.

If Melbourne Water and the Government mandated closing the outfall, the research would have a totally different impetus. So far, all the research has concentrated on examining and ameliorating the impacts of the outfall.

We want the discussion to be opened up and for Melbourne Water to genuinely seek alternatives to get the highest treatment standard possible.



World standards and regulation regarding sewage treatment are changing and there are some amazing advances in other countries. We want to see brainstorming of issues relating to water pricing, infrastructure costs and water storage.

We would like to see cost-benefit analyses of retrofitting Eastern Treatment Plant to potable standard. Developers should be asked for expressions of interest on how this could be achieved.

We are disappointed that extending the outfall appears to be an option. This would spread effluent further afield and the impacts of construction haven’t been investigated.

The problem with Melbourne Water’s consultation program is that it is going to get answers and information from the community too late. A three-year community consultation process was recommended by Des Lord and Associates in 1996, but Melbourne Water has not acted on these recommendations.

This issue can be solved if there is a willingness and commitment to do so. But we need a totally different approach to the traditional engineering culture.”



Neale Adams

Councillor, Fingal Ward, Mornington
Peninsula Shire Council

“As a representative of the people near the outfall, I know that it is a major concern for them. Odour and litter are immediate concerns that need to be fixed.

Until 18 months ago, the community made little or no headway on this issue. Now Melbourne Water seems to be listening and this is largely due to the efforts of community groups.

Gunnamatta is a beach with a national profile for surfing and tourism and we need to protect those values and ensure that the water quality doesn’t further

damage the marine ecology or pose a risk to public health.

But Melbourne Water also needs to look further up the pipe to address the longer-term issues such as managing the total resource.

I would like to see Melbourne Water working towards an agreed timeframe for the elimination of the outfall. It is a challenge that Melbourne Water must take on, with funding from the State Government and strategic partnerships with the corporate sector and the community to help make it happen.

We need the highest possible water quality at reasonable cost to encourage recycling. The first step is to upgrade to tertiary filtration at Eastern Treatment Plant.

But we also need a public education campaign to change people’s behaviour and attitudes and emphasise the value of water. We need to ensure people understand fully the benefits associated with tertiary reuse.

We need to look at retrofitting water conservation appliances to the whole plumbing system in Melbourne. This program needs the full backing of the State Government.”