

# YUNTA DISTRICT HALL Inc.

## Post Office, Yunta, SA 5440

Chairperson: Allen Hucks  
Phone: [REDACTED]

Secretary: Lisa Crawford  
Phone: [REDACTED]  
Email: [REDACTED]

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To the Commissioner,  
Essential Services Commission of South Australia

### **RE: SA Water Regulatory Determination 2020 – Draft Determination**

As Yunta is a remote community without a Council, the Yunta District Hall Inc. is responsible for the management of relevant service functions on behalf of residents that would otherwise be attended to by a Council. A Committee of volunteers is elected annually to manage these affairs on behalf of residents.

This submission is prepared on behalf of the residents of Yunta by the Yunta District Hall Inc. Residents of Yunta have been paying materially high rates for the provision of non potable water for many years. Until 2019, Yunta was supplied non potable water via dams (settling pools) situated just outside the town. The water was pumped from the dam site to a header tank (situated in the town centre) and was gravity fed into the existing water infrastructure (pipes) to each of the residential and commercial properties. There is no supplied water pressure, all water is provided to residents purely by gravity feeding.

The dams/settling pools and drains used to supply the town water have not been subject to regular maintenance, clearing or cleaning by SA Water. This had resulted in ongoing issues with water odour and colour.

Approximately 30 years ago, residents of Yunta were advised of a material increase to water costs (which were already significantly higher than costs being charged to metropolitan areas across the state). It was advised to residents at the time that the increase was so SA Water could 'prepare' in case there was a need to cart water to supply the town. Costs remained at this high level over that 30-year period despite water not being carted until 2019.

During 2019, SA Water undertook a project to upgrade some of the water infrastructure in Yunta so that carting of water could commence. At this time, it was understood by residents that the upgrade would result in potable water being provided to the town. This however is not the case. A new tank was installed in the town, near the existing header tank for carted water to be pumped into, but this was the full extent of the works completed.

The carted water, which is now obtained from a potable supply in Peterborough SA, is pumped into the newly established water tank upon arrival in Yunta. It is then pumped into the old header tank and gravity fed through the existing water infrastructure. This is required as no upgrade was made to any other water infrastructure in Yunta and as a result,

the water supplied to residents remains non potable. The price of water supplied continues to be around 3 times the cost of supply to metropolitan areas.

Residents of Yunta are required to supply themselves with potable water at their own cost as the supply provided by SA Water is non potable. This means that residents must either have sufficient stores of rainwater at their dwelling or buy in potable water.

Yunta, like so many other parts of SA, is now in its 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of drought. Most resident's supply of rainwater is now depleted meaning residents are having to buy in potable water or rely on donated potable water. This burden has an ongoing financial impact to residents in addition to the normal supply and use charges for non potable water. Residents also need to source this water from outside of the town which requires significant travel, up to 100kms to the nearest available location, assuming the water is available for purchase at this location. Yet another cost for residents, all in the pursuit of potable water.

Recently a desalination plant was installed in the town by the Outback Communities Authority with the intention of making available potable water to the town for purchase. While this has been commissioned, there has been no communication, consultation or signage installed at the site, meaning the plant is not being used regularly by residents or travellers. Again, this water is made available, but at a cost to residents for use.

In addition, when the plant is in use, there is an impact to the water supply to Yunta's public toilets and service stations which are directly linked to the line that the plant is attached to. This presents hygiene issues and remains a concern to Yunta residents.

It is unclear what infrastructure investments are planned for regional areas such as Yunta from SA Water's proposed plan.

Yunta residents are supportive of any infrastructure improvements **that will result in the supply of potable water** to its residents. The current infrastructure does not provide potable water – a basic human right. This would be unacceptable in any metropolitan area. With reliance on rain to provide potable water to the town, for which supply is always unknown, the need for supplied potable water is more important than ever.

What residents are not supportive of is any increase to the cost of supply of water. Costs are already materially higher than supply to other non-regional areas of the state, and residents have been paying these higher rates for many years without any improvement to water infrastructure or the quality of water supplied.

The Yunta District Hall Inc would welcome the opportunity for a detailed consultation process in order to provide information and data to support the development of a relevant infrastructure upgrade plan for Yunta and other regional communities.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Crawford  
Secretary, Yunta District Hall Inc.