



The Flinders Ranges Council

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SAWRD24 submission – Regulatory Business Proposal
Essential Services Commission of South Australia
GPO Box 2605
Adelaide SA 5001

Sent electronically: reviews@escosa.sa.gov.au

Dear Colleagues,

Water Quality in Quorn and SAWRD24

We note with great disappointment the exclusion, by SAWater, of the Quorn Water Quality 'Aesthetics' improvements from the SAWRD24 Regulatory Business Proposal Submission.

Our Council and community request that ESCOSA ('the Commission') make an urgent allocation of additional revenue within the SAWRD24 to allow for the inclusion of upgrades to Quorn's water supply.

To assist in making our submission we invite an opportunity to make an in-person submission to the Commission. We also welcome the Commission travelling to Quorn.

Given the importance of this decision to the health, liveability and success of our community it is important the Commission hear from our community directly before making a decision with both long term and significant ramifications.

We also note the outcome of the SAWRD20, where the Commission indicated further planning work was required to justify any potential future spend.

We have been assured by representatives from SAWater that this work has now been done, identifying Quorn as the priority community. Therefore, it stands to reason that having fulfilled the requirements of the Commission in SAWRD20, and having obtained top priority in this planning work, this should justify investment in this critical area.

If the work is not done to the satisfaction of the Commission, we reference the multitude of meetings and correspondence with both the Commission and SAWater. This is in addition to the passage of eight years (noting this was first raised in SAWRD16). This is a sufficient time to have achieved necessary planning requirements to a satisfactory standard (a responsibility of others which should not adversely impact the basic living conditions of the residents in our regions).

It is also noted both in the SAWRD20 and SAWRD24, SAWater customers were in support of regional South Australian water quality improvements and willing to pay an additional amount to see equity in water quality.

We also refer the Commission to the [submission](#) Council made as part of the SAWRD20 process for pertinent details, as the situation has not changed.

In respect of our submission and the SAWRD24 we note as follows:

All Correspondence to be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer

SAWRD24:

The reasoning identified within the SAWRD24 for exclusion of the Quorn water quality improvement notes that expenditure was identified as an improvement initiative. Therefore this investment was not included but may be considered at a future time.

This position has been reached based on feedback from the CCG and PBEF in November 2022 identifying that SAWater should prioritise meeting external obligations and delivering existing services before investing in improvements.

In the SAWRD24 SAWater recognised that Quorn remains a priority area for investment when improving aesthetics, to be considered at a future time.

The Quorn community has been seeking a resolution for well over 20 years, approving the determination in its current state excludes Quorn for another four (4) years. This is on top of the last four (4) years following exclusion by ESCOSA in SAWRD20.

Quorn's service from SA Water does not provide residents with a reliable source of drinkable water and despite customers being willing to pay extra on their bill this has failed to shift SA Water's investment decision to improve the town's water supply.

SAWRD20 and Long-Term Plan for Improvement Drinking Water Aesthetics:

In respect of the SAWRD20, to summarise very briefly, our understanding of the reasoning used by ESCOSA to exclude this upgrade in SAWRD20 was that insufficient planning had occurred.

To assist in ensuring this planning occurred, The Flinders Ranges Council has continued to liaise and lobby with both ESCOSA and SAWater on multiple occasions over the last four (4) years. A new plan was developed by SAWater for this exact purpose and specifically to inform the 2024-28 planning process, this plan is titled: ["Long-term plan for improving drinking water aesthetics"](#).

This plan raises several important points:

- Quorn is identified as the priority across South Australia across all the communities identified.
- Customer satisfaction with overall water quality was lowest amongst Quorn residents.
- Residents from Quorn are the least likely to use mains water as their primary drinking source (**only three per cent indicated they use it for this purpose, compared with 81 per cent of those from metropolitan Adelaide**).
- Hardness, salinity, and damage to pipes were some of the main concerns for residents of Quorn.
- For 53 per cent of respondents from Quorn, if water quality was to improve, their use of mains water would increase.
- Quorn was the most heavily attended session through the community drop in consultation process with more than 50 residents attending.
- Replacing taps (at least once) as a result of using mains water was a common occurrence across all locations and is most prevalent in Quorn where nearly nine in 10 have had to replace their taps at least once in the past five years.
- Residents in Quorn report a much higher incidence of having to replace pipes/plumbing inside their home or business in the past five years.
- Residents in Quorn were unable to grow or sustain a garden.

A selection of comments from Quorn, Melrose and Wilmington customers respondents in the SAWater survey:

*“My son has **constant skin infection** from the terrible quality water, I have lived in a lot of places in Australia it is by far the worst here!”*

*“We cannot drink our tap water; our laundry machine has been already replaced once this year due to white chemical build up. We can only give our pets bottled or rainwater... it is honestly unacceptable and **makes me feel like moving away from Quorn.**”*

*“**Feel sick if I drink the tap water.**”*

*“Significantly negative influence on my quality of life. The hard water in Quorn damages everything, **including my skin which is often irritated.** While my water bill is low, the cost of repairing, or replacing, and having to use cask water, adds up for a person on a DSP. I've had to do multiple repairs to my HWS, even with a hard water anode, The amount of calcium deposit averaged almost a buckets worth on each repair.”*

*“**It affects our plants. The dog doesn't drink it.** Leaves marks on the shower screens and sink and discolours the toilet and destroys the hot water service. Can't run it through the air conditioners.”*

*“**Extreme wear and tear on plumbing and fixtures. Blocking taps and fittings due to salt fluid up.**”*

*“Large, **refuse to use it in the house due to poor quality.**”*

Most importantly, based on the assessment included in the Long-term plan for improving drinking water aesthetics, Quorn was rated the highest on a multi criteria analysis including customer water quality, social, environmental and financial factors.

SAWater's own data as published identifies **only 3% of the Quorn community use mains water as their primary drinking supply.** Further, the respondents indicated that the water had a direct impact on their quality of life and certain medical concerns, including infections, rashes and avoidance behaviour.

Understanding Water Use and Needs of Older People in Regional South Australia:

We also refer the Commission to the recent [study](#) completed by Dr Alison Reid, titled: “Understanding Water Use and Needs of Older People in Regional South Australia.” This study was prepared by “The Plug-in” on behalf of COTA SA for the Department of Environment and Water. The study indicated that the poor water quality in Quorn had a significant impact on older residents.

Quorn is a town of over 1,300 residents, it's a central hub to the iconic Flinders Ranges, a significant and iconic tourist location within South Australia which caters for tens of thousands of tourists each year.

Our residents deserve better than water which is truly unpalatable and destructive.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ken Anderson', written in a cursive style.

Ken Anderson
Mayor
THE FLINDERS RANGES COUNCIL