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From: Jen Bradley [REDACTED]
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To: ESCOSA:Reviews
Subject: SAWRD24 submission – Regulatory business proposal

Categories: [REDACTED]

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the SA Water RD24 business plan.

My submission will focus on the omission of the 'regional water quality aesthetics improve initiative', in particular regards to the SA regional town of Quorn. As a Quorn resident and homeowner since 2005, I'm directly aware of the impacts of the poor quality water has on my health and wellbeing, and that of my community. When a majority of a regional town will not drink, or utilise the provided tap water, when that water is known to cause constant ongoing damage through corrosion and scale build up, these issues are more than an 'aesthetics' issue.

What SA Water heard through their stakeholder engagement was that "Safe, clean drinking water" was a key issue. "There was concern expressed that while all customers pay the same for services, not everyone enjoys the same access and water quality, with some areas experiencing issues including hardness and poor taste. **Providing safe, clean drinking water for all SA Water customers is still a first order priority.**" (page 103). Findings (page 156) state customers willingness to pay above the costs for the Quorn water improve initiative, directly demonstrates broad consumer support for the upgrade to the Quorn water supply.

In the SA Water business plan the economic argument against proceeding with this initiative is the need to provide a suitable cost-balance to the demand and likelihood of future growth when considering development in regional areas.

The demand is not there in Quorn as residents are **not willing to utilise** the water provided due to it's poor quality. The towns growth is being constrained the by the poor water quality, and reliance on ground water, which will eventually have longevity issues. In the future, this work will be required. The fact that the business plan states "SA Water recognises that Quorn remains a priority area for investment where improving aesthetics is considered at a future time." (page 157) highlights this. The longer this work is delayed, the greater the cost increases, and the greater the bill impact will be on all SA Water customers in the future.

The business plan mentions (page 289) in relation to the RD24 engagement that affordability is a significant key issue, and can be seen as reasoning for omission of the improve initiative work, despite making the point that "...the comparative cost of water is lower and more affordable than that of other household expenses". The cost impact on vulnerable customers is highlighted. I would like to point out that vulnerable customers within Quorn are being placed at great risk when faced carrying the large costs associated with the water quality issues here.

Since becoming a Quorn homeowner I am now on my third hot water service, and third washing machine. Not forgetting constant maintenance required on plumbing fixtures. As a person with chronic health issues, and as a result on a low income, these larger costs have a significant negative impact. They also means making the choice to forgo other important house maintenance. Not attending to those other house maintenance issues, has long term consequences.

There are ongoing environmental costs due to early failure of plumbing fixtures and appliances. Has this been factored in to the decision?

The water quality constrains the towns potential growth. The damage and associated poor performance leading to lower productivity the water causes, is a disincentive to attract and retain new business.

The poor quality water here also has an impact on residents budgets by requiring the reliance on establishing a secondary water supply, mostly rainwater, and the ongoing associated maintenance costs. For disadvantaged customers when failures occur, the ability to enact repairs is a significant cost, and often requires a prolonged financial recovery period. Customers that do not have the means to establish a reliable secondary water source, face the constant costs of damage to plumbing fixtures and appliances. Also needing to be considered is the costs impacts of the many small costs associated with using specialised products, often more expensive. such as sensitive skin care products as the Quorn water leaves skin uncomfortably dry due to the higher PH impacting the skin barrier, extra washing and cleaning products, boxed drinking water, etc. These extra costs all add especially in the context of the current cost of living increases, leaving customers on low incomes vulnerable.

The CARF funded COTA research into ["Understanding Water Use and Needs of Older People in Regional South Australia"](#) repeatedly highlights the health and wellbeing impacts the poor quality water in Quorn has on our aging population. An eighty year old needing to physically cart rainwater into their home for drinking purposes, is not sustainable, nor fair.

Quorn is over represented in the COTA research highlighting the depth of the impacts to our population.

By relying on rainwater, the question needs to be asked, how many residents filter and disinfect this water source? Are they aware of the need to? What are the local health impacts on potentially unsafe water? Has this been considered?

The physical adaptations residents take also has an impact on their health and wellbeing, and creates barriers for our aging population to 'age in place' and maintain their connection to their families and community. These also is long term financial and wellbeing impacts. This appears to be unrecognised when deciding to omit Quorn from the water improvement work. Yet Quorn residents are paying the same price for their tap water. Is that fair and equitable?

All South Australians carry the long term collateral costs impacts in increased health care costs.

Water is an essential service. Vital to sustain life. A vital component in every aspect of human activity. The COTA research demonstrates the depth that our poor quality water impacts aging populations. Many of these aspects translates to all of our population. When considering budgetary decisions regarding such work as this project, the decision should not be solely made in isolation, but that considers the bigger picture, the long term impacts, that may not immediately obvious. There is a need to challenge the current 'cost of living crisis' bias. Quorn residents are carrying disproportional costs compared with many other SA Water customers.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Bradley
Quorn resident