

Monday, 23 February 2009

TORRENS LAKE

State Cabinet has agreed not to proceed with refilling the Torrens Lake using water from the Riverview Quarry, Highbury, based on environmental advice.

Testing of water from the quarry revealed “extremely high” sulfate levels in the quarry water.

Minister for the City of Adelaide Jane Lomax-Smith says she will continue to talk to the council about their plans to remediate the lake.

A report prepared by the Environment Protection Authority says:

“The most likely outcome is the loss of a range of macroinvertebrate species from the Torrens Lake until suitable conditions favour their re-establishment (say up to two years).

“As a comparison, this could be compared with the impacts of the diesel spill, without the loss of bird life, but extending significantly upstream from the lake (and potentially downstream, depending upon the eventual discharge downstream).

“Ecosystem recovery time is likely to be of the order of several years.

“The likely impacts could reasonably be considered serious environmental harm under other circumstances.”

The EPA’s advice says a number of studies and other papers suggest that macroinvertebrates, including amphipods (crustaceans) and daphnia (water fleas), and possibly juvenile fish and frogs, would be impacted by the high sulfate concentrations. It says:

“Other impacts that may be observed include:

- stresses on a range of plants, although probably linked to growth inhibition (potentially an issue if there is no rain for an extended period)*
- potential chronic impacts on the ecosystem associated with stress until storms flush the sulfates.*

“Notably, all these impacts would occur not only in the lake, but throughout the path of the water to the lake, including water holes providing refuge for the river’s remnant ecosystems.”

Dr Lomax-Smith says the Adelaide City Council would be advised that the risk of environmental harm from the quarry water was too great.

“We have been trying to assist the Adelaide City Council in their predicament. We had been looking at a previously untried solution and unfortunately laboratory testing and subsequent advice suggests this is not an option.”