

EPA Board Communique

17 October 2006



The EPA Board Communique has been developed to provide information on matters discussed by the Board at its monthly meetings.

Adelaide Coastal Water Study

The Board received a presentation on the findings of Adelaide Coastal Waters Study (ACWS) from Professor David Fox, CSIRO Project Director, and Dr Graham Harris, Chair of the Scientific Committee. This study was undertaken in response to ongoing concerns about the decline in coastal water quality as well as the loss of more than 4000 hectares of shallow sub tidal seagrass along the metropolitan coast since the late 1940s.

Professor Fox provided the background information to the Adelaide Coastal Waters Study:

- while initial investigations began in the 1970s following loss of seagrasses, there was no formal monitoring undertaken until the EPA commenced water quality monitoring in 1995;
- a CSIRO Marine Research scoping report September in 1997 recommended a need for an integrated Study (~\$4m) - this was considered too expensive and not aligned with stakeholder issues and the Study was shelved for four years;
- the CSIRO Environmental Projects Office won a competitive tender to manage the ACWS and a staged approach to the Study was adopted: Stage 1 (2001-2003) – involved exhaustive consultation with stakeholders; Stage 2 (research program) commencing Spring 2003 and Stage 3 (synthesis) due for completion at the end of 2006.

The ACWS concentrates on improving knowledge and developing tools for the sustainable management of coastal waters by identifying the causes of ecosystems degradation, and the means to halt and reverse the damage.

The next stage in the project is to utilise the findings of the ACWS to develop a Water Quality Improvement Plan for the Adelaide Coastal Waters to improve coastal water quality. A multi-agency group, led by the EPA, is liaising with the Commonwealth Government regarding funding for this next stage. The Commonwealth has offered up to \$300,000 funding over two years for this on a 4:1 basis for State monies provided.

Strategic Budget Overview

The Board undertook a strategic review of the EPA budget in order to:

- consider the current EPA budget in relation to business functions and Strategic Plan priorities;
- assess the EPA's capacity to deliver on its Strategic Plan;
- develop strategies to ensure optimum use of the EPA's funds for achieving its priority objectives.

For the purpose of further benchmarking, the Board also considered an assessment of expenditure against the functions of the *Environment Protection Act* for 2005/06 and undertook some preliminary comparisons with the Victorian EPA.

This information will provide important background material to the Board's strategic planning session early next year.