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**Media Release**

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## **Is Desalination Sustainable?**

The Kwinana Seawater Desalination Plant has been in the spotlight lately because it has been forced to shut down due to the gas crisis. This is surprising because it is supposed to be powered by renewable energy. However the ACCC recently criticised the Water Corporation for claiming that the Kwinana Plant was powered by renewable energy and ordered it to withdraw this misleading claim from its web site.

Earlier this year the Kwinana Desalination Plant was forced to shut down on two occasions when dissolved oxygen levels in Cockburn Sound fell below the EPA's trigger levels. In response, the Water Corporation has lodged an application with the Minister for the Environment seeking to have these operating conditions removed from its licence.

Now the Water Corporation has a new proposal for a larger desalination plant at Binningup before the EPA. They are claiming that this plant will also be powered by an unspecified source of renewable energy. This proposal has attracted strong criticism from the local community who are concerned that the pipeline from this plant will damage the conservation category wetlands at Kemerton.

In its Water Forever Discussion Paper, that is currently open for public comment, the Water Corporation has put forward desalination as part of the solution to the State's water crisis that has been brought about by climate change and rapid population growth. So the question arises: How Sustainable is Seawater Desalination?

In its second policy paper, released today, Philip Jennings of Murdoch University and his colleagues in the Environmental Sub-Committee of WAPF examine the issues and controversies surrounding desalination technology. It identifies a set of concerns including: energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, marine impacts, terrestrial impacts, waste disposal and noise. The paper discusses how these issues need to be addressed in order to make this technology sustainable.

WAPF Director, Julian Roche, said that the paper was intended to inform the public about the benefits and hazards of seawater desalination so that informed and sensible decisions could be made about whether to use it or whether other water supply options might be more appropriate.

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