

## **A COMMUNITY PETITION TO THE ESSENTIAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

### **TO STOP THE STATE LABOR GOVERNMENT AND GIPPSLAND WATER FROM IMPOSING EXCESSIVE WATER RATE INCREASES.**

The undersigned citizens of Gippsland are deeply concerned about substantial increases in water rates, proposed by Gippsland Water and believe that the local water Authority has failed to properly consider community concerns in their final plan.

These concerns include the following:

- The proposed rate increase is excessive with great inequity and bias against the community who use only 30% of the water but pay 70% of the rates. This is grossly unfair.
- The government expects the community to subsidize the power generators and paper manufacturing industries which uses 70% of the water, when the state significance of the power industry should demand that if any subsidy is required, then it should be paid by the government.
- As the state government and the paper manufacturer, PaperlinX, reached an agreement to facilitate the construction of a new pulp mill, which will require significant increased water supplies, the costs associated with the new Water Factory should be met by the state government and/or this public company.
- Given that Loch Sport is not within the area governed by Gippsland Water, the \$45 million costs associated with supplying this town with sewerage and associated infrastructure works should not be met by ratepayers of Gippsland Water.
- The excessive increase in rates proposed by Gippsland Water are excessive and will cause significant financial hardship to many members of the community who are already suffering due to socio economic reasons. There is an aging population that is asset rich and income poor, who will be particularly burdened by the proposed increased rates.

We, the undersigned citizens therefore call upon the Essential Services Commission (ESC) to undertake the following actions:

1. Disallow the very substantial increases in water rates proposed by Gippsland Water and apply a rate increase of not exceeding 5% per annum.
2. Recommend that the state government ceases the practice of entering into private, long term agreements with private sector industry, which are not open and transparent and which have provided for hidden rates.
3. Ensure that the power generators and other large industries pay their fair share of rates.
4. If the Government is not willing to increase the power generators and large industries rates, the State Government to subsidize these industries as they are of state significance not Gippsland significance.
5. Gippsland Water consumers not pay for the 45m Loch Sport project as it is not in the Gippsland Water area.

There are approximately 60 signatures supporting this petition. The Commission has removed the names and addresses for privacy reasons.