



SUBMISSION to: Barwon Water

FROM: Friends of Lorne

RE: Lorne, Water: Your Say

DATE: 27 October 2025

Friends of Lorne is a planning and environment conservation organisation. It was founded in 1966. We are dedicated to conserving the natural fauna and flora of Lorne and its environment whilst ensuring that there are services and activities suited to the needs of permanent residents, holidaying residents, campers and tourists.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on *Lorne, Water, Your Say*. Our representative on your Community Working group for the last two years has been Colin Leitch. We appreciate the quality of the materials shared with us and the clarity of the possibilities that have been put before the public for consideration.

As a community group we have a vital role in communicating **community values and principles** that we feel will be **enduring into the future** and can be applied to all options under consideration. The principles are thus:

- 1 Environmental flows are paramount. In all the options you provided us we are willing to pay extra for the version that ensures our wildlife and habitat were not deprived of water. This particularly applies to the St George River which has populations of platypuses and other precious wildlife which are under threat with reduced water flows.

Increasing the storage of the Allen Dam and/or pumping to an off-stream storage will be at the expense of the downstream environment until 2045 when eFlows will be provided. So, for 20 years, the St George River flows will have the additional impacts of increased extractions as well as reductions of inflows due to climate change. Option4b is therefore not acceptable.

- 2 Minimal destruction of habitat and wildlife on land and in the sea. Infrastructure construction should be undertaken which has minimal impact on the environment and habitat. We are willing to pay more for constructions which retain forest and vegetation. Upgrading our existing water treatment site for a recycling plant or desalination is preferred over clear-felling forest for construction of new

infrastructure. At present our water treatment services are not prominent or visible from key parts of Lorne and we value that.

- 3 Use existing infrastructure. As noted above, we would like existing infrastructure used wherever possible laying pipes near or beneath roads in environment already disturbed.
- 4 Noise (underwater and on land), marine disturbance, and waste discharge should be kept to a minimum. This especially applies with the desalination option as we assume that the pipe and outlet would be near Stony Creek. Stony Creek is a residential area as well as recreational area/bush walk. It is also a popular beach. If the desalination option is to be given serious consideration, our community would need to be provided with case studies that demonstrate negligible risk.
- 5 Water is precious. We believe this ethic and key message requires massive education and promotion to the public immediately with the aim of minimising the town's water usage. The need is even more acute with climate change and the expansion of AI with its demands for electricity and water. Public education campaigns as well as price signalling is required. Specific practical messaging is critical. There is a sign on entering Lorne that says "permanent water saving." But most people don't know that this means no fixed garden sprinklers between 10am and 6pm. Payment of water rates which increase with water usage may be an appropriate incentive to keep water usage down.

We would also like to see an education campaign based on the public acceptance of recycled water in WA and Qld. Let's see if it can take less than 10 years to promote acceptance. If a recycle option is adopted, a treatment plant industrial site already exists so an extra recycle plant could be put here. The issue would be to put a pipe into the dam causing minimum impact to the environment. Once water is treated it can be piped to the dam.

- 6 Staged introduction of works with extensive monitoring and evaluation. Staged introduction of works is supported in principle if combined with an environmental monitoring program to allow the refinement of eFlows. In option 3b (Recycle), staged introduction however would only see eFlows delivered from 2052 and this would see flows in the St George River decline further due to climate change and increased demand. This is unacceptable. In option 5b (Demand Reduction), staged introduction would see eFlows delivered by 2036. This is an acceptable compromise provided that an ecological monitoring program is established so that in the intervening period the impacts of the Allen Dam can be quantified and eFlows modified accordingly.

Thank you again for seeking to establish policy guided by both evidence and community values.

Penny Hawe, President