



Hon Stephen Robertson MP
Member for Stretton



**Queensland
Government**

24 DEC 2009

**Minister for Natural Resources,
Mines and Energy and
Minister for Trade**

Ref CTS 14966/09

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 27 November 2009 enclosing copies of Petition No. 1323-09 and 1357-09 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The Petition requests that the House introduce independent monitoring of the brine output of the desalination plant.

The Gold Coast Desalination Plant has been in operation since February 2009 and has supplied more than 17.8 billion litres to the South East Queensland Water Grid to date.

WaterSecure is meeting its environmental and regulatory responsibilities through its ongoing monitoring around the desalination plant's marine structures. Independent experts from Griffith University were instrumental in setting up the rigorous water quality testing regime and analysing data. The marine monitoring programs were designed in conjunction with the Department of Environment and Resource Management and an independent third party expert.

The marine monitoring program is based on sound science and includes continuous, real-time monitoring of the quality of the brine discharged back into the ocean. The monitoring undertaken includes measurement of pH, chlorine, dissolved oxygen, temperature, turbidity, suspended solids and salinity.

Further monitoring of the marine life and sediments on the seabed is also undertaken. This is done by sampling a selection of around 60 parcels of seabed, which are then taken back to a laboratory and analysed to determine health, numbers and diversity of seabed based marine organisms.

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The plant has been designed to minimise any potential impacts on marine ecology and considerable effort has been placed on ensuring the quality of the marine environment. The long-term independent marine monitoring program being undertaken at the Tugun Desalination Plant shows that the plant is operating in compliance with the environmental licence conditions which have been developed to prevent environmental impacts. In conjunction with this scientific program, regular visual monitoring around the marine structures is undertaken and shows marine life is abundant and diverse indicating they are unaffected by brine discharged from the desalination plant.

Small plants and animals that live on the ocean floor are key indicators of a healthy environment because they are long-term residents - rather than moving in and out as more mobile organisms such as fish do. Results show these small plants and animals to be thriving on and around the marine structures. Underwater footage shows that the marine structures are providing a habitat for a diverse variety of marine organisms, effectively creating an artificial reef.

Should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Shannon Jimmieson, Assistant Policy Advisor on telephone 3225 1861

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Robertson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP