

June 16 2008

Sound Monitoring Under Threat

Kwinana Industries Council wants a state government guarantee the environmental monitoring of Cockburn Sound will not lose out in the current funding allocations.

"We have a seat on Cockburn Sound Management Council and there is a real concern that it is going to lose out in this year's funding allocation," said KIC director Chris Oughton.

"The council needs around \$750,000 and the fear is that this will be reduced to about \$250,000 which only covers salaries and on costs.

"This means no project work, no monitoring of the Sound and no reliable evidence about the improving quality of one of Western Australia's best stretches of water."

Cockburn Sound Management Council was established in August 2000 to coordinate environmental planning and management of Cockburn Sound and its catchment.

The Council has 23 members representing the community; recreation and conservation groups; industry; and Commonwealth, State and local governments.

Once a major source of pollution in the Sound, industry has cut its waste discharges by more than 95 percent. The largest source of pollution is now urban stormwater.

Most industries with licences to emit choose not to and are either recycling or disposing of liquid emissions properly.

"CSMC has a strong and credible reputation which has been gained as a result of its ability to provide empirical and objective evidence about its area of responsibility," Mr Oughton said.

"It may seem strange to some that industry wants a better watchdog, but that says something about how much industry has changed in Kwinana," Mr Oughton said.

"But watchdogs need to do more than bark: they need teeth to be a credible influence.

Over the last 15 years, industry in the Kwinana region has made a dramatic improvement in its environmental impact on the region.

A combination of community pressure, regulatory requirements and managerial commitment to operational change have combined to the point that all marine emission levels are well under the regulatory requirements and the quality of Cockburn Sound continues to improve.

"KIC accepts its responsibility and provides some funding for the Watchdog of the Sound," Mr Oughton said.



Over the last six years, KIC has provided some \$240,000 to fund the CSMC monitoring program,

This year it committed another \$90,000 over three years as well as an additional \$75,000 for a specific case study.

"I ask the government to attach a similar level of importance to the information developed by the CSMC through its project and monitoring work through the provision of adequate funding for the CSMC."

"KIC is also concerned that the current funding for CSMC is not a single line item within the State's budget, but that it comes from a variety of budget sources.

"We feel CSMC funding should be consolidated into one cost centre to reduce the possibility of it having to compete on unfavourable terms with other state government agencies.

"It is our opinion the money sought by CSMC is not an ambit claim budget application, but is rather the amount – based on the rigour for which it is renowned – it considers necessary to do a proper job.

"KIC fully endorses the CSMC's budget request and does not consider \$750,000 an unreasonable price to pay in order to achieve unimpeachable information about the state of Cockburn Sound.

"We consider this Sound management."