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Attention: News Editors, New Producers
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Media Release

Is the Treasurer encouraging business to break the law?

State Treasurer Peter Gutwein appears to be encouraging businesses to break the law in their disposal of trade waste following his claim that TasWater is punishing companies by making them comply with environmental requirements.

Chairman Miles Hampton said the Treasurer was either completely confused or being deliberately misleading in accusing TasWater of harming Tasmanian business by wanting firms to meet their obligations under State Government environmental law.

In reality the government knows that TasWater is doing what it must under the law. Recent correspondence on the issue from the state government department that provides the government with policy advice on trade waste stated "TasWater's actions are entirely consistent with what is expected of it as a sewerage service provider under Tasmania's current urban water legal and regulatory framework."

Mr Hampton said in citing trade waste as a reason for TasWater to be taken over by the State Government, did this mean that under Mr Gutwein's control, he would allow businesses to flout the law?

"In pointing the finger at TasWater, the Treasurer fails to acknowledge that the Corporation is actually complying with State Government legislation. He would know this and would have been briefed on the facts by Environment Protection Authority officers.

"TasWater has a legal requirement to ensure people dispose of their trade waste appropriately and the State Government, through the EPA, is responsible for regulating TasWater's activities in this regard.

"Trade waste including fats, oils and grease cause blockages in the sewerage system and this can result in spills. Current practices by some businesses present a risk to public health and the environment.

"TasWater is not shifting costs, as Mr Gutwein would have people believe. It is simply asking businesses to take responsibility for the waste they produce by installing pre-treatment systems that will help reduce the risk to public health, to the environment and to our infrastructure.

"At the same time, we are reducing the cost impact on business who already comply and residential customers, who shouldn't have to shoulder the financial burden.



“Unmanaged trade waste is one of the biggest contributors to environmental non-compliance for sewage effluent in Tasmania, yet it appears the Treasurer is happy for this to continue, or does he want householders to pick up the cost on their water and sewerage bills? This is the same approach he has unsuccessfully tried at Macquarie Point, where behind the scenes the government has tried to make mums and dads pay for the removal of the sewage treatment plant.”

Mr Hampton said hundreds of businesses across the state had been inspected since March last year and the majority had been found to be compliant in their disposal of trade waste, or were actively working with TasWater to become compliant.

“Businesses have been given a generous 18-month timeframe to become compliant and the overall process is considered fair and equitable.

“Mr Gutwein knows full well that a State Government-owned TasWater would report to the same regulators as the council-owned TasWater. There is unlikely to be any change to trade waste compliance under the proposed State Government ownership and any promises to the contrary make a mockery of the Treasurer’s commitment to Tasmania’s clean, green image.

“If the State Government is serious about protecting public health and the environment, it would work with us and continue to support, not criticise TasWater’s trade waste program

“TasWater remains ready and willing to work with businesses to help them comply with State Government regulations. The Treasurer’s disingenuous and misleading grandstanding does nothing to assist business or the environment,” Mr Hampton said.

Ends....