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Attn: News Editors, Producers

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Media Release- from the Chairman, TasWater

It's time to set the record straight

The Chairman of TasWater, Miles Hampton today said that it is time for the Treasurer to stop using TasWater as a political football.

As Chairman of the Board of TasWater, I want to reassure the community that there is neither a "crisis" in the State's water and sewerage system as the Treasurer asserts, nor is it "universally inadequate" as he has also asserted.

Despite his rhetoric, the Treasurer is fully aware that 99% of TasWater customers receive drinking water that fully complies with Australian drinking water standards.

Further, he knows the remaining one percent of customers will be receiving similar quality water within 18 months.

Prior to the Treasurer's announcements over the past week, neither the State Government, nor the Environmental Protection Authority, nor Department of Health and Human Services raised any issue of a "crisis". They sought no meetings or discussions about the issue.

Is the Treasurer in possession of advice from these two bodies that they have not shared with us?

From the start, the Treasurer's portrayal of the situation appears to have been a cynical attempt to alarm the community and convince the Upper House that a takeover of TasWater is in the best interest of the State.

To support his arguments, the Treasurer points to the number of small towns that are still on boil water alerts and says this is, in part, a result of councils underinvesting.

I feel I must now defend the record.

In 2008-9 The Office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator (OTTER) part of whose role is to report on TasWater's performance, reported that 4 percent of the Tasmanian population serviced with reticulated water received non-compliant drinking water.

Then in 2014-15 OTTER reported that only 1.4% of the population serviced with reticulated water received non-compliant drinking water.



I quote from the OTTER report of 2014-15:

“Sound ongoing performance reflects increased operational management and investment in infrastructure since the hand-over of the water supply infrastructure from local Councils to the regional corporations and then TasWater.”

The State Government’s own independent Economic Regulator therefore confirmed that TasWater and the Councils are making significant progress in these areas.

It has been reported that the Treasurer believes our fast-tracked 18 month time frame to address the remaining small towns on boil water alerts can be further accelerated without wasting public money.

If the Treasurer has a plan, I would like to see it.

The Treasurer also says he can solve Tasmania’s water and sewerage challenges in five years or less by leveraging the state’s balance sheet, in other words by running even greater debt now for others to pay later. Money is only one aspect of delivering real projects on the ground.

If the Treasurer has a plan, we would all like to see it.

TasWater on the other hand, does have a plan – a ten-year, fully-funded plan.

Once again, I call upon the Treasurer to consider the long term interests of Tasmanians and the people at TasWater who are proudly working every day on these issues – including some of the most talented water and sewerage engineers in Australia – and share his plan on how he intends to keep his promises and do it faster.

Until then, just let us get on with the job.

Further information:

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