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**Submission to the Environment Resources and Development Committee
Parliament of South Australia.**

Subject: The Future of the Cheltenham Racecourse Site

Submitted by the 'Friends of Gulf St Vincent'

The 'Friends of Gulf St Vincent' is a voluntary organisation, established in 2003, with a steadily growing membership base.

Many of our members have retired from professional involvement in policy and management of the State's aquatic resources. They have joined with environmental activists in the cause of the coastal and marine environment. Members live around the Gulf, and cover all age groups.

Our principal aim is to foster a unified community approach to the protection and wise use of the Gulf St Vincent.

Critical to the protection of the Gulf along the metro coast is management of stormwater. The principal problem with stormwater now, is the effect of turbidity on the local beaches and seagrasses. This has been confirmed through the Adelaide Coastal Waters Study. Rather perversely, the effect of NOT having discharges of turbid stormwater has also been observed through this summer of low rainfall, by regular beach users, who remark that many of the beaches are much more pleasant, and safer for children, because of their clear waters. This has been a reminder of what beach waters were like before the drainage across the Adelaide plains was drastically altered.

The State Government has indicated that the Cheltenham Race Course site is available for conversion to other public use, including stormwater management. With the advice of several prominent engineers the 'Friends' prepared a submission for that site that could provide significant public amenity and harvest rainwater for delivery to one of our depleted aquifers for reuse. We sent this proposal to Premier Rann several months ago, but have not had a specific response from the Premier.

We are putting the essential details before other Members of Parliament, to show what is possible in water management without rushing to expensive engineering or treatment plants.

The basic details are - the urban area to the south east of Cheltenham (Woodville through to Brompton) could realistically be drained to Cheltenham Race Course site. This drainage area is about 2300 ha.

The total wetlands area (pond area plus surrounds) required to treat the run-off from the catchment would be about 54 ha, including surroundings. It would yield about 2500 ML of useable water, annually.

This water could be injected into the underlying aquifer. When withdrawn by irrigators, its extraction would yield a return of \$1.5m pa (at a nominal cost of \$0.60/kL) less the cost of running the wetland (conservatively, 5-10% of expected revenue).

The methods for collecting and treating such water have been well proven in projects to the north of Adelaide. Innovative architects/designers should welcome the challenge to integrate water sensitive urban design with these wetlands and other community uses on the Cheltenham site.

This proposal puts 'new' water into the system, where much of the discussion on water policy at present is on conflict in allocating known supplies. We note recent discussion in 'The Advertiser' that applications to sink bores in metropolitan Adelaide are increasing. What we propose would substantially reduce draw on extant high quality water resources for greater Adelaide. If we return to 'normal' rainfall patters, it could then recharge the aquifer as a reserve for the future.

This water harvest need not hinder use of the Cheltenham site for housing. It would also reduce the impact of stormwater on the amenity and ecology of Gulf St Vincent.

We have received comment from associates that, if housing is such a priority for the Cheltenham area, then State and Local Government could look at other nearby sites where a relatively small proportion of an industrial site is occupied by buildings or works, and amalgamate some of that land with new uses for the racecourse site.

The urgent consideration right now is that the Cheltenham site gives three levels of Government a unique opportunity to harvest this water. If you do not use the Cheltenham site for this, it is difficult to find anywhere else on the map of Adelaide where it might be attempted in future.

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