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Essential Services Commission  
Level 37, 2 Lonsdale Street,  
Melbourne Vic 3000

April 30<sup>th</sup> 2013

SUBMISSION TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES COMMISSION:

RE. Poowong, Loch, Nyora Sewerage Scheme

The Loch Community Development Association notes the Commission's recommendation to South Gippsland Water in its Draft Determination, and hereby reiterates that the implementation of the Poowong, Loch, Nyora Sewerage Scheme be immediate, and that any factor determining the outcome of this long overdue essential service, be dealt with swiftly and with the utmost respect for the residents it is designed to benefit.

While we appreciate the role of the Commission in regulating essential services, and fully understand the financial implications to South Gippsland Water, it is our considered opinion that the cost of implementation of the Poowong, Loch, Nyora Sewerage Scheme is not unsurmountable, and in fact is far outweighed by Community cost on a daily basis.

The notion that funding the project is now under review, at this 9<sup>th</sup> hour, is unacceptable to the Loch Community, and demonstrates a total lack of foresight by South Gippsland Water. Inference by South Gippsland Water's representative at the recent forum at Leongatha's Tafe Campus April 29<sup>th</sup>, that SGW could find themselves financially bankrupt, through the apparent cost of this scheme, is totally counterproductive, and offensive to residents whose undisputed right it is to have this essential service.

Throughout the lengthy consultation and planning process associated with ensuring the best possible model for our specific requirement, Loch residents and business owners have braced themselves against minimal retail growth, depressed real estate markets and an ongoing diminished potential for development. The Community of Loch cannot continue to sustain itself without the immediate implementation of the adequate and effective waste water system it has repeatedly been promised. We believe any rate increase required to ensure 21<sup>st</sup> century sanitation standards are met, are well founded

and should be seen as a genuine and worthwhile investment in the development of the wider Gippsland Region.

Furthermore, and most essentially, the deterioration of existing septic tank systems within Poowong, Loch, and Nyora vindicates the urgent need for action. The Loch Community Development Association, quite emphatically, will not allow the question of money to dictate the health and safety standards imposed upon its members and their children.

Additionally, any further negating of South Gippsland Water's obligation to provide this essential service to the Loch Community is completely at odds with current Victorian Government strategy to drive population and investment to regional and rural Victoria. If Regional Living comes at a price, let it be funded.

We believe the Commission should revise its Draft Determination for budget postponement in respect of the scheme forthwith, and accept the scheme budget as contained in SGW's Water Plan III for 2013-18. In doing so, SGW must address the budget restraints required, and ultimately demonstrate that when our Government openly endorses Regional Living, it means life in a proactive, conscientious community free of public health and environmental risks.

We thank you for your time.

Howard Booth  
President  
Loch Community Development Association