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MEDIA RELEASE

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Opposition's Lal, Lal position welcomed, but where is the money?

The decision of the State Opposition to support the return of all water from Lal Lal Reservoir to Ballarat's water supply has been welcomed by the Committee for Ballarat.

Committee for Ballarat chair Noel Coxall said, however, Lal Lal was always only a short to medium term solution and much more vision was required to provide a sustainable long-term water supply option.

“The Committee welcomes the Opposition's input into the debate about water. It is only through such recognition of and debate about this critical issue that we will quickly arrive at the solutions we need,” Mr Coxall said.

The Committee has reinforced to the Opposition Leader that it believes the interconnection of the Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat supplies is an alternative which is worthy of continued consideration as a sustainable long-term solution.

The Committee also expressed concern, consistent with its own stated position on the city's water future, that there needed to be a greater recognition and commitment at a State level to the substantial costs of providing the critical infrastructure for Ballarat and region.

“We do not believe that either the Government or Opposition have so far committed to the necessary funding required to provide the long-term water solution we need,” Mr Coxall said.

“Ratepayers, by themselves, should not be expected to bear such a financial burden.”

Mr Coxall and other representatives of the Committee met with Opposition Leader Ted Baillieu on Thursday following the announcement of his party's policy for Ballarat's future water supplies.

“We are adamant that Lal Lal's total capacity should be returned to Ballarat and it is important that Mr Baillieu has recognised that. We welcome it and congratulate him on his commitment,” Mr Coxall said.

“It is also important that he has recognised the situation facing Ballarat is near to crisis. That is the fact of the matter and it is to Mr Baillieu's credit that he appreciates it.

“He has also placed great store on fast tracking the recycling of water, something which will be important in providing a total solution to the region's water challenge.

“But, as the Committee's submission to the Government's draft Central Region Water Strategy states, Ballarat business and potential investors need a firm, believable and clearly deliverable water supply strategy for the next 20 to 30 years, based on high end assumptions of demand growth.

“We are seeking big picture vision and we remain concerned that neither the Government nor Opposition are providing such a vision,” Mr Coxall said.

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