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## TOXIC ALGAL BLOOMS ARE BACK

### **Inadequate or misleading information, legislation not applied**

The Swan Canning river is again experiencing toxic algal blooms , this time summer rains are being raised as cause. (<https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/parks/alerts-and-updates/item/3114-algal-blooms-impacting-the-swan-river>).

Recent Government has been in denial that our iconic river is dying claims *My Clean River (MCR)*, an independent group championing river health. "The river has become an off-the-record *political football*" says Remco van Santen "and the government has not been informing the public who are not only losing their river, but paying for failing attempts to disguise its decline." "Even the Auditor General's recommendations of 2014 have substantively been ignored."

MCR says for example that the Department of Parks and Wildlife provides no long term information on the massive decline of bird, fish and other aquatic life and their recent publication on the river describes how some twenty government agencies will replace the now defunct Swan River Trust. That publication uses a picture of a happy family netting river prawns though these have been restocked to distract the public from its calamitous decline. Professor Jorg Imberger, laureate of the prestigious Stockholm Water Prize, was reported to having declared that the river would be dead within five years.

A detailed report prepared by MCR describes how the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006*, designed to protect the river, has not been fully enacted as conceived by the then Labor Government. Taxpayers' money is spent each year dealing mostly with the *symptoms* when a more direct and lower cost for the taxpayer option, as used overseas, is required. These include the use of more sophisticated fertilisers in select areas.

The MCR report details how the WA Auditor General's report of 2014 confirmed that not only is the river in decline, no understandable and relevant information is provided to the public to identify the pollutants, their sources and the seriousness of the problem.

This contrasts with river health programs around the world that foster community ownership. One of the globally recognised programs is the *Healthy Water Ways* program that looks after the health of the Brisbane River and Morton Bay. That program provides publicly accessible information using a simple score card system. (See <http://healthywaterways.org/reportcard/#/overview/2016/condition>).

"The public information about the declining health of our river, is near useless for anyone to understand and to respond to take action" says Remco van Santen.

In 2004, the Swan River was proclaimed to be a "Heritage Icon" but MCR spokesperson Remco van Santen, in making the keynote address at an international rivers conference last November in India, said that "its treatment by government over the last decade was disgraceful for a developed country when direct action is available".

If you would like more information about this topic, or an electronic copy of the *Swan Resource 2017* report, that has not been released as yet, please contact us.