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Submission to the Inquiry into the Project: Cocos (Keeling) Islands Water Infrastructure

Access to water is a vital human need for many functions, including drinking water, hygiene and cleaning. Having a water desalination plant is an important feature of water security, including in places like the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean. Expanding water infrastructure is a good plan to better facilitate the water needs of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands residents (and any other visitors and tourists) and their water security. Given the likelihood of the water needs of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands increasing into the future, the existing capacity of the water plants will be overtaken. Hence, there is a need for expanding or building new water infrastructure - which the proposal for the new Seawater Reverse Osmosis Plant and expanded Waste Water Treatment Plan provide for.

The water security of the Cocos Islands will be better and more efficiently met with a long-term plan, including water infrastructure, compared to waiting for the current capacity to be overtaken or an emergency to arise - either case having drastic impacts on the wellbeing and health of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands residents (and likely their tourism economy). Moreover, emergency provision of water would be expensive (including because of the remote location of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands) without resolving the underlying capacity issue. As an example, ocean states can be vulnerable to water security issues after natural disasters, as we have seen after the volcanic eruption and tsunami impacting on Tonga (ABC News, 2022). Overall, I support the projects (as outlined in the Department of Infrastructure's submission).

Benjamin Cronshaw.

References

ABC News. 22th January 2022. "Drinking water the priority in Tonga after volcano, tsunami with Australian naval ship on the way." *ABC News*. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-01-22/tonga-aid-update-hmas-adelaide-to-arrive-wednesday/100775502