Beware of bores in southwest

DOUG ROBERTSON

RESIDENTS in Adelaide's south-western suburbs are being warned not to use bore water because of a possibility cancer-causing chemicals might be present in contaminated underground water.

The Department of State Development has been testing the underground water for impurities since 2010 to assess groundwater known to be contaminated with trichloroethylene (TCE), perchloroethylene (PCE) and dichloroethylene (DCE), which have been linked to cancer.

A letter yesterday from SA State Development Department chief executive Dr Don Russell to residents and landowners living near the Marleston TAFE campus, advised them not to use bore water for any purpose "as a precaution".

The DSD letter said the most recent water testing done from January to March this year, and overseen by an independent auditor, showed that "there remains no unacceptable risk to residential properties in the area".

However, it does not outline what impurities were found in the underground and in what concentration.

Dozens of residents at Clovelly Park were forced from their homes after concerning levels of trichloroethylene was found in soil samples early last year.

"The auditor has confirmed the most recent testing ... indicates that there remains no unacceptable risks to residential properties in the vicinity of the TAFE site," the letter read.

"While there remains no unacceptable risk to residential properties, we are writing to provide you with information on this process as our precautionary testing program overseen by our independent auditor will continue in this area.

"We will ensure to keep you informed."

SA Water mains water and rainwater tanks are not affected, the letter said. Groundwater naturally flows in a north-westerly direction so residents living north and north-west of the campus have received the warning letter.

The Department of State Development did not return phone calls to The Advertiser last night.
Looking to turn water into wine

VALERINA CHANGARATHIL

WILLUNGA Basin Water owner Water Utilities Group has applied for federal and state funds to advance a multi-million-dollar plan to make McLaren Vale's wine industry more sustainable.

Water Utilities Group Craig Heidenreich will tell an OZwater conference in Adelaide today how the scheme, which supports more than 140 growers, could be extended to the McLaren Flat and Blewitt Springs regions where bore water quality is causing issues.

"When we acquired WBW in October 2013, it was a well-established business supplying 4 gigalitres of recycled water a year into McLaren Vale from the Christies Beach wastewater plant," he said.

"But with climate change and some of the issues we are aware of around groundwater quality in the regions, we know we can expand further."

The large reclaimed water scheme services McLaren Vale, Willunga and Sellicks regions.

"Storage is a key constraint to growth because the surplus water is produced in winter but the vineyards are only irrigated in summer," Mr Heidenreich said. WBW has a long-term agreement with SA Water to source the recycled water and also leases some storage from it.

"We think we have the potential for 500 to 600 million litres of water demand in that region so it's a fairly big storage demand and it's not viable for us to fund it and pass the cost to customers," he said.

"We have applied for state and federal grants under the respective regional schemes to try and get some assistance."

Gemtree Wines viticulturist Melissa Brown said the groundwater quality and resource in the McLaren Flat region where it had its biggest vineyards was decreasing.

"We buy water from neighbours but there isn't enough and the salinity in the bore water is increasing as well... there is a lot of pressure on the system," she said.

Chinese property developer and investor Song Yangang invested $30 million in the company to boost production.

The OZwater conference in Adelaide will hear from more than 100 companies and organisations in the water industry.