

MEDIA RELEASE

THE ABC NEEDS TO COMPENSATE ST HELENS

Independent Member for Apsley, Tania Rattray, has called on the ABC to compensate the St Helens community for the damage caused by the *Australian Story* episode, 'Something in the Water'.

The story incorrectly claimed that there were elevated levels of toxins in the St Helens drinking water, and that this was linked to an alleged increased rate of cancer and other illness.

An Independent Panel of scientific experts later found no evidence to support those claims.

"It is clear to me that the ABC's *Australian Story* has done serious damage to the St Helens community, and to its national reputation," Ms Rattray said.

"The allegations made in that *Australian Story* report have now been proven to be completely untrue.

"The program severely damaged the town's tourist and seafood industry reputation, both nationally and locally.

"I am calling on the St Helens community to be compensated by the ABC for the damage caused by the incorrect reporting.

"I am proposing that a significant donation be made to the St Helens Chamber of Commerce to go towards a marketing and information campaign.

"The campaign would assist those areas of the St Helens community that have been severely affected by the false report."

Ms Rattray said the most concerning issue about the whole saga was that the ABC has made no attempt to set the record straight.

"The ABC must address the negative impact caused by the program. They need to acknowledge their obligation to compile reports based on accurate information, and their failure to do so in this instance.

"Any way you look at this situation, the striking conclusion is that the St Helens Community is the big loser in this and the ABC should at the very least support the Chamber of Commerce with funding to promote the area.

"Local people know that the St Helens and East Coast area is a beautiful holiday destination, but thanks to the ABC this fact has been muddied by misinformation aired across the rest of the nation."

Ends.

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