

SHOCK OVER THE FILTH IN FRESH WATER

POLLUTION from Robb Jetty abattoir at South Fremantle is far worse than residents feared and in breach of Health Department regulations.

Fremantle City Council tests last month showed that the waters of Owen Anchorage were teeming with faecal coliforms and salmonella when the Education Department was running swimming classes in the area.

By MARTIN SAXON

But the abattoir has been allowed to continue pumping 200,000 litres of effluent into the ocean each day.

Faecal coliforms and streps are micro-organisms in animal excrement. Their presence indicates faecal pollution.

A 14-day "clean up or else" pollution abatement notice expired last week but the Environmental Protection Authority has taken no action to close the government-run abattoir.

Delay

The detailed test results also show that the authorities knew about the pollution more than two months before the Health Department issued a public warning to swimmers.

The tests detected the worst faecal pollution around the outlet pipe from the abattoir.

Several types of salmonella were also detected in al-

most every sample from water near the abattoir and at South and Kendall beaches.

Fremantle chief health surveyor Bob Caporn, in a report to the council, said salmonella was identified in water samples in early October and that faecal organisms well above the acceptable limits were detected later that month.

On December 1 the council advised the Ministers for Health, Agriculture and Environment of the problem.

But the authorities did not warn swimmers until late January.

"These results are far worse than we imagined," Fremantle Community Action group spokesman Noel Coward said yesterday.

"The Education Department was running swimming classes at South Beach at the time these high readings were recorded."