

**Draft Basin Plan – Initial Engagement to inform the development of the  
South Australian Government response**

**KEY VIEWS AND ISSUES RAISED AT THE GOOLWA MEETING  
Alexandrina Council Chambers, Wednesday 21 December 2011**

**Hosted by the Honourable Minister Paul Caica MP, Minister for Water and the River Murray**

**Overview of the meeting**

The meeting commenced with an opening address from the Minister for Water and the River Murray and presentations from Department for Water (DFW) officers on the State Government consultation process on its response to the draft Basin Plan and an initial appraisal of the draft Basin Plan.

The Minister noted the importance of a unified approach and community support to get the best possible outcomes from the final Basin Plan. The Minister also asked participants to disseminate information to their respective communities and groups.

Meeting participants provided their feedback and initial comments on the draft Basin Plan. The key views and issues expressed by participants have been grouped into common themes and summarised below.

*Unified South Australian position*

- Support for a unified South Australian position.
- Recognition that while there may be different views on some issues, there is also a great deal of commonality about the fundamental principles that should be achieved.
- The consultation period for the draft Basin Plan is an opportunity to improve and strengthen the Plan.

*Issues with the draft Basin Plan*

- Although not perfect, the draft Plan as it currently stands is still an improvement on current arrangements.
- The success of the Basin Plan is particularly crucial for the lower reaches of the Murray-Darling Basin system.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the adequacy of the draft Plan's objective to keep the Murray Mouth open 9 out of 10 years and the potential for the Mouth to be closed for a number of years under the current water recovery scenario.
- The Basin Plan should build resilience into the system to avoid drought impacts.
- Concern that the framework for adaptive management is not as solid as it needs to be to ensure adjustments can be implemented as needed.
- The process around the 2015 review needs to be strengthened.
- There is a need to ensure that the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's compliance powers are strong enough to ensure the outcomes of the final Basin Plan are actually achieved.
- Questions around whether the Authority has considered a 'do nothing' scenario in development of the draft Plan. It is important to recognise that the lower end of the system has already suffered.
- Views that the plan does not appear to be consistent with best available science.
- Discussion about the importance of focussing on outcomes rather than the numbers.
- South Australia has a right to access water of adequate quality.

*The content of this document reflects a summary of issues and views raised by participants during the meeting and does not necessarily reflect Government policy.*

### *Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth*

- An appreciation that upstream states are also concerned about impacts of proposed sustainable diversion limits; however South Australian communities, particularly those below Lock 1, have experienced difficulties due to over-allocation and drought. South Australia also bears the costs to dredge at the Murray Mouth and manage acid sulfate soils.
- Discussion about the lack of monitoring points in the lower reaches of the River Murray, particularly in and around Lakes Alexandrina and Albert.
- Desire to have minimum river height targets between Lock 1 and Lake Alexandrina to avoid future acid sulfate problems and other issues.
- Desire to have five additional measuring points around Lake Alexandrina to monitor salt loads (1000 EC units 95% of the time).
- Concerns regarding the current salinity levels in Lake Albert.
- The outgoing Lower River Murray Reference Group has developed a 40-point plan of initiatives and management issues. This document will be provided to the Minister to consider as part of its response and future negotiations with the Australian Government and the Authority.

### *Risks and opportunities*

- Concerns a legal challenge may delay adoption of the Basin Plan. The Minister outlined the Premier's views that a legal challenge would be a last resort – but that all possible avenues of action are being investigated.
- Views about the importance of having a sufficient starting point, particularly given the current emphasis on using the 2015 review to reduce the water recovery target.
- Views that it is important for South Australia to 'raise the bar' and argue for the best possible outcomes – this is a draft plan at the moment and it is appropriate to debate the content.
- The final plan must deliver on the objectives of the Water Act and deliver environmental outcomes.

### *Australian Government investment*

- More detail is required about the Commonwealth Government's role and funding support to assist communities to adapt and transition.
- There is a need for Commonwealth Government funding to support transition for communities around Lake Albert as well as communities negatively impacted by the Basin Plan.
- South Australia could benefit from additional investment in capital works projects such as:
  - Upgrade and maintenance of the barrages; and
  - Flow connectors between the South East and the Coorong.