



**Government
of South Australia**

Minister for Environment
and Conservation
Minister for the River Murray
Minister for Water

01 April 2011

Senator the Hon Trish Crossin
Committee Chair
Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Crossin

The Government of South Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry into the provisions of the *Water Act 2007*.

The Government of South Australia has long sought and supported strong Commonwealth leadership in achieving reform in the Murray-Darling Basin. We continue to support the Murray-Darling Basin Authority as an independent body that can take a whole-of-Basin approach to managing water resources based on sound science.

As you are aware, jurisdictions were involved in the development of the *Water Act 2007* (the Act). Following its enactment by the Commonwealth Parliament, State Parliaments subsequently referred a number of powers over water management to the Commonwealth to strengthen the Act and facilitate its implementation.

The Government of South Australia continues to support the objects of the Act and the purpose and basis of the Basin Plan. In particular, we support its intent to manage Basin water resources in the national interest and achieve environmentally sustainable levels of extraction for water resources that are overallocated or overused. Only a functioning, healthy river system can provide for viable and productive industries and communities into the future.

The Government of South Australia recognises that reform, to the extent that is envisaged under the Act, will have social and economic impacts, however, this should not be an excuse to move away from the original intent of the legislation. It is our belief that socio-economic consequences can be minimised through strategic investment programs that assist communities to transition to a future with less water.

It is imperative that this significant reform is progressed without further delay. Continued deliberation and debate about the intent of the provisions of the Act is likely to contribute to further uncertainty for those potentially affected by the Basin Plan. This would not be in the best interest of the environment or the communities that depend on the resources of the Basin for their livelihoods.

Instead, focus should be directed to creating strong working relationships between communities, partner governments and Members of Parliament to ensure a sustainable future for the Basin, including provision for healthy environments and support for communities that will need to transition to the new arrangements.

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely

PAUL CAICA
MINISTER FOR THE RIVER MURRAY
MINISTER FOR WATER