



Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
Department of the Senate
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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10 September 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

GetUp is delighted that a Senate Inquiry is being conducted into the management of water in the Coorong and Lower Lakes – an issue of national importance.

GetUp comprises over 280,000 members who are consistently telling us that they are gravely concerned about the future of the Murray-Darling system. As such GetUp will shortly launch a national campaign to Save the Murray. Through our Save the Murray petition we are planning to mobilise many of these members around their concerns.

GetUp believes that a national plan to save the Coorong, the Lower Lakes, and the Murray-Darling River system would enjoy a very high level of public support from GetUp members and the broader Australian community.

Our campaign will call for several recommendations to be implemented to Save the Murray, one of which relates directly to this stage of the inquiry into water management in the Coorong and Lower Lakes. This submission outlines that recommendation.

We also note that the Inquiry is made up of two parts and we will be making a more detailed submission into the long-term sustainable management of the Murray-Darling Basin in due course, following the launch of our campaign.

The Coorong and Lower Lakes wetland system became a Wetland of International Importance in 1985 under the Ramsar convention. It is also one of six icon sites, chosen for their high ecological and cultural significance, under the Living Murray Initiative.

However, according to the *Living Murray Icon Site Condition Report – 2007*, “[t]he ecological health and condition of the Coorong and Lower Lakes continues to decline. The decline in health is primarily due to the reduction of freshwater inflows.”¹

¹ *Living Murray Icon Site Condition Report – 2007*, p.5 available at:
http://www.mdbc.gov.au/__data/page/1327/MDBC_TLM_Icon_Site_Condition_Report_2007_Web.pdf

Increase in freshwater flows into the Coorong and Lower Lakes is vital if there is to be any chance of saving this national icon. The target set by the Living Murray Initiative is 500 GL by mid-2009. Given the current crisis in the Coorong and Lower Lakes, the Inquiry should consider moving this forward and explore options for delivering 500 GL by 2008.

While the recovery of 500 GL would demonstrate to the Australian public that the government is taking an important first step towards restoring the Murray River, much more is needed to improve the health of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and the Murray-Darling River system as a whole in the long run.

In addition to delivering 500 GL by 2008, GetUp urges the Senate Inquiry to consider options and mechanisms, including annual targets and timelines, for progressively increasing flows into the Murray by at least a further 1,000 GL by 2014. This measure has also been recommended by the CSIRO and supported by the Australian Conservation Foundation.

The need to develop short, medium, and long-term measures for the responsible management and conservation of the Murray-Darling system is vital for the environment and communities whose livelihoods depend on a healthy, functioning river system.

GetUp will be monitoring the Inquiry and the Committee's recommendations with interest, and communicating with our members about its progress. We look forward to presenting a more detailed submission, including a reflection of community attitudes to the issue, as the Committee examines the implications for the long-term sustainable management of the Murray-Darling Basin system.

Yours Sincerely,



Ed Coper
Acting Executive Director
GetUp