

**Senate Rural & Regional Affairs
&
Transport Committee**

**INQUIRY INTO WATER MANAGEMENT
IN THE COORONG & LOWER LAKES**

Submission by Lesley Fischer

Lake Albert -Meningie

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The problem/issues:

- Insufficient water flowing down the system to ensure a healthy environment to the Lower Lakes & Coorong..
- Lack of water due to over allocation, exacerbated by the drought upstream.
- The Lower Lakes & River becoming acidic as water levels drop below sea level.
- Over allocation of water – commodification of water as a resource.
- Social impact of changes in water regulations, policy, & forced licence sales.
- Rural Australia is in drought. Government buy back of water licences in drought affected communities is seeing people having to sell their asset as a last resort. Then what?
- The "new" investors should be the ones feeling a bit of the pain....last on first off!!
- Rural community breakdown..... schools, hospitals decimated.
- Lack of understanding by our city counterparts & Government bodies.
- Drought in the MDB has not been considered in water allocation processes.
- Lack of understanding that rivers must flow to sustain a healthy environment.
- Decisions being made on the run. Government being reactive instead of proactive.
- Corporate farming will not be the saviour for our Nation. As more and more Corporate farming comes into being, rural communities will close down as people move to the cities.
- The future will see employment in farming become more like mining . Fly in fly out.
- The death of a river system, the environment & the death of rural Australia.
- States should not be able to hold other states to ransom. ie Victoria over the water plan.
- Lake Albert has been cut off from the river system with the building of bunding between the two lakes. There was no community discussions when this decision was made.

Recommendations / role of Federal Government & Opposition:

- Mother Nature is repairing the damage by revegetating the lakes foreshores with native grasses, what right have we to again undo what nature is providing.
- Ensure equity flow for all – environment, agriculture, communities.
- Acknowledge the importance of all rural communities and ensure their viability into the future.
- Rural communities need assistance. Many have been at the forefront of many years of drought. Rural Australia was the back bone of this mighty nation...it is now all but broken. Family farms look to the environment for the future of their next generations.
- Without a viable environment, every thing will collapse.
- Provide all people with the opportunity to participate in discussions & decisions about water, so that rural & urban people share the commitment & responsibility for reaching sustainable water use.
- A complete independent audit of all water, evaporation losses & extractions from rivers & water ways.
- A moratorium on all future dam building and water extractions & new permanent plantings until the water situation is under control.
- Compensation to those who's businesses have been decimated in Lake Albert. Lake Albert has been deliberately cut off by Government intervention.
- When so called experts look at making changes, talk to local residents. They breath & live their environment.
- Provide wise leadership regarding the National Plan for water security and acknowledge the urgency to act...the rivers cannot wait any longer.
- Act as fair, independent regulators of water use, taking into account social, environmental & economic impacts.
- This is a National issue and should not be a political contest between States.
- All water ways need to be under the banner of the National body. Situations occurring now with the Minister Wong looking at buying water and Premier Brumby taking 75 gigs out of an already depleted system. What is the value of that?
- **Does the Government want a healthy river system?**
- **OUR ENVIRONMENT CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER..... ACT NOW!**

Dairying in the Lower Lakes District MENINGIE South Australia

The district as a whole experiences hot dry summers & mild, wet winters. The lakes region is regarded as one of the potential growth areas in South Australia for dairying.

The dairy industry on the lower lakes consists of the irrigated dairies West of Meningie & dryland dairies East of Meningie.

The Meningie West region is entirely dependent upon water from the Murray Darling System direct from Lake Albert for both agricultural and domestic use.

Irrigators have clearly demonstrated an ability to convert higher salinity water into high value production, under center pivot irrigation. Utilising the latest technology, monitoring winds, moisture, evaporation & efficiencies together with advice from agronomists & nutritionists.

Meningie dairy/irrigation region is unique to SA, as the area has a reliable milk supply through summer/autumn. Supplying 55% of Adelaide's milk in autumn. Producing 50 million litres of milk annually to three milk companies, National Foods, Dairy Farmers & Warrnambool Cheese & Butter.

A number of dairyfarmers in this region are recognised for being in the top 10% for milk quality, Australia wide.

Some of the most professional, innovative farmers in Australia, farm in this region.

These farmers are acutely aware of their impact on the environment and the need to constantly look at change and future management strategies, utilising sustainable farming practices.

They test the boundaries and are always looking for efficiencies of production to ensure a quality product for the consumer.

Dairying in the Meningie region has been targeted for future development and town businesses have grown accordingly.

Family farms play an important role in the future of Australian agriculture.

They care about their business, their environment. It is their future—It is Australia's future.

MENINGIE

HEART OF THE COORONG

Situated on the picturesque shores of Lake Albert. 160 kms south east of Adelaide.

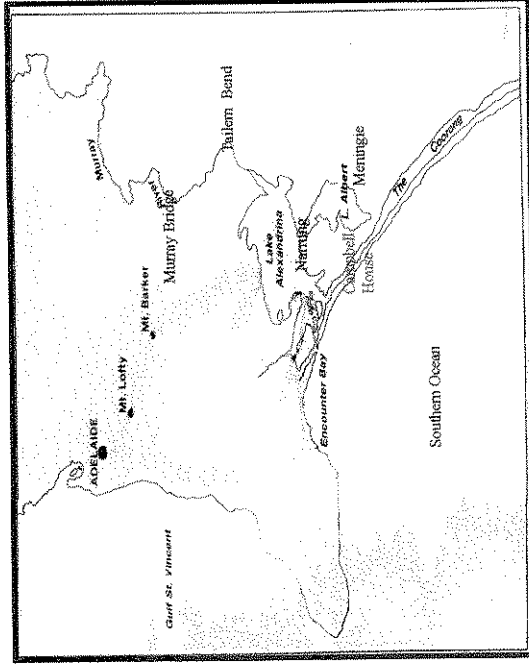
The first Europeans known to have visited the area, down to the Murray mouth were Captain Charles Sturt and his crew in 1830. At this time it was noted that the shores of the lakes were densely covered with fresh water reeds in one continuous belt as far as could be seen.

The construction of the beautiful old homes that abound the shores of the lake are testament to the foresight of our original pastoralists. They would not have invested in the region without availability of fresh water.

Current industries supporting the district today are dairy, beef, fodder, crops, pigs, wool, horticulture & commercial fishing.

In 1985, the Coorong and Lower Lakes were listed as Wetlands of International Importance under the RAMSAR Convention.

Recognising the importance of wetlands to regional ecology.



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Brad: 0418857541

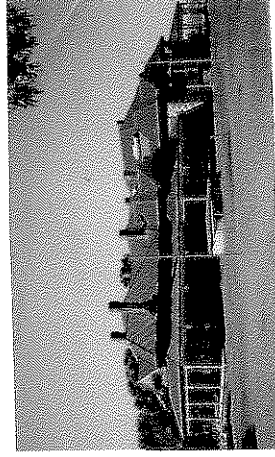
Email: fisc@internode.on.net

CAMPBELL HOUSE

Mick & Lesley Fischer

PRODUCERS OF QUALITY MILK SA Recipient

Dairy Business Enterprise of the Year 2000

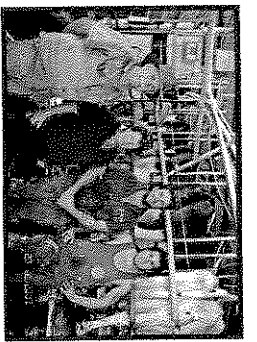


Dairy, Beef & Cropping Enterprises

MISSION STATEMENT

Campbell House is in the business of

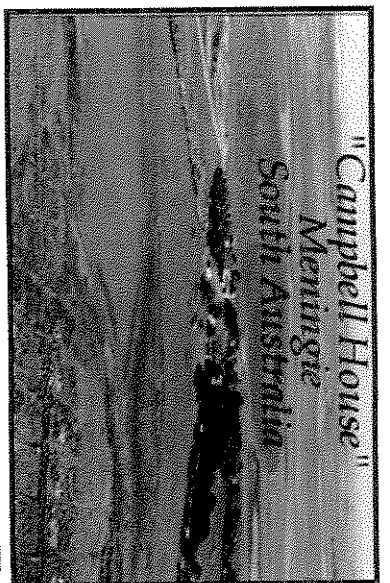
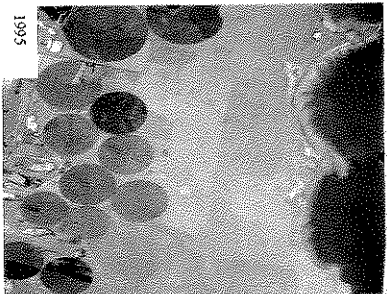
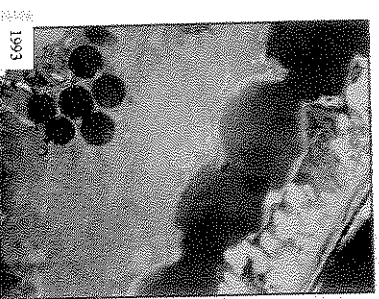
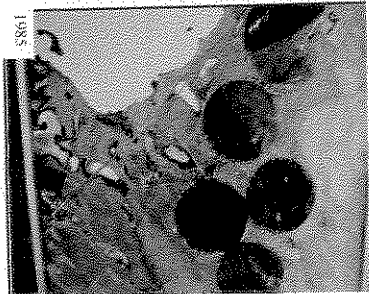
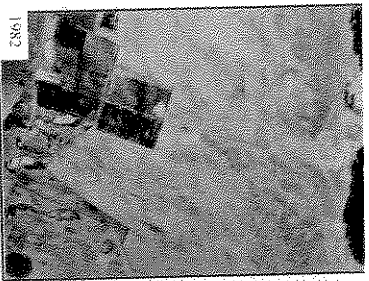
maximizing profits, by using the best available resources for efficient production and marketing of quality produce utilising sustainable farming practices.



Campbell House Objectives

We aim to build cow numbers to 1000+ & embrace the latest technology, computerization, embryo transplant, breeding & utilising management skills to the maximum (using the best that modern technology offers).

At Campbell House, we are in constant change mode. Every year improvements have been made to the dairy complex. Pastures upgraded, cattle breeding / type & nutrition made a priority. Installation of a weather station enables best practice water use efficiencies, accounting for every drop of water.



DAIRY ENTERPRISE DETAILS

Dairy Manager Brad Fischer

Assistant Rhys Fischer

Employees 4

Farm area: 1600 ha

Soil Type: Undulating, mainly sand over limestone with outcrops of limestone

Irrigation: Farm enterprise area: 240 ha
Effective dairying area: 210 ha
8 center pivots

Milking: 650 cows

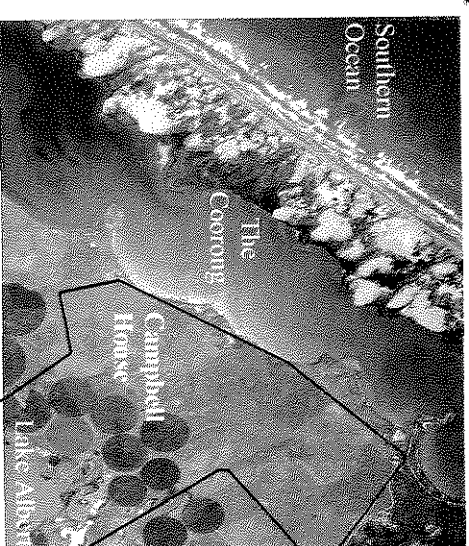
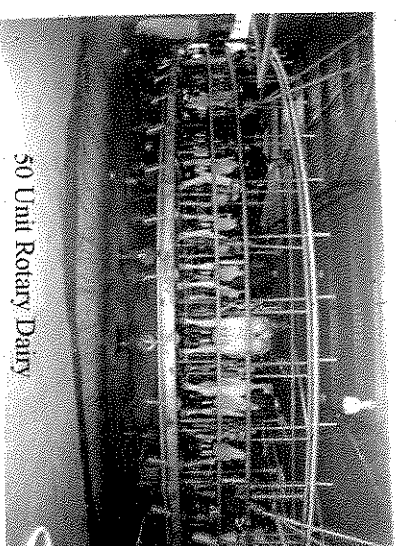
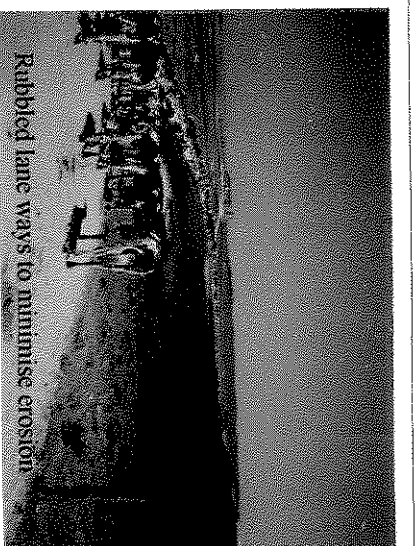
Dairy: 50 unit computerized rotary platform

Herd Ave: 8,000 litres

Butterfat: 4.0 Protein: 3.4

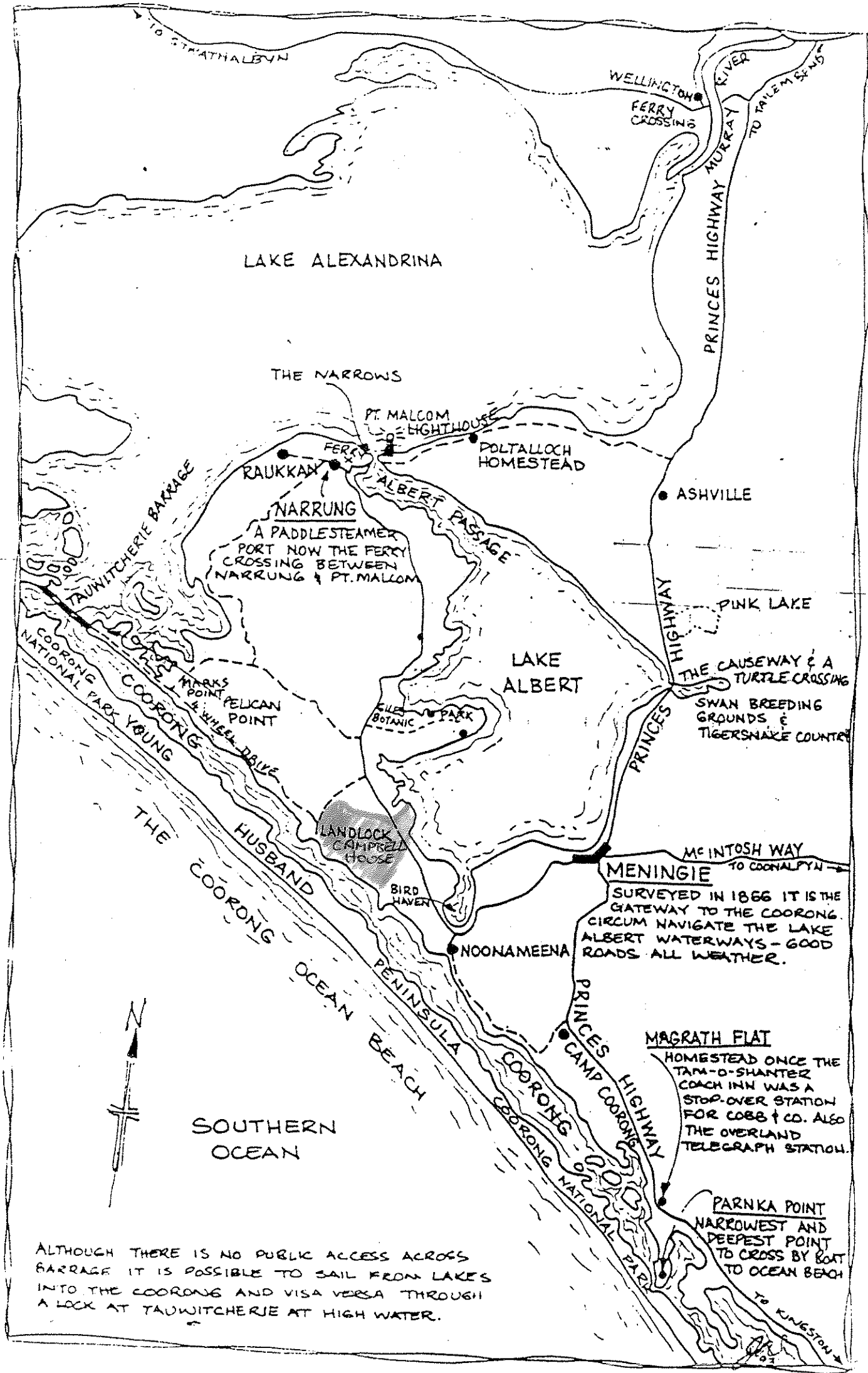
Somatic cell: Ave: 100,000

Proud Recipient of Countdown
Downunder Milk Quality Award
2001, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007



PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT

1982—2006

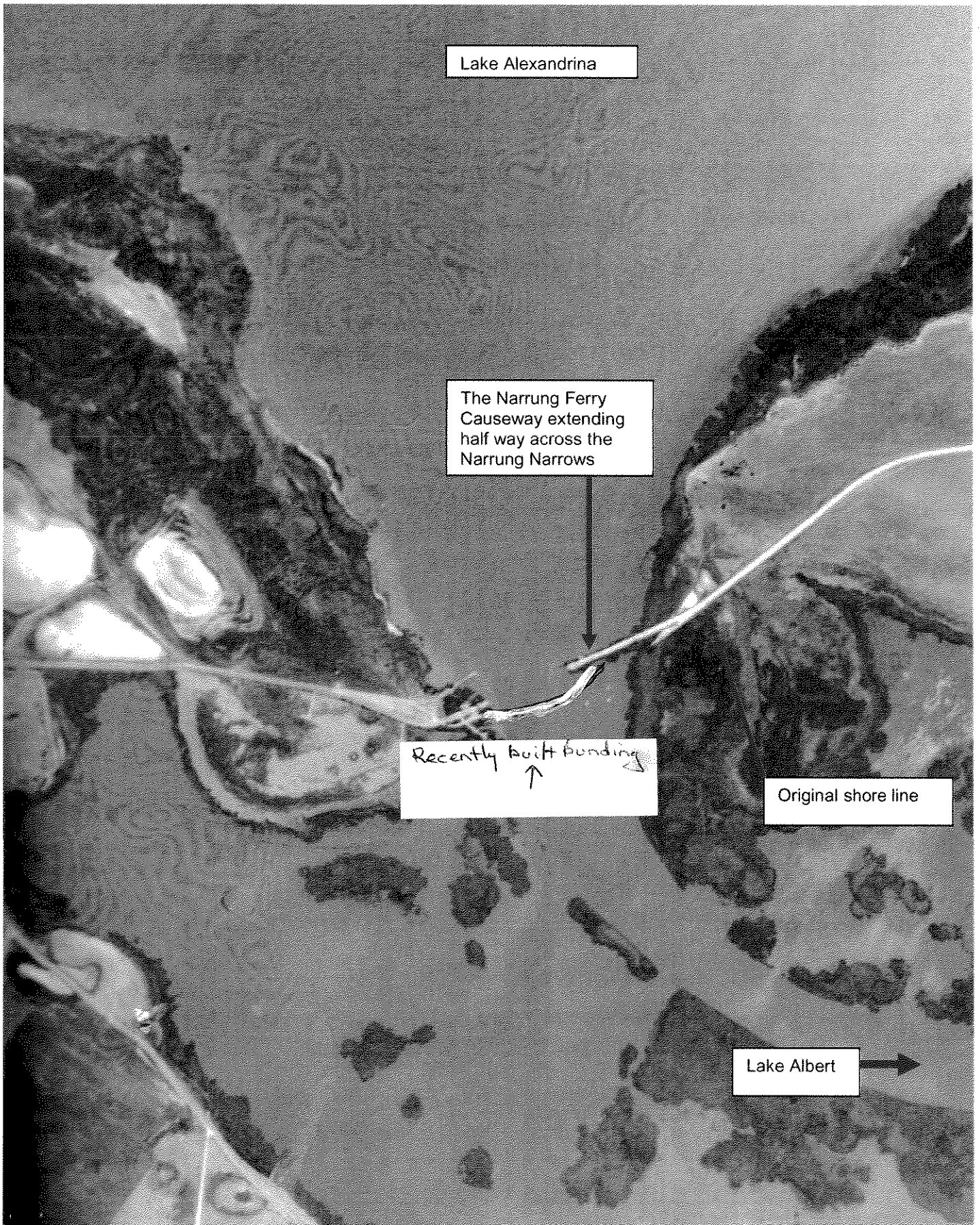


SOUTHERN OCEAN

ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO PUBLIC ACCESS ACROSS BARRAGE IT IS POSSIBLE TO SAIL FROM LAKES INTO THE COORONG AND VISA VERSA THROUGH A LOCK AT TAUWITCHERIE AT HIGH WATER.

PARNKA POINT
NARROWEST AND DEEPEST POINT
TO CROSS BY BOAT
TO OCEAN BEACH

NARRUNG FERRY & CAUSEWAY



Lake Alexandrina

The Narrung Ferry Causeway extending half way across the Narrung Narrows

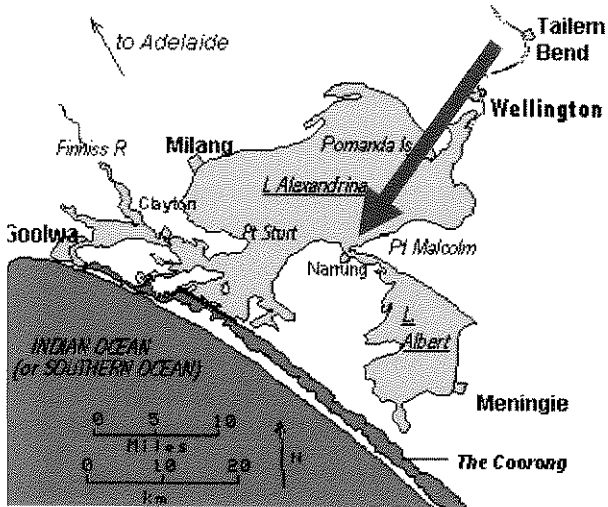
Recently built bunding
↑

Original shore line

Lake Albert →

NARRUNG FERRY & CAUSEWAY

Crosses the Narrung Narrows between Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert



The causeway to the ferry blocks half of the Narrung Narrows

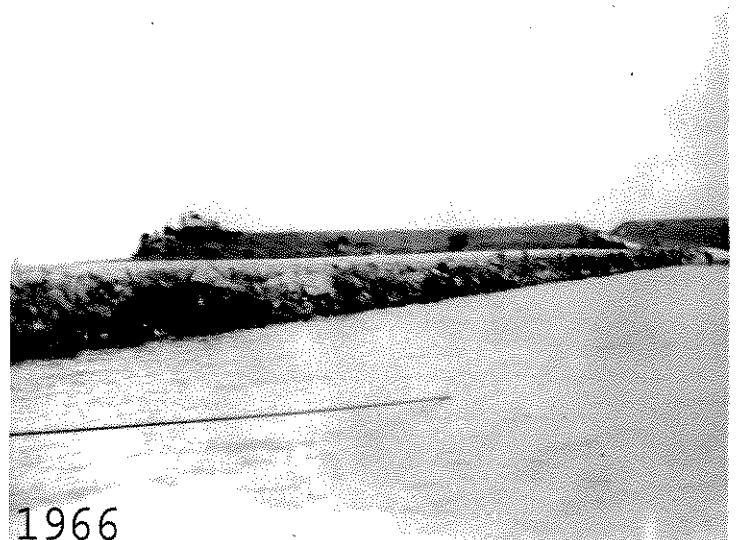
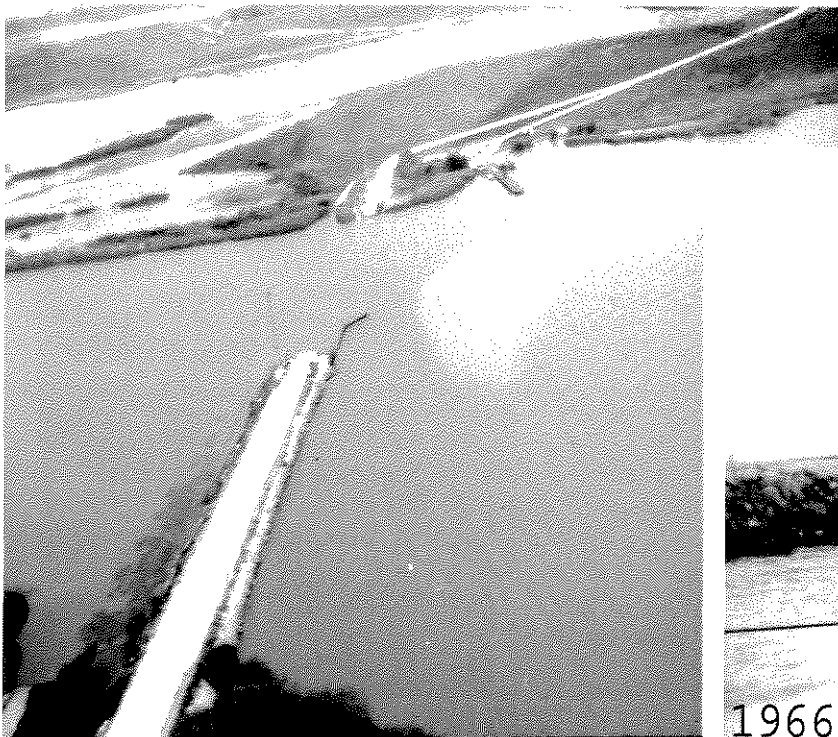
Lake Albert is landlocked and depends on the wind to move water between the lakes in order to keep salinity levels down

Impacts of the causeway;

- Water transference between the lakes is significantly reduced,
- Increased salinity levels in Lake Albert,
- Significant silting is occurring because of the reduced flows in the Narrows and this is allowing reeds to choke half of the waterway,
- Silting and shallow water will increase the likelihood of algal blooms,
- Navigation between the lakes is becoming more difficult.

Salinity Levels are currently (20/08/2008)

- Meningie 5,070 EC (Lake Albert)
- Pottaloch 3,380 EC (Lake Alexandrina)
- Milang 3,570 EC (Lake Alexandrina)



1966

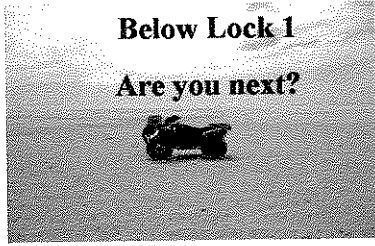
LEFT and BELOW; Newly constructed causeway in the mid 1960's clearly showing the restriction to the Narrows

RIVER MURRAY

Has been sacrificed

Below Lock 1

Are you next?



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Presentation 16-4-2008

Australia's National
Environment & Economic Disaster

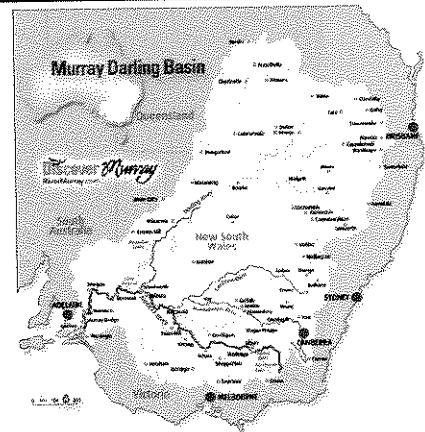
The Mighty Murray
Is In Crisis

The Coorong, Lakes Albert & Alexandrina
The Lungs of Our Murray Are Dying!

Ngarrindjerri People

- Spiritual connection to the river, lakes & Coorong
- Dreamtime stories tell of fresh water, fish & birds
- Abundance of food & fresh water
- Supported a large population
- They were resident to the Coorong & lakes

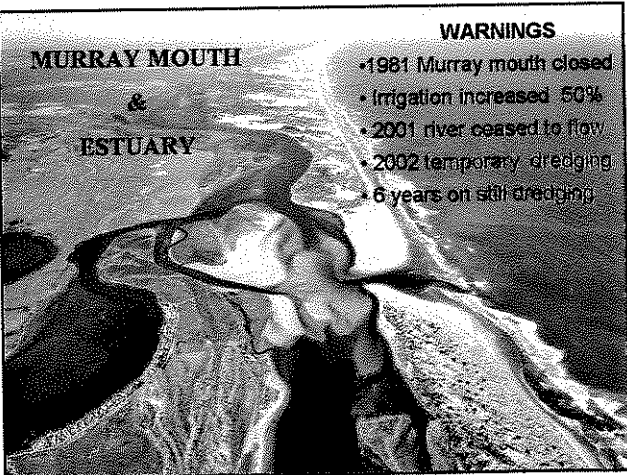
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MURRAY MOUTH & ESTUARY

WARNINGS

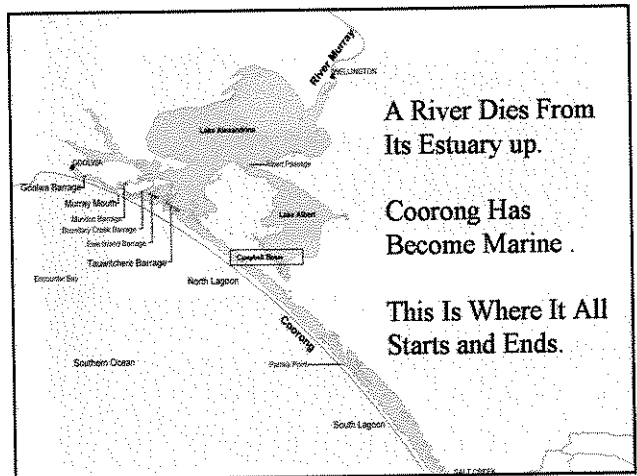
- 1981 Murray mouth closed
- Irrigation increased 50%
- 2001 river ceased to flow
- 2002 temporary dredging
- 6 years on still dredging



A River Dies From
Its Estuary up.

Coorong Has
Become Marine.

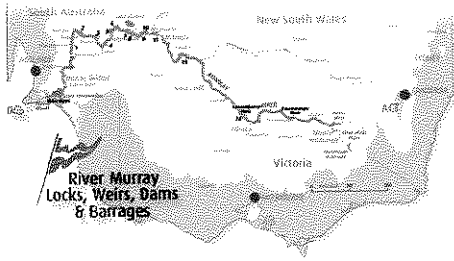
This Is Where It All
Starts and Ends.



S A Water Entitlement

7% Share

A Minimum entitlement 1850 GIGS



RAMSAR SITE

THE COORONG & LAKES ALBERT & ALEXANDRINA WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

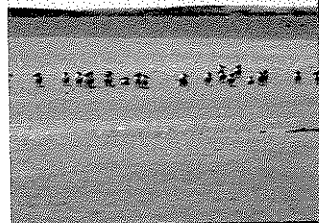
In its prime – teeming with birdlife

The Coorong changing from estuarine to marine environment



Pelicans standing 100's meters out in Lake Albert
The water is about 1 kilometre from the shore

Waders cleaning up as water recedes

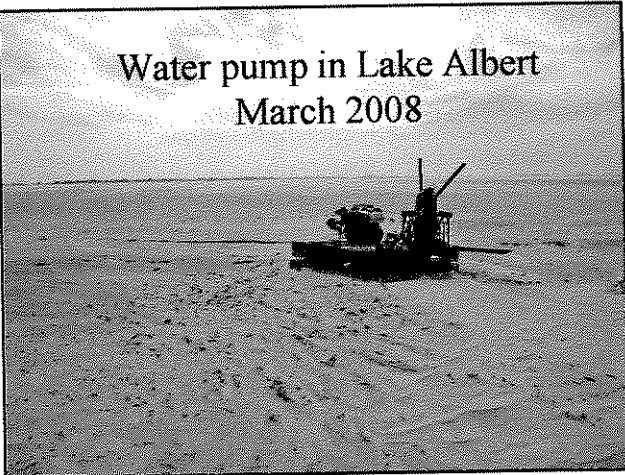


WHERE HAS THE WATER GONE?



WE RESORT TO CRAWLING ON HANDS & KNEES JUST TO GET WATER FOR OUR STOCK

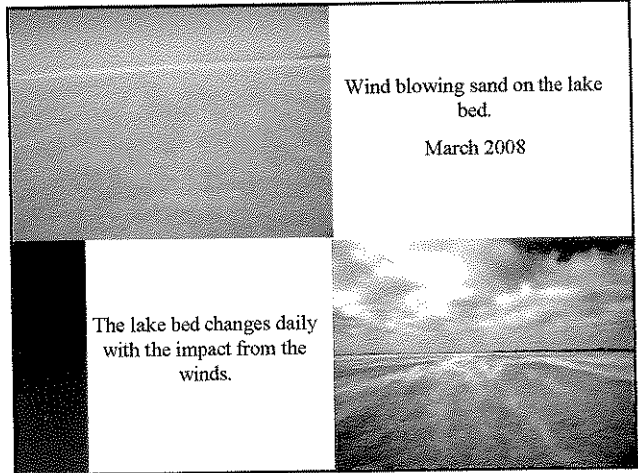
Water pump in Lake Albert March 2008

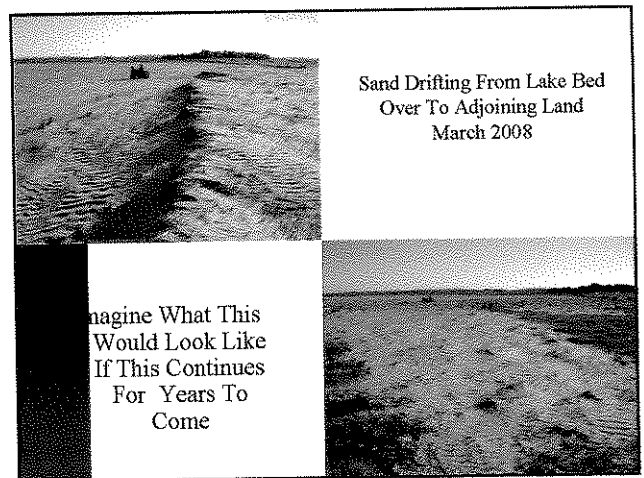
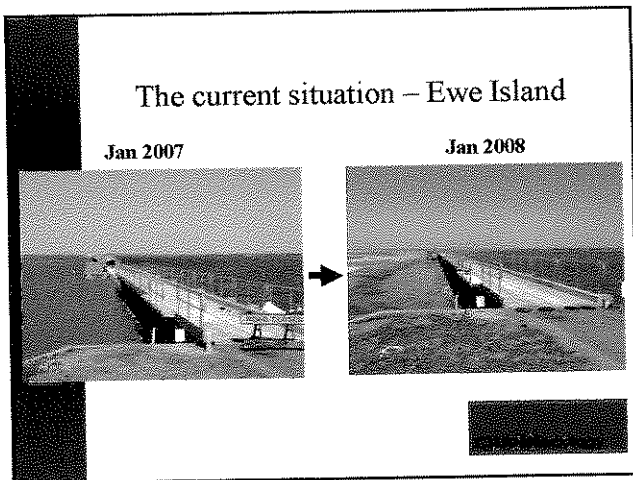
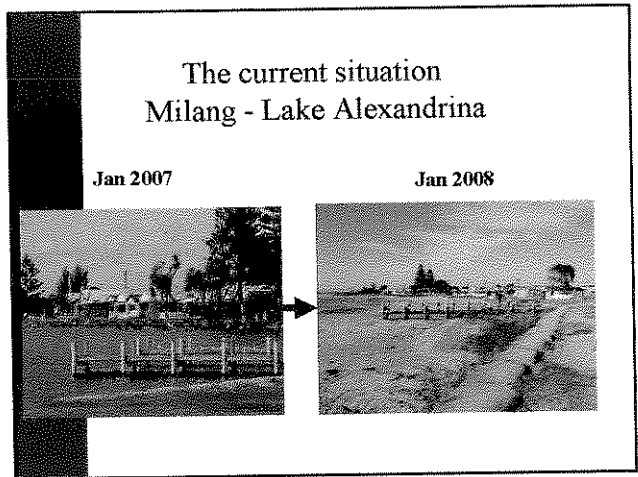
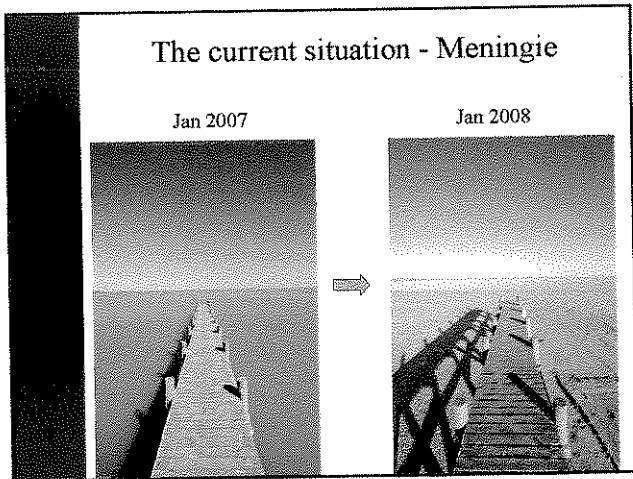
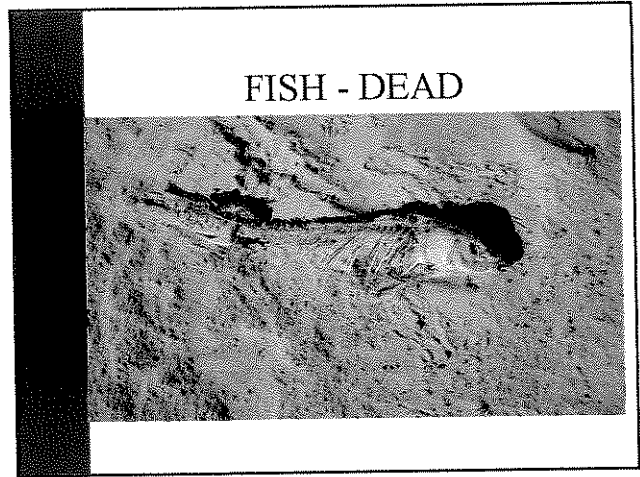
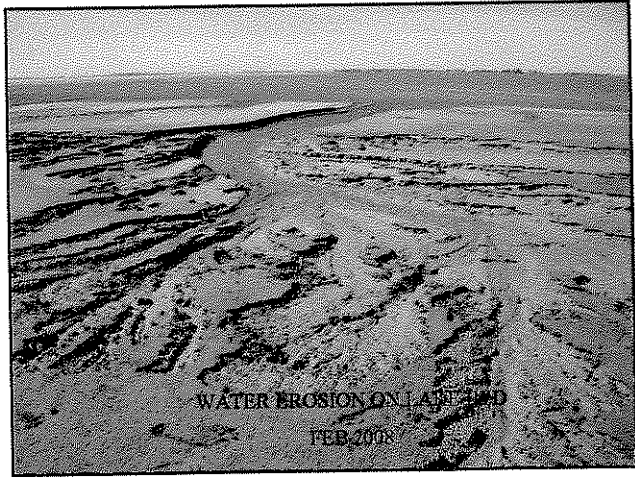


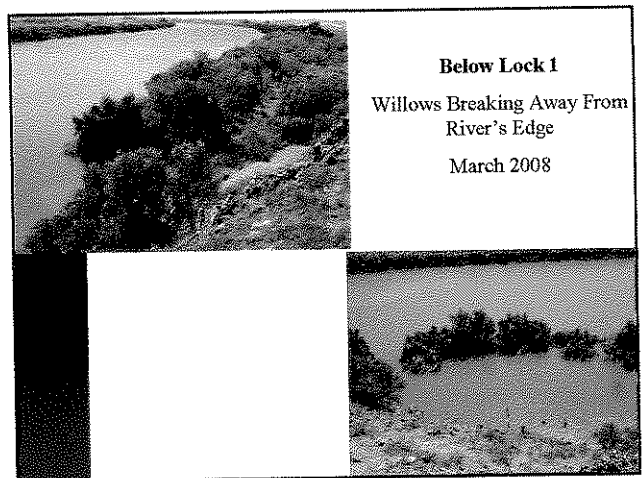
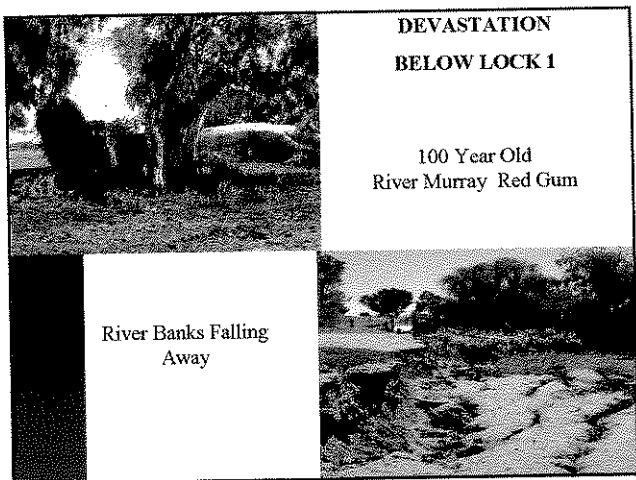
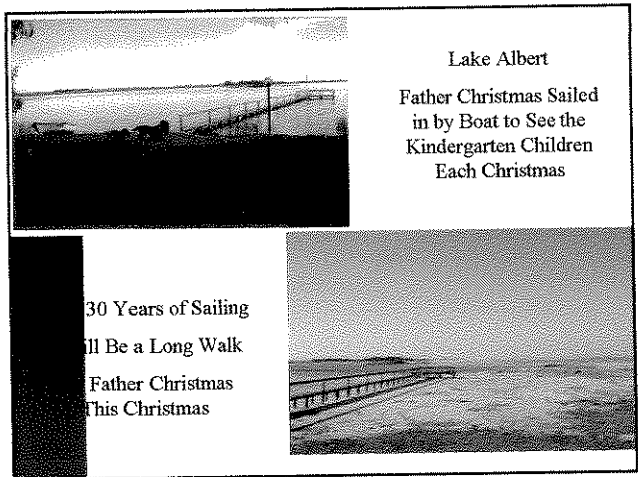
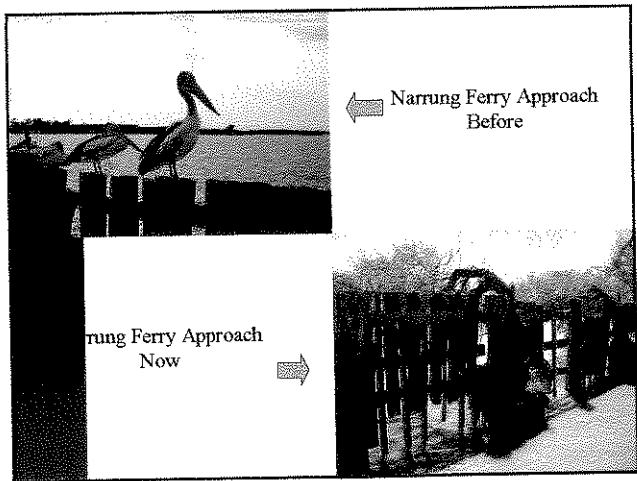
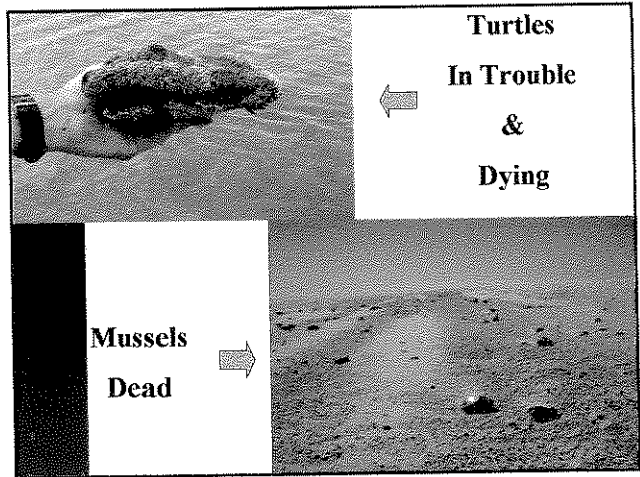
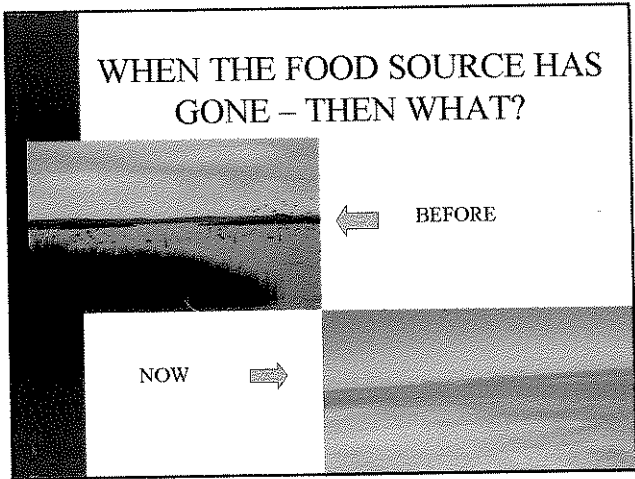
Wind blowing sand on the lake bed.

March 2008

The lake bed changes daily with the impact from the winds.







Complete Independent Audit of All Water Extractions Stored, Above & Below Ground

Our River Resources have been Over Allocated.

We Have a Moral Responsibility to Ensure Equity Water for All.

Need Management Flows As Well As Environmental Flows.

The Murray Mouth Must Remain Open.

I Am a Farmer Still. But I Know That If We Do Not Look After Our Water & Our Environment Now, There Will Be No Future.

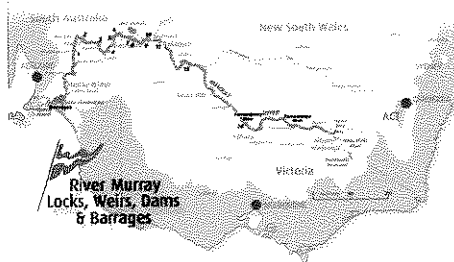
Our Rivers Are Dying. We Have Had Many Warnings.

This May Well Be Our Last Warning

What Legacy Do We Leave Our Future Generations

Our National Water Plan Will Be Too Late.

**The Rivers Haven't Failed Us
We Have All Failed The Rivers
No More Extractions-Diversions**



Acknowledgements

- CLLAMMecology Research Cluster Partners
- Meningie, Narrung & Raukkan communities
- A Fresh History of the Lakes –Wellington to the Murray Mouth 1800's to 1935 – Terry Sim & Kerri Muller
- Kathryn Rothe - Mannum to Wellington LAP
- Shane Strudwick – Discover Murray