

SENATE ENQUIRY INTO WATER MANAGEMENT IN THE COORONG AND LOWER LAKES

1d Any other related matters

Mayor Kim McHugh of the Alexandrina Council is requesting 250 Gl of fresh water to be provided to the Lakes as soon as possible, and this request is echoed loudly around the communities which encircle the Lakes.

Currently, putting water into the Lakes and Coorong is seen as unsound because of the evaporation rate, and it is seen as preferable to store water upstream where the temperatures are higher, the atmosphere is dryer, and the evaporation rate is higher.

Currently also the only commercial use of the river is seen to be agriculture/horticulture and the income from boating and tourism is largely overlooked.

Also overlooked is the storage capability of the Lakes as a huge back up reservoir of fresh water for Adelaide. Without this back up of water Adelaide would have been far worse off during the drought of the past few years.

Putting water into the lakes seems to be too hard because it is talked about in terms of huge dollops of water, and people throw up their hands in hopelessness.

Water can be provided if there is any political will, and in small amounts from here and small amounts from there. One idea is that water could be available from future water resource improvements. Currently all increase in water availability is allocated to irrigators. It is time a mechanism is put in place to provide some of this improvement to the environment.

Bureaucratic off-the-cuff language says 'the river is stuffed below Wentworth', which means it is important to send more fresh water down the river and into the lakes.

It may well be that this can be done comfortably politically by increasing the dilution flow to South Australia. This would have the added benefit of improving the quality of water to all towns and Adelaide, before it empties into the lakes.

At the moment I believe it is important not to take any actions which are irreversible. This means no weir below Wellington, and no salt water. Climate change may in the future change these decisions. For the moment the whole river needs to be managed with the maximum flexibility to ensure a healthy working river, rather than for maximum production with its salinity by-product.

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