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**SENATOR THE HON IAN CAMPBELL**  
Minister for the Environment and Heritage  
**THE HON PETER McGAURAN MP**  
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

The Hon Gail Gago MLC  
Minister for Environment and Conservation  
Parliament House  
ADELAIDE SA 5000

7 DEC 2006

Dear Minister *Gail*,

Thank you for your letter of 23 May 2006 seeking approval for removal of the 40,000 megalitre per annum limit on releases from the Upper South East Dryland and Salinity Flood Management Programme to the Coorong.

The Australian Government is also concerned about increasing salinity levels in the Coorong's lagoons and the consequent impacts on ecological systems. We agree that it is appropriate to look at flows into the Coorong system from the Upper South East and how these could be better managed to improve the ecological health of this internationally important wetland.

We agree to the removal of the limit on the volume of releases from the Upper South East into the Coorong. We recommend, however, that South Australia undertakes the following actions prior to implementing any change:

- o implements a monitoring program to monitor the hydrological and ecological impacts of Upper South East water flows into the Coorong; and
- o develops a flow release/management strategy that is complementary to the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Icon Site Environmental Management Plan (developed through the Murray-Darling Basin Commission Living Murray Initiative).

We consider that all the relevant conditions on the Upper South East Dryland Salinity and Flood Management Programme resulting from the original assessments under the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974*, have now been finalised or are being addressed through the contract arrangements under the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

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You should be aware that if there are major changes to the programme or if substantial new elements are added, a referral may be required under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Also, given the repeal of the *Australian Heritage Commission Act*, there is no role for the Australian Heritage Commission. The Australian Heritage Commission was a party to the Cultural Heritage Management Plan which was required to be developed as a condition under the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974*. However, we would expect that the Programme Board would ensure it is well informed on relevant heritage issues, including indigenous heritage issues, prior to making decisions.

Thank you for referring this matter to us. We look forward to a continuing productive partnership with the South Australian Government in restoring the ecological health of this important wetland.

Yours sincerely

IAN CAMPBELL

PETER McGAURAN