

## Office of the Chief Executive

TRIM Ref: 2018/21175

Assoc. Prof. David Paton AM

ADELAIDE SA 5005

Dear Dr Paton

Thank you for your recent letter received on 8 April 2018 regarding the implementation of the South East Flows Restoration Project (SEFRP) and your submission on the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) provided on 3 November 2017. The MDBA is committed to a rigorous and transparent implementation of the SDL adjustment mechanism and we value your feedback.

As you would be aware, the SEFR project has been notified as a supply measure under the SDLAM by the government of South Australia and as such the design and implementation of the project is their responsibility. It is appropriate, therefore that any questions about the specifics of the project and its implementation should be addressed to the relevant areas of the SA government.

As with other Basin state governments, the SA government has committed to provide information to stakeholders and communities about how they can contribute to the project, which must be completed by 2024. It is recognised that expert local knowledge will be integral to the project's success, and community involvement will allow understanding, and wherever possible, mitigation of any adverse impacts before the project is fully implemented.

As your submission on the SDLAM determination last November makes specific reference to one of their projects, we have made your submission available to the SA government for them to respond to your concerns. Similarly, we will also pass on your letter to them and encourage them to contact you to provide up to date information on the SEFR project.

It is important to note that the Limits of Change under the Basin Plan should not be confused with the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) under the Ramsar Convention referred to in your letter. The MDBA does not have any direct role in setting the LACs for Ramsar sites.

As you know, under the SDL Adjustment Mechanism, the Authority's role is to assess the package of measures agreed by the Basin Officials Committee and propose an SDL adjustment. With regard to the SEFRP, it should be noted that Schedule 6 of the Plan recognises that, because of its unique nature, environmental values at the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) are not comparable to other water dependent ecosystems within the Basin. The MDBA default modelling method protects the values of the CLLMM site through specific provisions that place limits on the changes allowable to key environmental values of the CLLMM. In effect, the MDBA cannot accept any SDLAM result that breaches these limits of change for the CLLMM site (unlike the 5% limit of change applied to most other sites).

So contrary to your accusation of the MDBA being “complicit in allowing such extreme changes to a Wetland of International Importance”, the MDBA through Schedule 6 of the Basin Plan is safeguarding the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth site.

In response to your question around the ongoing monitoring for the SEFRP, it should be noted that it is a requirement of the assessment process for all SDLAM supply measure projects to include provisions for ongoing ecological monitoring as well as risk assessment and mitigation. As such I can assure you that the SEFR project does include these provisions and it is expected that risk profiles and mitigation strategies will be updated as implementation of the project is undertaken.

I'm aware that there is a diversity of opinions regarding what the appropriate range for salinity values in the CLLMM site should be and the source of the nutrients for recent algal blooms. It is my understanding that the SA Government is hosting a workshop on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2018 involving experts from the science community and water resource managers to debate these issues. I would encourage you to participate in this forum so that your views can be well represented alongside those of others to inform future management of this important area including the implementation of the SEFRP.

Your passionate commitment to the ecological values of the Coorong and Lower Lakes is well known and I appreciate your bringing these issues to my attention, and hope that you will continue to do so.

Yours sincerely

Phillip Glyde

19 August 2018