

ATT: Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on
Environment and Communications
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27th February 2019

RE: Inquiry into the Water Amendment (Purchase Limit Repeal) Bill 2019

Dear Committee,

The Conservation Council of South Australia (Conservation SA) welcomes the opportunity to make a response in relation to the Inquiry into the Water Amendment (purchase limit repeal) Bill 2019.

Conservation SA is an independent, non-profit and strictly non-party political peak body organisation representing more than 60 of South Australia's environment and conservation organisations. Conservation SA has been a strong advocate for the protection of nature and biodiversity, and the promotion and uptake of sustainable practices in South Australia since 1971.

We strongly welcome this review. It is timely and needed. In simple terms, if the supply measures fail to produce the required recovery of environmental water, buyback is needed as an important tool to get the Basin Plan back on track.

Direct purchase of water licences from willing sellers is the most efficient use of public funds to restore water for river and wetland health. More water for our river systems is critical to prevent ecological disasters such as the recent Darling River fish kills.

Taxpayers expect the \$13b investment of public funds to achieve the best outcome for the Murray-Darling Basin long term health and resilience.

Economic modelling and applied research has repeatedly shown that reducing water available for irrigation has not to date had a strong negative impact on agricultural production and associated employment.

There is generous public funding available to assist the irrigation industry to be more efficient in water use. The Basin Plan also included financial support for regional communities to adjust to the changes.

The Conservation Council of SA strongly supports this amendment to ensure the 1500 GL cap on voluntary water buybacks through the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office is repealed.

We strongly support the Water Amendment (Purchase Limit Repeal) Bill 2019 and recommend that it be passed without delay.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. Please do not hesitate to contact me on _____ or _____ should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Craig Wilkins

Chief Executive