

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 140
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 4
Program: Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO)
Topic: Gippsland Lakes
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Question Date: 14 March 2017
Question Type: Written

Senator Rice asked:

I understand that proposal could return the Lakes to the condition they were in in the 1960-70s, and hopefully recover some of the damage caused by rising salinity since 2008. Will the new review be setting out objectives for the management of the Lakes like that one?

Answer:

No. The Gippsland Lakes were first listed as a Ramsar site in 1982, and the Ecological Character Description of the site at that time establishes a benchmark for the assessment of change in ecological character. Ongoing management of the Gippsland Lakes, and other Ramsar sites, recognises and supports existing wise use of the sites by a range of users including commercial and recreational use.

If the review finds that there has been a notifiable change in ecological character, then a Response Strategy will be developed which will set the management objectives to address this change. There are two possible outcomes – either the site's ecological character can be restored to that at the time of listing or such restoration is neither possible nor feasible.

In the first case, management objectives will be framed to achieve restoration that reverses the change to its original condition at listing. In the second case, a new ecological character will be established and management objectives will be set to ensure the maintenance of this new ecological character.