

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

We thank you for the opportunity to put before you our submission as follows.

The Alexandrina Council is strongly opposed to the construction of a pipeline from the Goulburn River to Sugarloaf Reservoir.

The River Murray is dying from the bottom up, putting at risk the most significant food production and economic region in Australia that supports about 40% of the country's agriculture.

Past meetings between this Council and the Federal Minister, Peter Garrett have been encouraging in the knowledge and passion he has for the environment, together with his intimate awareness and appreciation of the vital role the lower River Murray lakes and Coorong play in ensuring a healthy river system.

Here at the end of the river we are feeling the pain of all the mismanagement upstream, and we have a national obligation to sound the alarm.

It is in our view time for the management of the Murray Darling Basin to be free of State politics.

The simple task for this inquiry is to assess the failing health of the lower River Murray, lakes and wetlands and to take strong action in denying further diversions to distant growing population centres. Those centres must recognise that limited resources must be the main consideration in determining whether populations can grow. Melbourne's focus has to be on water conservation and re-use.

The Alexandrina Council will continue with its strong campaign to ensure ecological health is sustained in the RAMSAR wetlands of Lakes Alexandrina, Albert and the Coorong.

Our Mayor, Kym McHugh said at a recent public rally, "If the Federal Government can act swiftly to address the national financial crisis, surely they can act swiftly to save the lower lakes and Coorong from an ecological, social and economic disaster."

We await the Inquiry's decision to deny this ill conceived proposal for this pipeline at a time of national crisis.

Yours Faithfully

John Coombe
Chief Executive
Alexandrina Council