



MURRAY **FUTURES**

Lower Lakes & Coorong Recovery

Community Consultation Report
The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth:
Directions for a Healthy Future

June 2009



Government of
South Australia

WATER  GOOD

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Executive Summary

The South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) is developing a Long Term Plan for the Coorong, Murray Mouth and Lower Lakes (CLLMM) region in partnership with the community, scientists and industry. This is part of the South Australian Government's \$610million Murray Futures program, funded by the Australian Government's Water for the Future program. The purpose of the plan is to support post-drought recovery and develop a sustainable future for the region in a future of increased climate variability. The plan will encompass the environmental, social, cultural and economic values that are important to the region. It is being developed over three stages over the course of the year. The final plan will be completed in October.

This *Community Consultation Report* provides an overview of community comment on the *Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth: Directions for a Healthy Future* document. The *Directions* document was developed by the CLLMM Project Team to provide a basis for discussion on development of the Long Term Plan.

During April to June 2009, the CLLMM Project Team conducted a community consultation process. This was designed to provide a variety of opportunities for community members and organisations to contribute their ideas about the *Directions* document. This community input will be integral to the process of developing the preliminary Long Term Plan, expected to be released for public comment in July.

The objectives of this report are:

- To meet funding agreement requirements with the Australian Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) for the *Feasibility Study for Long Term Management of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth*.
- To provide evidence that a diligent, transparent and effective process of consultation and processing of comments has occurred.
- To describe how the *Community Consultation Plan for the Long Term Plan for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth* was put into action.
- To describe how the ideas and comments received from the public were processed.
- To provide a summary of all comments received during the period of public consultation.
- To document written comments from consultation meetings and community submissions relevant to *Directions for a Healthy Future*.
- To describe how community input is being used during the transition from the *Directions* document to the Draft Long Term Plan (Version 1).

The CLLMM Project Team was guided through the consultation process by the *Community Engagement Strategy*. The goal of this strategy is to optimise community engagement with both the development and implementation of the Long Term Plan. The Project Team received ideas and comments from a large number of interested community stakeholders, through a variety of consultation mechanisms:

- 212 people in total attended the *Community Information Sessions* held in 5 locations throughout the region.
- 93 people participated in *Targeted Meetings* with 9 key organisations.
- 67 people commented through one of 9 *Listening Posts* set up throughout the region.

- 75 written submissions were received - 64 from individual community members, and 11 from organisations.
- 236 people contributed through an on-line survey.

The *Community Information Sessions* were widely advertised. These meetings were carefully designed so that people could gain information relevant to them about the issues incorporated in the *Directions* document. Specialist panels were provided to respond to questions asked. A range of opportunities were provided for participants to input their ideas at the meetings. Participants were also informed about how to submit written comment to the Project Team. Responses to a survey distributed and collected at 3 of these meetings indicate participant satisfaction with the structure, organisation and general quality of the Community Information Sessions.

Targeted Meetings were conducted by organisations with interests and expertise which significantly relate to the *Directions* document. Senior CLLMM Project Team members gave a presentation, and contributed to each of these meetings. Comments arising from meeting discussions were documented and processed.

Consultation activities were further extended in the region through the use of *Listening Posts*. These booths were available for 2-4 weeks, often in smaller communities. Community members were able to pick up the *Directions* document and related information at each Listening Post. CLLMM Project Team members attended the Listening Posts at advertised times to enable the general public to discuss issues or present ideas in relation to the *Directions* document.

The on-line survey was developed by the Project Team in association with Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science at the University of South Australia. This provided a further avenue for people to contribute to the development of the Long Term Plan.

Throughout the consultation process, community members could download the *Directions for a Healthy Future* document and other relevant factual information, from the DEH website. This site also provided information about meeting and Listening Post times and locations, and encouraged written comment.

All information gathered from the community by these varied means was then processed. Material was organised ready for retrieval, grouped according to particular aspects of the *Directions* document. At the time of writing, information continues to be processed, assessed and integrated as the first version of the Long Term Plan is being written.

This report provides a detailed overview of comments which directly related to *Directions for a Healthy Future*. These are presented in relation to:

- Core Elements (*Directions*, pages 12-13).
- Suggestions for a more complete *Directions* document.
- Management Actions (*Directions*, pages 32-44)
- Map 1 (*Directions*, page 21)
- Proposed improvements to words, sentences and paragraphs.

Comments were received which addressed a range of other issues. In particular, some proposed major engineering projects (e.g. north to south pipelines, canals, channels and twin lakes projects). Others commented on the relationship between issues raised in the *Directions* document and other related plans (eg. the Ramsar Agreement) and organisations (e.g. the Murray Darling Basin Authority). These are noted, but not covered in detail, in this report.

Glossary

CLLMM	Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth
CLLMM Project Team	The CLLMM Project Team in DEH
DEH	Department for Environment and Heritage (South Australian Government)
DEWHA	Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (Australian Government)
<i>Directions for a Healthy Future</i> or the <i>Directions</i> document	<i>Murray Futures, Lower Lakes and Coorong Recovery. The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth: Directions for a Healthy Future</i> (May 2009).
Long Term Plan	The plan being developed as part of the <i>Feasibility Study for Long Term Management of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth.</i>
DWLBC	Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (South Australian Government)

1. Introduction

This Community Consultation Report describes the processes used to gather public comment on the document entitled *Murray Futures, Lower Lakes and Coorong Recovery. The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth: Directions for a Healthy Future* (May 2009).

The *Directions* document (as it is generally referred to in this Report) was produced by the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Project Team in the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH), South Australia. It was written to provide a stimulus for a range of individuals and organisations to raise questions and express their views. It also provided a useful framework for gathering, assessing and ordering community comments. Where appropriate, these will be integrated into the Long Term Plan for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth.

This Report demonstrates how the CLLMM Project Team distributed the *Directions* document, ensured that the relevant communities knew about the consultation and were provided diverse opportunities to participate in the consultation process.

Once received, comments were summarised and categorised according to key areas covered in the *Directions* document. This ensured participant comments were captured and that all ideas were assessed. Where feasible, these ideas will be incorporated into the ongoing development of the Long Term Plan by the CLLMM Project Team.

Objectives for this Community Consultation Report are:

- To meet funding agreement requirements with the Australian Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) for the *Feasibility Study for Long Term Management of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth*.
- To provide evidence that a diligent, transparent and effective process of consultation and processing of comments has occurred.
- To describe how the *Community Consultation Plan for the Long Term Plan for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth* was put into action.
- To describe how the ideas and comments received were processed.
- To provide a summary of all comments received during the period of public consultation.
- To document written comments from consultation meetings and community submissions relevant to *Directions for a Healthy Future*.
- To describe how community input is being used during the transition from the *Directions* document to the Draft Long Term Plan (Version 1).

2. Background to the Community Consultation

The Coorong, Murray Mouth and Lower Lakes (CLLMM) region is an ecological asset of state, national and international importance. The Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site has been designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. This recognises its essential habitat function for migratory birds, including threatened and endangered species.

The region is of immeasurable cultural significance to its Traditional Owners, the Ngarrindjeri.

The health of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth is of vital social and economic importance to the generations of farmers, fishing families and others who have established homes and livelihoods in the region.

Reduced River Murray inflows combined with heavy extraction demands and drought have taken a grave toll on Lakes Albert and Alexandrina and the Coorong in respect of increasing salinity and the exposure of acid sulfate soils.

DEH, as part of the Murray Futures Project funded by the Commonwealth Government, is working to develop a Long Term Plan for the CLLMM region. The Long Term Plan will detail remediation strategies to restore ecological integrity and function to the system. It will also include strategies to develop resilience in the face of climate change, predicted inflows and other variable environmental factors.

3. Consultation Methodology

3.1 Community Engagement Strategy

A Community Engagement Strategy for the Development of the Long Term Plan for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (June 2009) has been developed. The goal of the strategy is to effectively engage the community in the development and implementation of the Long Term Plan. It also aims to ensure that affected communities and individuals have a good understanding of relevant science and management options.

The Strategy recognises that local communities have unique knowledge and expertise that could assist with the development of a viable Long Term Plan for the CLLMM. Therefore, it was decided to engage with the community early in the process, to ensure that these competencies were recognised and understood by DEH staff and systematically considered and applied throughout the development process. Ultimately, the Community Engagement Strategy sought to ensure the widest and strongest community input available.

During the consultation process, people were specifically invited to provide comment on:

1. Whether the Core Elements of *Directions for a Healthy Future* include the issues the community believes need to be addressed.
2. The accuracy of information contained in the *Directions* document.
3. The completeness of information provided in the document.
4. The appropriateness of the environmental management options presented.
5. Any environmental management options not included in the document.

The company *Meeting Success* was engaged to provide community consultation services to the Long Term Plan development process. Meeting Success worked collaboratively with the CLLMM Project Team to add value to their work within the region and its diverse communities. This document describes and overviews consultation activities including:

- Five (5) Community Information Sessions.
- Responses from Community Information Session feedback surveys.
- Nine (9) Targeted Consultation Meetings.
- Listening Posts located throughout the CLLMM Region (particularly in smaller communities).
- Other means of connecting the public with the *Directions* document, including the internet and mass media.
- The management of comments received from the variety of consultation processes and community stakeholders.
- A compilation of direct references to *Directions for a Healthy Future* made in throughout the consultation process.

3.2 Promotion of Consultation Opportunities

Media Coverage

Radio and print media covered issues and activities related to the *Directions* document and the community consultation process. Wherever possible, mass media was used to stimulate community interest in participating in consultation meetings and/or providing written comment.

A list of all radio and print media which included the key words 'directions', and 'Long Term Plan' were reviewed. Those pertinent to the consultation process are provided in Appendix 2.

DEH Website

The *Directions for a Healthy Future* document, post card and other relevant materials were available on the DEH website for the duration of the consultation phase of the project. Community members and organisations were encouraged to make written comment to the CLLMM Project Team through:

- The website - www.murrayfutures.sa.gov.au
- Email - cllmm@deh.sa.gov.au
- Free call 1800 226 709 during business hours

- Free post to:
Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Projects Team
Department for Environment and Heritage
Reply Paid 1047
Adelaide SA 5001

4. Community Responses

The following table outlines communications from the general public, in response to DEH promotion of the consultation process:

Number of phone calls to LTP hotline	45
Number of emails to cllmm@deh.sa.gov.au from unique individuals	63
Number of Community Information Session registrations via phone or email	28
Number of submissions received by email	56
Number of submissions received by letter	19
Total number of submissions received	75
Number of unique visitors to the Murray Futures website	634
Number of visits to the Murray Futures website	1069
Number of page views on the Murray Futures website	5095
Number of unique visitors to the CLLMM website	1043
Number of visits to the CLLMM website	1630
Number of page views on the CLLMM website	5143
Members on Stakeholder Database	1456

4.1 Community Information Sessions

These Community Information Sessions were planned and executed as set out in the document *Community Consultation Plan for the Long Term Plan for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth*.

The purpose of the Community Information Sessions was to add value to the *Directions for a Health Future* document, through:

- Ensuring stakeholders were well informed, by providing them with the information necessary to access, understand and respond to the *Directions* document.
- Providing a range of opportunities for community members to participate in discussion and lodge comments directed at moving toward a viable Long Term Plan for the CLLMM.

A panel of five or six specialist resource people attended each session to provide information. The panel was drawn from the following:

Brenton Gear	DEH	Acting Director,
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		Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Projects
Russell Seaman	DEH	Environmental Manager
Hon Dean Brown	Drought Reference Group	Premier's Special Advisor on Drought
Paul Harvey	Private Consultant	Former Manager, River Murray Program, DWLBC
Dr Murray Townsend	DEH	Manager Coastal Management
Bill Paterson	South Australian Murray Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board	Presiding Member
Piers Brissenden	DEH	Assistant Director, Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Projects
Andrew Beal	DWLBC	Chair, South Australia Water Security Technical Group
Peter Alexander	DEH	Regional Conservator, Mt Gambier

Community Information Sessions were advertised in newspapers, the DEH website and the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Project (DEH) email Bulletin. A copy of these advertisements are included in Appendix 3.

The agenda for meetings at Meningie, Murray Bridge, Goolwa and Adelaide was largely consistent. However, the process was modified over time, based on participant feedback. The outcome was that there was progressively less input from DEH staff and more time allowed for interaction - between community members themselves; and between community members and the specialist panel.

At the request of community members there was some variation to the agenda at the Milang Community Information Session. At the Milang Session, more time was allowed for discussion and community members (rather than DEH staff) facilitated small groups. As a result, fewer DEH staff attended the Milang meeting than the other four meetings.

Consultation Agenda

The panel of specialists was introduced early in each meeting prior to a short presentation over-viewing the *Directions for a Healthy Future* document (see Appendix 5).

Participants formed groups of eight with a trained DEH facilitator. The task of the group facilitator was to write questions on large Post-it notes. These questions were sorted and answered by the specialist panel.

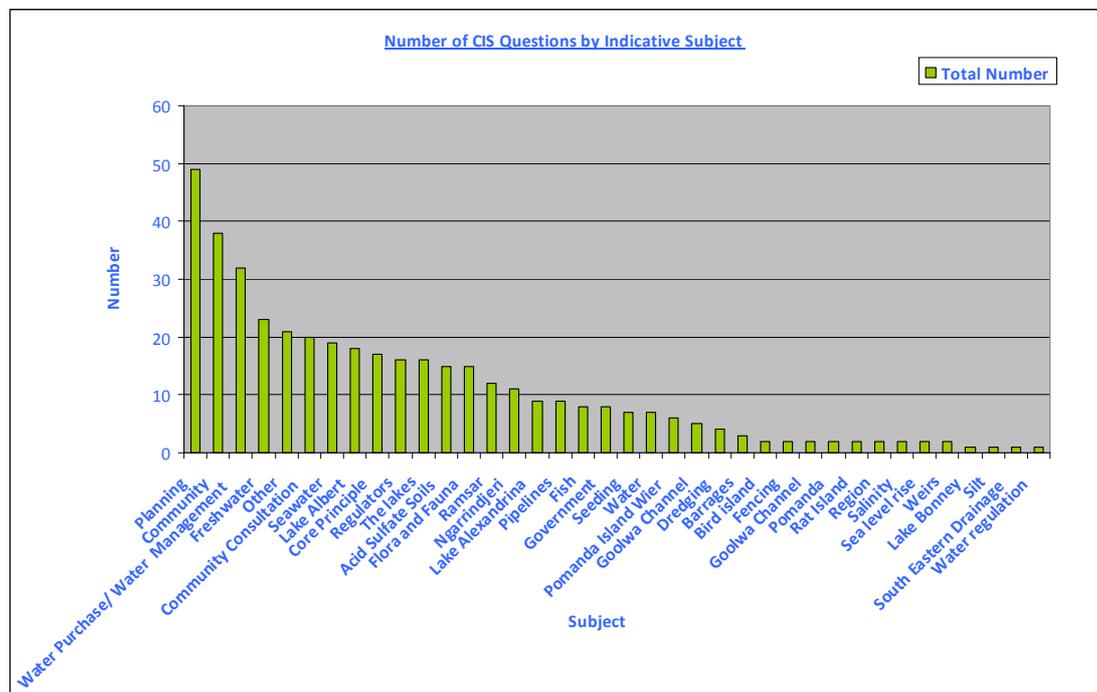
As group facilitators wrote questions, these were continuously collected and placed on a wall. Specialist panel members gathered and discussed who would be the most appropriate panel member to answer each question. Similar or related questions were grouped together. Duplicated or overlapping answers were avoided.

Following the small groups, the meeting re-gathered and the specialists answered questions in an open manner.

DEH provided a light meal or refreshments at the end of each Community Information Session. Community members were invited to stay after the meeting to informally discuss issues and/or ask questions of the specialists. Many members of the public accepted this invitation.

This meeting format allowed community members the opportunity to ask questions, hear answers from people with specialist knowledge, and engage with them further. This format successfully achieved its goal of sharing information. A large number of questions (410 in all) were answered. (Appendix 4 lists the wording of each question submitted to the specialist panel). Panel members and community members generally responded favourably to this format. Results of the feedback surveys on the Session process are included in Appendix 6.

The broad indicative categories of questions have been summarised. Below is a graph which groups all questions raised at Community Information Sessions under indicative subject headings:



People planning to attend a Community Information Session were invited to pre-register via email at clmm@deh.sa.gov.au or to register through a DEH 1800 number hotline. Registrations were sought to ensure that venues had sufficient capacity, there were sufficient group facilitators and the catering was adequate. Registrations were also accepted on entry, and all registrants were offered:

- A hard copy of the document *Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth: Directions for a Healthy Future*.
- A paper summary of the main PowerPoint presentation on the *Directions* document.
- A meeting feedback survey (implemented at three of the five meetings).
- A simple A4 sheet so that a *headline* comment could be recorded with additional details, and handed to DEH staff as a comment at the meeting.

- Postcards inviting those attending to subscribe to DEH CLLMM email Bulletin.
- The option for people to provide an email address so that they could receive CLLMM project updates by email.

Participants were able to make comments by a variety of means including:

- At the meeting, via *headlines and details* pro-forma.
- By email or email with attachments.
- By speaking with a DEH staff member at a community Listening Post and having comments recorded on request.

The distribution arrangements for the *Directions* hard copy document (43 pages) are detailed in Appendix 1. The *Directions* document was also made available through the DEH website from Monday 4 May and in hard copy from Friday 8 May. The first Community Information Session was held on Tuesday 12 May.

Community Information Sessions Conducted

Meningie

Meningie Football Club, Tuesday 12 May, 7.00pm-9.30pm
50 registered attendees

Murray Bridge

Murray Bridge Town Hall, Thursday 14 May, 7.00pm-9.30pm
22 registered attendees

Goolwa

Goolwa Community Hall; Saturday 16 May, 2.00pm-4.30pm
52 registered attendees

Milang

Milang Community Hall, Tuesday 19 May, 7.00pm-9.30pm
56 registered attendees

Adelaide

Arkaba Hotel, Glen Osmond Road, Fullarton, Adelaide Thursday 21 May 7.00- 9.30pm
32 registered attendees

A total of 212 people attended the 5 sessions.

4.2 Feedback on Community Information Sessions

Meeting feedback sheets were widely distributed at the Murray Bridge, Goolwa and Adelaide Community Information Sessions. The feedback sheet was not prepared in time for the Meningie Meeting; it was decided not to ask people to complete a feedback sheet at Milang, due to the late finish of the session. (Feedback surveys were not utilised at Targeted Meetings, because the format of these meetings was different to the process used for Community Information Sessions).

Meeting	In attendance	No of surveys returned
Murray Bridge	22	7
Goolwa	52	15
Adelaide	32	13
Total	106	35

The feedback survey is reproduced, and its findings summarised, in Appendix 6.

Responses to the survey were generally positive. More than 80% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with positive statements about - meeting presentations, small group workshops, questions to the specialist panel and general feedback. A review of all comments written on the feedback sheets indicates that of those who responded, significant affirmation was given to the meeting procedures adopted.

The following is a short list of respondents' feedback:

Comments or suggested improvements in the presentations:

- Less technical jargon.
- More linked to the document pages.

Comments or suggested improvements on the workshops:

- Include Ngarrindjeri rep on panel and youth input.
- Tighter control of discussion groups.
- Frustrated that money is being spent for innumerable talks and discussion papers — time goes on and nothing seems to be done.
- More time needed.

What were the most satisfying aspects at the meeting?

- Discussion time with sticky notes.
- Well done — keep up the info.
- Ability to get some detail.
- Good quality staff.
- Great to have clear explanations from experts.
- Very lucky to have such a broad range of participants.
- Facilitator helped to get a broader perspective.
- Opportunity to learn other viewpoints.
- Hearing others' concerns.
- Experts from various fields.

How should we do things differently next time?

- Tighter group meeting control.
- Engaging youth.
- More publicity.
- Leave out introductory explanation of DEH work.
- Should hear from people/farmers/irrigators/businesses affected by the crisis.
- Was OK as is.

4.3 Targeted Meetings

Seven (7) targeted consultations were held. *Targeted Meetings* are defined as consultation with existing organisations who meet for purposes related to the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth recovery. CLLMM Project Team negotiated with officers from these organisations to provide an opportunity to:

- Distribute *Directions for a Healthy Future*.
- Provide an overview presentation at a scheduled meeting of the organisation. (An overview of the PowerPoint presentation on the *Directions* document is in Appendix 8.)
- Allow time for discussion.
- Invite written comment from the organisation or individuals in the organisation.

Meetings were attended by a range of DEH officials. The CLLMM Projects Director, Acting Director or Assistant Director attended Targeted Meetings and provided the overview presentation of the *Directions* document. The Manager, CLLMM Projects Policy and Planning participated in most Targeted Meetings.

Targeted Meetings were held between 21 April and 4 June and a total of ninety three (93) people attended. Questions, issues and comments raised at these consultation meetings are included in Appendix 7.

Targeted Meetings Conducted

Long Term Plan Reference Group

Mt Lofty House Crafers
Tuesday 21 April

Lower River Murray Drought Reference Group

Murray Bridge Local Government Rooms
Thursday 30 April

Scientific Advisory Group

NPEC Adelaide
Thursday 30 April

Local Government Briefing (Alexandrina Council, Rural City of Murray Bridge)

Coorong District Council
Tuesday 5 May

Long Term Plan Socio Economic Report

Regional Development Office, Murray Bridge
Tuesday 5 May

Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth Icon Site Community Reference Committee

Langhorne Creek Bowling Club
Wednesday 13 May

South Australian Murray Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board

SA NRM Board Office, Mt Barker
Thursday 21 May

4.4 Consultation with Ngarrindjeri

Ongoing meetings have been held between representatives of the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority and government officials.

The State Government is close to finalising a formal Overarching Consultation Agreement with the Ngarrindjeri People in relation to consultation and negotiation on a range of environmental and cultural matters of joint interest. This will include a grant agreement to facilitate input by Ngarrindjeri People into the planning process for the development of the Long Term Plan for the recovery of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth.

4.5 Listening Posts

Listening Posts were provided at public places at advertised times (shopping malls, general stores, community centres and libraries) in the region. The purpose of the Listening Posts was to hear community concerns and to record comments. Listening Post dates were publicised by posters and flyers in local shopping centres, through local media outlets and through local organisations. Listening Posts provided an additional consultation opportunity where individual concerns were heard and recorded. In particular, they provided smaller locations (Langhorne Creek, Strathalbyn and Clayton Bay) with a service.

A Listening Post structure was a Murray Futures' branded cardboard display (similar to a polling booth) holding multiple copies of *Directions for a Healthy Future* and postcards inviting people to sign up to CLLMM email bulletins and explaining how people could access further information (mainly through DEH). Listening Posts remained *in situ* for up to three weeks. They were staffed at advertised times by two CLLMM Project Team members for between two and four hours at a time. Conversation numbers were recorded. Distribution of post cards and *Directions for a Healthy Future* were not recorded but are known to be significantly higher than the conversation rate.

Date	Location	Conversations
May 12	Meningie Community Library, Meningie Area School	6
May 14	Centro Plaza, Murray Bridge	6
May 16	Goolwa Library Foyer	6
May 19	Langhorne Creek General Store	2
May 20	Woolworths Arcade, Strathalbyn	6
May 26	Goolwa Library	20
May 26	Meningie Library	2
May 26	Milang Old Schoolhouse Community Centre	5
May 26	'Sails' Store, Clayton Bay	4
Total		67

4.6 Written Submissions

The *Directions* document was available (both on-line and in hard copy) from Friday 8 May. Opportunities for comment nominally closed at COB on Friday 29 May. The public were invited to provide written comment sent as an email, as email with word attachments, or hard copy (using a free post address or fax).

Seventy three (75) comments were received by Thursday 11 June. Of these, sixty two (64) were individual comments and eleven (11) were from community or other organisations.

A list of people and organisations that contributed comments is available in Appendix 9.

When written comment was received, the contact details supplied were recorded, and a letter or email message acknowledging receipt sent. Comment was provided with a unique identifier and printed and stored in a folder ready for reading.

Following the consultation period comments were processed. Processing included:

- Reading all written comments closely.
- Producing a summary of each comment (in order to reduce the volume of text to a more manageable size).
- Entering this summary into an Access database memo field.
- Entering key words and other key identifier information into a second data base memo field.

Summaries and key identifiers for all written submissions received are in Appendix 10. At the time of writing, this information is in the process of being analysed and considered in depth by the CLLMM Project Team.

An Access data base was used because all comment summaries can be searched for by key words. Related comments can be assembled and assessed by assessors looking at a particular area. Specific references can be readily located for consideration.

The data base provides the means for specialist assessors responsible for the development of the CLLMM Long Term Plan Version 1, to:

- Assess issues raised and ideas presented in their focus area.
- Readily check for suggested text changes in the *Directions* document.

4.7 On-line Survey

An on-line survey was designed as an additional means for the community to have input into the Long Term Plan through giving feedback on the *Directions* document. The on-line feedback will be considered and assessed by the Project Team and where possible will be incorporated into the first version of the Long Term Plan.

The survey was prepared by Ehrenberg-Bass, Institute for Marketing Science at the University of South Australia in association with staff from the Department for Environment and Heritage.

The on-line survey sought to:

- Gauge the level of awareness and knowledge about the *Directions* document.
- Contribute to development of a stakeholder data base.
- Measure the level of support for the development of the Long Term Plan.
- Gather feedback on the issues contained in the *Directions* document.
- Gather feedback on the community engagement activities undertaken.

This survey was available to the public between 12 May and 24 May.

Findings were presented in relation to two populations. One population consisted of people who subscribed to the DEH CLLMM email Bulletins and responded to a specific request. The second population consisted of people who visited the DEH CLLMM website and sought out the survey.

5. Consultation Findings

5.1 Community Feedback on the Directions Document

This section of the Community Consultation Report summarises community comments from Community Information Sessions, Targeted Meetings and Listening Posts which specifically address the criteria listed (*Directions*, page 6).

All other written comments received by email or post in relation to *Directions for a Healthy Future* are being carefully assessed by a range of specialists. The seventy three (75) comments made suggestions aimed at contributing to a positive long term future for the CLLMM. Many of the written comments provided considerable detail, which will be addressed during development of the Long Term Plan.

Relatively few comments addressed particular sentences, paragraphs, sections or appendices of the *Directions* document. At the time of writing, the process of assessing comments both from meetings and written submissions continues. Below is a record of direct comments in relation to the *Directions* document from Community Information Sessions, Targeted Sessions and Listening Posts.

5.2 Comments from Community Information Sessions - 'Post it' Notes

Of the four hundred and ten (410) questions/comments on 'Post-it' notes at Community Information Sessions, fourteen (14) referred directly to the Core Elements listed in *Directions for a Healthy Future*, pages 12-13, or to the *Directions* document by name. These are arranged below under the relevant Core Elements. **The words used remain those provided by people through meeting processes with minor exceptions aimed at increasing clarity.** Each comment is being assessed by the Project Team, along with those derived from the written comments entered into the Access data base. Comments from notes taken at Community Information Sessions and Targeted Meetings are also included below.

Core Element 1: *A responsive management approach based on robust research, adequate monitoring and extensive community involvement*

- Community input - important for community to be listened to and responded to.
- Good communication with feedback to community from submissions.

Core Element 2: *Engagement of the traditional owners - the Ngarrindjeri*

- When will the community be aware of the Ngarrindjeri position on both long and short term planning?
- Important to consult with Ngarrindjeri, but very difficult and different process to engaging general public.

Core Element 3: *Freshwater provided to the Lakes*

- *How* will Core Element 3 become a reality when to date, we've failed to make it a reality?
- How are you going to provide freshwater to the Lower Lakes?
- The belief that 'fresh' is the natural state of the Lakes. And if so - what of the science?
- If Core 3 is satisfied, why is Core 6 necessary?
- Core Principles 3 & 5 based upon our (DEH) preferred option (value judgment).

Core Element 4: *The Murray Mouth open and connecting the Coorong to the sea*

- Include a self flushing flap valve to bring water in to the South Lagoon and exit through the mouth.

Core Element 5: *Accepting viable Lake levels, yet monitoring system connectivity*

- How will system connectivity be maintained, if engineering interventions are being proposed in the immediate future and will remain in place for possibly 5 years or more (Clayton/Pomanda weirs)?
- What is being planned to achieve this?
- This creates short term un-connectivity in system - how will this impact on long term achievements to this goal?

Core Element 6: *Managing localised threats, especially acidification*

No direct questions.

Suggestions for a more complete *Directions* document

Two questions suggested that the *Directions* document was incomplete:

- Is there need for a *worse case scenario* Core Element?
- Is the *Directions* document giving sufficient attention to the economic issues?

5.3 Comments from Community Information Sessions - Meeting Notes

People at the Community Information Sessions often made extra comments about the *Directions* document, which were not written on Post-It notes. These were recorded in meeting notes. Comprehensive notes were taken during each Community Information Session. These were read closely and references to Core Elements extracted.

Core Element 1: *A responsive management approach based on robust research, adequate monitoring and extensive community involvement*

- At the CIS Meningie Paul Harvey (specialist panel member) suggested bathymetry maps should be available on the World Wide Web.

Core Element 2: *Engagement of the Traditional Owners - the Ngarrindjeri*

- Include a Ngarrindjeri person on the panel of specialists.

Core Element 3: *Freshwater provided to the Lakes*

- Policy mechanisms, for example Murray Darling Basin Authority, provide fresh water for environmental purposes.
- Purchasing water entitlements (temporary and permanent water).

Core Element 4: *The Murray Mouth open and connecting the Coorong to the sea*

- Open mouth and flushing.
- Goolwa CIS proposal for Murray Mouth breakwaters. Already rejected in previous DWLBC Report. Should there be another review?
- Pumping hyper-saline out of South Lagoon.
- South Eastern Drains diversions.

Core Element 5: *Accepting variable Lake levels, yet maintaining system connectivity*

- Barrage operations to establish variable Lake levels.
- Reduce reliance upon Lakes for extractive purposes so that Lake levels can be lowered periodically.
- Provision of fish passage structures.

Core Element 6: *Managing localised threats, especially acidification*

- Acidification: bioremediation, pooling fresh, pooling salt.
- Fencing stock and rabbit control.
- Murray Bridge CIS Fencing emerged as an unclear issue. When will (should) fencing go in? Where in relation to the Lakes shoreline? At whose expense? Different kinds of fencing?
- Localised weed control.
- Wind erosion.
- Ecological refuges.
- Foxes killing birds on Bird Island was an issue raised at Goolwa CIS.
- Foxes killing tortoises on Lakes Shores at Milang meeting.
- A proposal at Goolwa CIS to use (promote, facilitate, support) the Murray River as a (nature link?) corridor, through Local Action Planning funding.

Suggestions for a more complete *Directions* document (mostly social and economic issues)

- Managing cars on Lake beds. (CIS Milang)
- Issues of mental health and economic development should be included.

- How to incorporate social and economic sciences into the Long Term Plan? (Milang CIS)
- How to engage young people into Long Term Planning processes?

5.4 Comments from Targeted Sessions & Listening Posts

The following is a summary of the key comments made which were related to the *Directions Document*.

Core Element 1: *A responsive management approach based on robust research, adequate monitoring and extensive community involvement*

Research

- Mosley and Seaman's seawater and acid soils research should be made available on web.

Community Involvement

- Fencing and funding of community groups.
- Fencing and direct consultation with stockowners whose property fronts the Lower Lakes.
- Use school newsletters as a communications means with parents.
- Use radio to disseminate information.
- Consider using church groups and industry groups as tools for consultation.
- It may be difficult to consult when people feel they are in a crisis.
- Scientific information needs to be readily available to community groups.
- Planting trials for native plants which will withstand climate change — develop a nursery with local schools, Ngarrindjeri or other groups.

Core Element 2: *Engagement of the Traditional Owners - the Ngarrindjeri*

- Ngarrindjeri Nation Sea Country Plan integrated into LTP.

Core Element 3: *Fresh water provided to the Lakes*

- Policy mechanisms, for example MDBA, provide fresh water for environmental purposes.
- Purchasing water entitlements (temporary and permanent water).

Core Element 4: *The Murray Mouth open and connecting the Coorong to the sea*

- Open mouth and flushing.
- Goolwa CIS proposal for Murray Mouth breakwaters. Audience says already rejected in previous DWLBC Report. Should there be another review?
- Pumping hyper-saline out of South Lagoon.
- SE drain diversions.

Core Element 5: *Accepting variable Lake levels, yet maintaining system connectivity*

- Barrage operations to establish variable Lake levels.
- Reduce reliance upon Lakes for extractive purposes so that Lake levels can be lowered periodically.
- Provision of fish passage structures.
- Re-vegetation for the provision of habitat for key species.

Core Element 6: *Managing localised threats, especially acidification*

- Acidification: bioremediation, pooling fresh, pooling salt.
- Fencing stock out, rabbit control.

- Complexities of fencing, shifting shore lines due to wind, fencing and seeding relationship and timing of fencing installation.
- Availability of fencing materials for re-use at Loxton or Berri.
- Funding of fencing, and funding for community groups.
- Localised weed control.
- Wind erosion (see fencing).
- Ecological refuges.

Suggestions for a more complete *Directions* document (mostly social and economic issues)

- Managing cars on Lake beds. (CIS Milang)
- Integration of the Long Term Plan with other plans including Mt Lofty Ranges Water Management Plans.
- Consider using alternative words to “drought” in documents. (There is no drought in Lower Lakes.)
- Final time frame of Long Term Plan is too far out — and not connected with people’s interests.
- Importance of high level leadership in managing issues (for example, the Premier).
- Integration of Long Term Plan with NRM plans, and with local government plans.
- Integrate the Long Term Plan with the Basin Officials Committee and the SAMDBA plan. Is there a shoreline business plan?
- Advice to regard the Murraylands socio-economic study as a model for use in LTP.
- Always mention Coorong and Lower Lakes (don’t drop the word *Coorong* to create a short hand).
- How to control dune buggies, 4WD and motor bikes on Lower Lakes?
- How to control the use of jet skis close to or in Ramsar wetlands?
- Build in social analysis, social planning and social support around the CLLMM.

5.5 Comments from Written Submissions

The following is a summary of the key comments made which directly addressed aspects of the *Directions* document.

Written comments on Management Actions

Comment No 16 (Appendix 10) the author provides further ideas in relation to Management Action No 29.

Comment No 47 (Appendix 10) The author generally supports management actions which result in increased freshwater flows to River and Lower Lakes:

- Management Action 16: Is dangerous - environmental and economic disaster.
- Management Action 17: Supported.
- Management Action 21: If permanent regulator at Narrung then at the southern end and thus preserve the Narrows habitat.
- Management Action 22: Supported.
- Management Action 31: Supported - Tourism economy benefits. Likely to educate visitors. Franklin Dam/Gordon River issue in Tasmania created awareness and support for the River. Similarly here.

Written comments on Core Elements

Comment No 51 comments that Core Element 3 lacks detail. It should say “sufficient freshwater to maintain the range of salinities that support the ecological communities of the Lakes and Coorong, that is freshwater, estuarine, saline, hyper-saline”. Suggests that Core Element 6 is a function of Core Element 1.

Comment No 54 affirms all Core Elements.

Comment No 56 asks that DEH first check Core Elements against the following:

1. Mitigation v adaptation: mitigation during climate change may enable ecosystems to adapt - but don't adapt in ways which require on-going mitigation.
2. Resilience v transformation: which is most appropriate? When? What is the resilience of an ecosystem to withstand a change in environmental drivers? When to develop a trajectory to a new more appropriate ecosystem forget.
3. Climate change v climate variability: track both evaluating expected outcomes, considering 'nested nature of system vulnerability and adaptive capacity. Security of the most resilient components. Manage to secure the strongest components working towards the weakest.
4. End of system forgets v a natural systems paradigm: NOT what we want it to get back to, BUT what would it look like if...?

Comment No 57 affirms all core elements but Element 1. Proposes an additional action - identify indicator species for benchmarking and management plans. Develop actions to support indicator.

Comment No's 39 & 46 discuss Map 1 (*Directions*, page 21), which uses different colours for different water bodies. The use of different colours suggests disconnection and it is preferable to use only one colour to emphasise connectedness.

Comment No 19 provides information for inclusion from *Birds Australia*. Provides a reference to newly published research; **Comment No 50** provides references to Australian native plants of economic value which could be considered for cropping in the region; **Comment No 52** provides a reference to the subsidence of land in or near the region.

Written comments suggesting changes to the text

Comment No's 47, 51, 63 are very detailed submissions that suggest changes to a considerable number of sentences and raise many issues. These have not been reproduced here due to the length and detail of the submissions.

Other significant themes

A number of themes were identified in comment from the community. These continue to be assessed. These comments made a contribution to the consultation process but did not directly address a core element, management actions or some other aspect of the *Directions* document.

- The need to consider all upstream influences (e.g. allocation, management actions and a “whole of basin” approach) when developing the long term plan
- The need for the plan to have effective links with the Murray Darling Basin Authority and basin allocation planning.
- suggestions for natural solutions to be considered over engineering solutions

- Suggestions for engineering solutions to sustain the region's natural environment
- The need to incorporate scientific knowledge with local knowledge and expertise.
- The importance of bioremediation and re-vegetation.
- Links with/alignment to the Ramsar Agreement.
- A range of major engineering proposals – a significant number of which proposed solutions to problems for the whole of the Murray Darling Basin. These include desalination projects and north to south pipeline projects. Other engineering projects tied to the CLLMM region include suggestions for pipes, canals, channels, locks, levees and barrages.

5.6 Comments from On-line Survey

Overview

An on-line survey was designed as an additional means for the community to have input into the Long Term Plan through giving feedback on the *Directions* document.

The survey was prepared by Ehrenberg-Bass, Institute for Marketing Science at the University of South Australia in association with staff from the Department for Environment and Heritage.

The on-line survey sought to:

- Gauge the level of awareness and knowledge about the development of a long-term plan and the *Directions* document.
- Measure the level of support for the development of the Long Term Plan.
- Gather feedback on the issues contained in the *Directions* document.
- Gather feedback on the community engagement activities undertaken.
- Contribute to development of a stakeholder data base.

This survey was available to the public between 12 May and 29 May 2009.

Findings were presented in relation to two populations. One population consisted of people who subscribed to the DEH CLLMM email Bulletins and responded to a specific request. The second population consisted of people who visited the DEH CLLMM website and sought out the survey.

A number of people had not participated in other community activities, indicating the online survey captured views from people who would not otherwise have been engaged.

Summary of findings

Community awareness

- About 70% of participants were aware of the **long-term plan** being developed for the region.
- 59% of participants had **seen** the 'Directions for a healthy future' document before the survey and a further 5% downloaded a copy at the start of the survey. 40% had **read** the document.
- **Current projects** including dredging the Murray Mouth, preparing for the proposed temporary weir at Pomanda Island and pumping into Lake Albert were widely known. Also constructing pipelines and actions to address acid sulfate soil were also known by a majority of participants. Stakeholders were aware of more current projects than web participants.
- Results indicated the **stakeholder group was more highly involved**. 95% of stakeholders were aware of the long-term plan compared to 60% of people that chose to take part online. Also a greater proportion attended community events and had read the directions document before the survey.

Community consultation

- 12% of participants had attended a **community event** and 20% intended to. The main reasons people gave for not attending community events were lack of time, work commitments, not being local or being away at the time.
- 14% of respondents had attended a **community display** and 25% said they intended to. The main reasons for not attending a display were lack of time, no need because information was available in other ways, or they were not in their local area.
- Slightly lower numbers had attended/intended to attend **listening posts**. The main reasons for not attending were lack of time, unaware of them, inconvenient location and they were unnecessary.
- Only 6 participants had provided **written feedback**, although a third intended to. The main reasons for not sending in feedback were that it would not be listened to and lack of time.

Developing the long-term plan

- Almost all respondents (97%) agreed a **long-term plan is needed** for the region.
- 95% were supportive of the **goal** of securing a future for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth region as a healthy, productive and resilient wetland of International Importance.
- 93% agreed the environment should be the plan's **primary focus**.
- Results indicate the **community is divided** on whether the planning process will be worthwhile and whether results will benefit the environment and the community.
- About half the people that responded were **supportive of the 'Directions for a healthy future'** document. They felt it was a step in the right direction, explained what had been done and the options clearly with timelines and they were relieved action is being taken.
- Almost a third were **unsupportive of the document**. They felt the Government has waited too long, it does not focus enough on social and economic issues and more should be done to secure water from upstream. People who participated through the website were generally more negative (40% unsupportive) than stakeholders (14%).

- A majority of people **supported the sections** 'What is at stake?', 'What are the problems and management challenges' and 'How do we secure a healthy future' (very few stakeholders answered these questions).
- Just over a third (36%) of respondents agreed the **core elements** are an exhaustive list and about a quarter (26%) felt they encompassed most of what needs to be considered but something else ought to be included, such as working with traditional owners and the broader community, securing water from upstream and allowing the environment to change naturally. The majority felt that the core elements would ensure a healthy, productive, resilient wetland.
- The main things people **value about the region** are the natural beauty of the region and the environment. Also highly valued were its unique ecology and biodiversity and the local communities sustained by the river.
- The most common way for participants to **access** the 'Directions for a Healthy Future' document was online.

Community engagement in implementation projects

- About half of respondents just wanted to be **kept informed**. A quarter of participants were **unable to be involved** at the moment. The rest were interested in **getting involved** either through having their say and providing input or through workshops and on-ground work.

6. Conclusion

This Community Consultation Report has been primarily descriptive. It has covered activities undertaken, and issues raised, through a range of different consultation mechanisms. A reflection report on the Community Consultation process is currently being prepared.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Promotion - Distribution Points

Appendix 2 Promotion - Media Coverage

Appendix 3 Promotion - Advertisements & Web Copy

Appendix 4 Community Information Sessions - Notes

Appendix 5 Community Information Sessions - PowerPoint Presentation

Appendix 6 Community Information Sessions - Feedback Survey

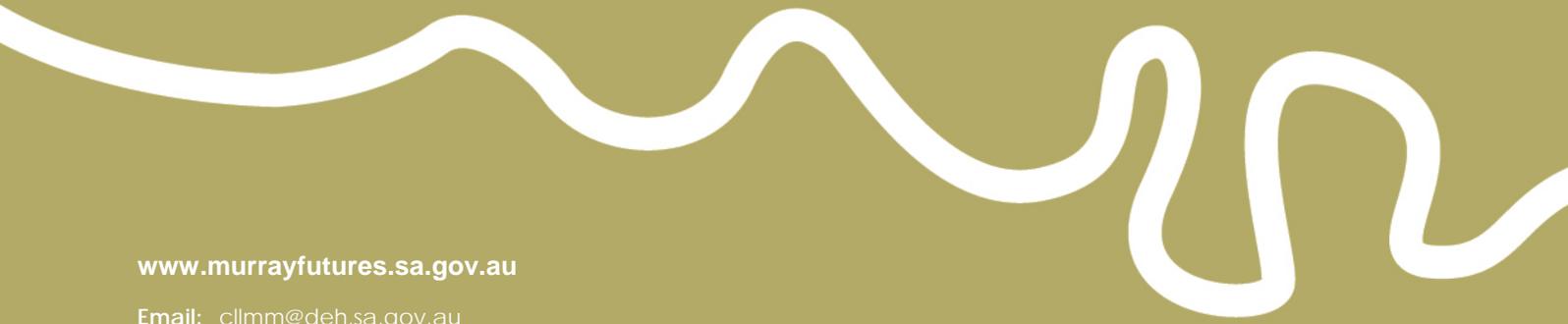
Appendix 7 Targeted Meetings - Notes

Appendix 8 Targeted Meetings - (Example) PowerPoint Presentation

Appendix 9 Written Submissions - List

Appendix 10 Written Submissions - Summaries

Appendix 11 On-line Survey Report (from Ehrenberg-Bass)



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Printed on recycled paper
FIS 90360 May 2009
ISBN 978-1-921466-47-2

