

MEDIA RELEASE

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Agriculture, Food and Fisheries – Forests

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Seawater in the lakes referral is ‘rubbish’

The South Australian government’s application to the Federal government to allow seawater in to the Lower Lakes offers very little science to back its claim that the action is less harmful to the environment than allowing nature to take its course.

With lake levels falling to previously unknown levels due to record low flows, the government proposes to allow seawater in to the freshwater lakes, which it says will mitigate the effects of acidification.

Shadow River Murray Minister Adrian Pederick said the referral was riddled with errors, vague assertions and unsubstantiated claims, backed by out of date or incorrect data.

‘That the state government would even submit such a weak and poorly prepared argument is indicative of its poor planning and management of this whole business,’ Mr Pederick said.

‘There is virtually no science or previous examples in the world on which to base its claim that letting seawater in is a better option than allowing natural bio-remediation.

‘Claims that fringe vegetation has died off is countered in the same document by statements that reed growth has taken over. This referral is disjointed, ill-informed rubbish.’

Mr Pederick said many lake edge dwellers from all around the lakes were reporting vigorous new growth on the exposed lake beds as nature sought to repair the damage. Indications are that bio-remediation will mitigate the effects of acid sulphate soils and counter the acidification of the water.

‘But if seawater is allowed in, that bio-remediation will be severely hindered or even halted. At this moment, aquatic life is flourishing due to recent inflows from the Finniss and Currency Creek. We know seawater will do damage. We believe natural bio-remediation and freshwater inflows are preferred options.’

Mr Pederick said the State government’s referral was ‘full of ifs, buts and maybes and precious little science and fact’.

‘They’ve cobbled together a variety of outdated and vaguely related snippets and used it to justify perhaps the most destructive and catastrophic decision on the environment any government in Australia will ever make. That they’ve even submitted such a shabby argument it is shameful.

‘Two other points are particularly misleading. The suggestion that allowing seawater in is not part of a larger action is patently incorrect. Other actions, such as weirs and bunds already planned, are contingent on this action.

‘Secondly, and most frustrating of all, is the statement that there is no other option, when clearly there is. Allow more freshwater down the river to the lakes. We know water is available and the funds are available. What’s lacking is the political will and courage of state and federal Labor

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governments to acquire it for the lakes. Rann, Rudd, Maywald and Wong have done some sort of deal with the eastern states and sold South Australia up the river.'

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