



## The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

B09/2212

Mr Anada Tiéga  
Secretary General  
Ramsar Convention Secretariat  
Rue Mauverney 28  
CH-1196 Gland  
SWITZERLAND

27 OCT 2009

Dear Mr Tiéga

I am writing to provide you with an update of the Australian Government's consideration of listing the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site (Coorong Ramsar site) on the Montreux Record.

An Article 3.2 notification was made to the Convention Secretariat on 13 December 2006, and subsequent updates were provided on 17 October 2008 and 22 June 2009. The notification and updates provide detail about measures being undertaken to address the significant environmental challenges facing the Coorong Ramsar site.

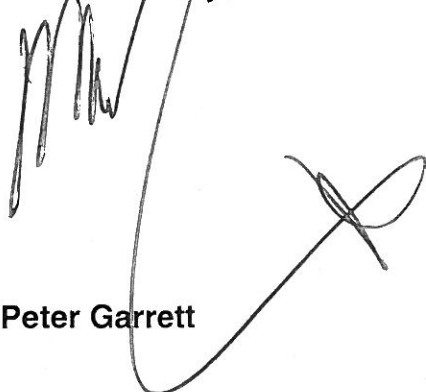
Under Resolution X.13, Australia agreed to consider the appropriateness of proposing the Coorong Ramsar site for inclusion in the Montreux Record. Australia has considered this issue very carefully, noting that inclusion of sites on the Montreux Record is voluntary.

There are very significant scientific and financial resources being provided to assist the recovery of the site. There is also recognition by the site manager and governments of the issues facing the site and the need for cooperative approaches to its future management. Therefore we will not be including the Coorong Ramsar site on the Montreux Record at this time. A completed Montreux Record Questionnaire is attached for your information.

The Australian Government looks forward to the outcome of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel's (STRP) further work on Montreux Record procedures. In Australia we are currently developing national guidance for making Article 3.2 notifications. This will allow Australia to further improve its approach to implementing this core Convention obligation. We would be happy to provide further information on our approach to the Secretariat or STRP.

Australia remains very strongly committed to addressing the threats facing the Coorong Ramsar site and will continue to provide the Ramsar Convention Secretariat with updates on the site's status while it continues to change.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a final cross-like stroke.

**Peter Garrett**

# **Montreux Record - Questionnaire**

(as adopted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties in Resolution VI.1)

## **Section One**

### **Information for assessing possible inclusion of a listed site in the Montreux Record**

#### **Essential items**

- Name of site
  - The Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site.
- Ramsar Criteria for listing the site as internationally important
  - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (based on the 2006 RIS attached to the ECD)
- Nature of the change in ecological character/potential for adverse change
  - See Article 3.2 notification and subsequent updates
- Reason(s) for adverse change, or potential adverse change, in ecological character
  - See Article 3.2 notification and subsequent updates

#### **Additional items which may be included**

- Date Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands submitted
  - An information sheet (RIS) was provided to the Secretariat in November 2000.
  - An updated RIS was provided to the Secretariat in draft form with the Article 3.2 notification in December 2006, as part of the Ecological Character Description Report (ECDR) for the site. For the purposes of this assessment we are treating the 2006 version as the RIS.
- Date and source of Information Sheet updates (e.g. National Reports, national wetland inventory, specific survey)
  - The 2006 draft RIS was prepared as part of the Ecological Character Description Report.
- Benefits and values derived from the site
  - See the Ecological Character Description Report. It can be accessed through:  
[www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/wetlands/ramsar.html](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/wetlands/ramsar.html)
- Extent to which values and benefits derived from the site have decreased or changed
  - See Article 3.2 notification and subsequent updates
- Monitoring programme in place at the site, if any (technique(s), objectives, and nature of data and information gathered), and assessment procedures in place
  - Substantial amounts of monitoring occurs at the site:
    - Existing river flow, salinity and water quality data
    - Air quality monitoring
    - Acid sulfate soil investigation
    - Investigations of water quality effects from acid sulfate soil impacts
    - River operations projects

- Drought-related data collection
- Bathymetry investigations
- Biological/ecological monitoring
- Many of these monitoring and investigations projects will also contribute to modelling, which in turn will contribute to:
  - Knowledge on effects of regional low flows and local river pooling (and stratification) on water quality at key locations critical for Adelaide's water supply (to ensure water quality is adequate and can be achieved at reasonable treatment costs)
  - Science-based decisions on engineering and other solutions for key areas in the Welling and Lower Lakes area (as they relate to mitigate water quality impacts due to bio-geochemical processes)

Lower Lakes and Tributaries Monitoring Plan in response to acid sulphate soil material in the Lower Lakes. The primary objective of the program is to provide early warning of acidification events as water levels continue to decline. Monitoring includes:

- Ecological monitoring (ie fish, aquatic vegetation, water birds, invertebrates). Objectives are:
  - To collect baseline ecological data under current drought conditions which can be compared to future conditions
  - To detect extent of biota populations present in these freshwater habitats
  - To determine which areas are providing adequate drought refuge for key species, in particular for aquatic vegetation, small-bodied fish, water birds and invertebrates
  - To determine changes in ecological condition due to the drought
- Acid sulfate soil monitoring. Objectives are:
  - Monitor changes in acid sulfate soil materials at 50 previously studied sites: 20 sites in Lake Albert and 30 sites in Lake Alexandrina based on previous studies by CSIRO. Analyses of water and soils to be completed: peroxide pH, Cr-reducible S, ANC and ageing experiments. These will be sampled every four months to assess changes which may impact the local environments and surface waters.
  - Monitor water quality parameters, with a focus on metals not being analysed by State agencies.
  - Determine the likelihood of specific trace element and acid release during rewetting of the wetland soils, based on the rapid extraction/release experiments in the laboratory. Approx 50 samples will be analysed from selected sites.
- Biological monitoring
  - Birds
  - Wetland vegetation
  - Frog monitoring
  - General fish monitoring
  - SARDI fish data
  - Macroinvertebrates

Given the extensive number of monitoring programs at the site and the number of parameters covered, it is impractical to include further detail in this document. Further information can be provided on request.

- Ameliorative and restoration measures in place or planned (if any) so far
  - \$10 million bioremediation and revegetation project

- Murray Futures project, including \$200 million provided by the Australian government. For further information, see:  
[www.murrayfutures.sa.gov.au](http://www.murrayfutures.sa.gov.au)
- List of attachments provided by the Contracting Party (if applicable)
  - Ramsar information sheet - 2006
  - Article 3.2 notification – 13 December 2006
  - Article 3.2 notification update – 17 October 2008

Australian Government (DEWHA), September 2009.