

## Peel-Harvey Catchment Council

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*People Working Together for a Healthy Environment*

## Media release

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For immediate release

### WA Chief Scientist Checks Catchment Health



*Photo: Peel-Harvey Catchment Council Chair Jan Star escorts Professor Peter Klinken on a tour of the catchment pictured here at Goegrup Lake with Jane O'Malley, CEO and Bob Pond, Board Member of PHCC.*

The decline in the ecological health of the Peel-Harvey estuary, which experts say hasn't been adequately addressed since the creation of the Dawesville Cut, was the focus of a visit this week by the Chief Scientist of Western Australia, Professor Peter Klinken.

The visit was organised by the region's peak Natural Resource Management body, the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council. Professor Klinken inspected three separate locations where

consequences of the threats impacting the estuary are most evident, and said the visit provided him with an overview of the challenges being faced in the Peel-Harvey catchment area.

“In particular, we studied Lake Goegrup, the South Yunderup dredge disposal site and Austin Lakes/Murray River. I see the catchment’s health as a very significant issue which needs serious examination and am pleased the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council invited me to tour the Estuary to examine the ecological health of some locations,” he said.

Jan Star, chair of the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council, said Professor Klinken’s visit and other indicators showed encouraging signs the State Government is recognising the dire condition of the Peel-Yalgorup system.

“If we want to avoid another ecological collapse like we had two decades when the Cut was created, we have to show people the issues which lie beneath the surface. The waterways here are deceptive: what looks good – clear water and no algal bloom - isn’t the whole story at all. The health of our estuary is intrinsically connected to our rivers. The ongoing problems we face as a region, such as the nutrient avalanche, are most evident in the lower reaches of the Serpentine and Murray Rivers. It’s excellent to have Professor Klinken on site to see our issues first hand,” said Jan Star.

Drawing attention to the serious condition of the estuary has been an ongoing campaign for the Natural Resource Management body.

“There are now positive indications that government is listening and our advocacy is gaining attention. We now have the Peel Harvey Estuary Management Committee, an election commitment of the Member for Dawesville, Kim Hames, plus the Strategic Assessment Perth and Peel Region is a massive process the State has committed to and one our organisation is fully engaged with. We simply have to get it right.”

“It’s about time we stop skirting around and fix the problems once and for all. We effectively have dead zones in the Murray River, and I believe we are becoming desensitised to closing our rivers as a consequence of health problems. We are not a developing nation; our children should be able to swim in our rivers and we should be able to crab and fish without sinking into putrid black ooze,” said Jan Star.

**ENDS**

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