

The Convention on Wetlands

The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971 (more commonly known as the Ramsar Convention) is the first of the modern international agreements on the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. Australia was one of the first countries to sign the agreement.

The agreement's mission is "the conservation and wise use¹ of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".

The agreement covers all aspects of wetland conservation and wise use, recognising wetlands as ecosystems that are extremely important for biodiversity conservation and for the well being of human communities.

¹ Wise use of wetlands is the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development.

(Ramsar COP9 Resolution IX.1 Annex A, page 6)



Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)

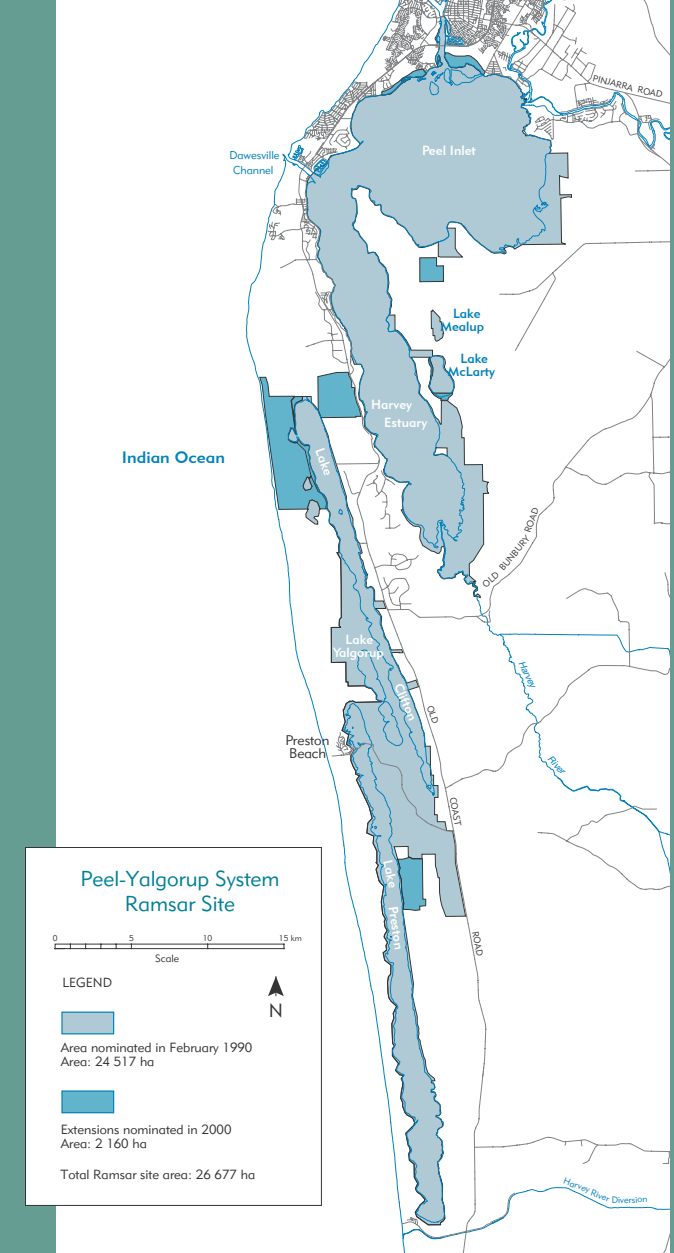
The Australian Government considers the 'ecological character'² of Ramsar wetlands' as a matter of National Environmental Significance under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). It is an offence to undertake any activity that has, will have, or is likely to have a significant impact on a Ramsar site, without first obtaining the approval of the Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

² Ecological character is the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits³/services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time.

³ Within this context, ecosystem benefits are defined in accordance with the MA definition of ecosystem services as "the benefits that people receive from ecosystems". (Ramsar COP9 Resolution IX.1 Annex A, page 5)

International importance of the Peel-Yalgorup System

- Incorporates the largest and most diverse estuarine complex in SW Australia.
- Lake Clifton is one of only two locations in the south-west of Australia and one of very few in the world where living thrombolites occur in hyposaline water. It is the largest 'lake-bound' microbialite reef in the southern hemisphere.
- Includes good examples of coastal saline lakes such as Lake Preston and freshwater marshes or lakes such as Lake McLarty.
- Peel Inlet and Harvey Estuary comprise the most important area for waterbirds in south-west Australia. They regularly support more than 20,000 waterbirds each year and have had in excess of 150,000 birds recorded at one time.
- The Peel-Yalgorup System regularly hosts over 1% of the populations of at least 6 migratory shorebird species including Red-necked Avocet, Red-necked Stint, Red-capped Plover, Banded Stilt, Caspian Tern and Fairy Tern.
- Australia also has international agreements with China (CAMBA) and Japan (JAMBA) to protect migratory birds and their habitats.



What makes up the Peel-Yalgorup System

The Peel-Yalgorup System was Ramsar listed in 1990 and includes the Peel Inlet, Harvey Estuary, Lake McLarty System, Lake Mealup and a number of conservation reserves. It also includes the waters and lands of Yalgorup National Park, which incorporates 10 lakes including Lake Clifton and Lake Preston.

Cultural Significance

Wetlands and waterways have special significance for Nyungar people. They are important as sources of food, for ceremonial purposes and as part of the dreaming and natural beliefs of the people.

There are several important Aboriginal heritage sites around the Peel Inlet and Harvey Estuary, which are protected by the Western Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972) including campsites at the Serpentine River mouth and Island Point, and a ceremonial site at Egg Island.

Management

The Peel-Harvey Catchment Council in partnership with the Department of Environment and Conservation, with funding received from the South West Catchments Council, is developing a Ramsar Management Plan for the Peel-Yalgorup System.

The development and implementation of this management plan has many benefits including

- improved ecosystem health
- assisting to protect the Peel-Yalgorup System including migratory shorebirds and their habitat
- establishment of limits of acceptable change to the ecological character of the system
- coordinated research, monitoring and evaluation
- greater recognition of the Peel-Harvey region
- improved awareness of the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar listing in the community.



Why Conserve Wetlands

Wetlands act as the kidneys of our landscape as they filter waste and pollutants and improve the quality of water. They also

- provide habitat for a great diversity of plant and animal species
- control flooding and help to protect our coastal areas
- provide important economic and recreation value from commercial and recreational fishing to tourism
- are extremely important in terms of the social and cultural values they provide.



If you would like more information on the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar site or on the development of the management plan, please contact the

Peel-Harvey Catchment Council at the

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**“Wetlands and water: supporting life,
sustaining livelihoods”**

9th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) Kampala, Uganda, 8-15 November 2005



www.peel-harvey.org.au



Peel-Yalgorup System

- wetlands of international importance



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(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

