

Enquiries: Jane O'Malley  
Our Ref: 0029\_2017\_1606



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Jenny Tomkins  
Assistant Director, Wetlands Section  
Commonwealth Environmental Water Office  
Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy  
GPO Box 787  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Jenny

### **Draft Ramsar Implementation Plan for Australia for 2016-2018**

The Peel-Harvey Catchment Council is pleased to provide feedback with respect to the draft Ramsar Implementation Plan for Australia for 2016-2018. The PHCC is the Regional NRM body tasked with the care of the Peel-Harvey NRM Region. In this capacity we continue to play a major role in the collaborative management of our Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar System.

We understand that you are seeking feedback on major existing or new national community, NGO and research initiatives that will contribute to outcomes to be achieved for the current triennium (2016-2018). In this respect, please refer to the attached table 'Draft Ramsar Implementation Plan for Australia for 2016-2018'.

Kim Wilson, on behalf of the PHCC has tracked additions and comments within the table to provide a range of examples where the PHCC is actively implementing a range of initiatives for the Ramsar-listed Peel-Yalgorup System, that directly relate to this triennium's outcomes. Please note that implementation is only achievable by working collaboratively with a range of partners, including community, industry and all tiers of Government.

Please note that the Peel-Yalgorup System (PYS) contains the largest and most complex estuarine system in the south west of Australia. Hence, we feel activities under way here are indicative of the scale of initiatives required to achieve outcomes this triennium.

In addition to those listed in the attached document, the PHCC works collaboratively in research projects. We are currently a partner in an ARC Linkage Project focussed on the PYS's estuarine system, called "Balancing estuarine and societal health in a changing environment." We would be pleased to provide additional information on this project.

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*We acknowledge the Noongar people as Traditional Custodians  
of this land and pay our respects to all Elders past and present*

We would also like to provide comment on the Ramsar Implementation Plan as follows. Whilst recognizing the Secretariat set the Goals and Targets for the international Ramsar Strategic Plan, we note that some of the Targets do not seem to be suited to meeting the associated goals. For example, “**Target 1:** Wetland benefits are featured in national/local policy strategies and plans...” does not seem to align with “**Goal 1:** Addressing the drivers of wetland loss and degradation.”

In 2005, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment identified human population growth and associated increases in resource use as the major driver of global change (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (Program) 2005). More recently, climate change has been predicted to be the second most important driver of global biodiversity change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (second only to land use change associated with population growth) (Elmhagen et al. 2015). It is unclear how having wetlands recognised in policies addresses the large scale drivers of change that affect wetlands globally.

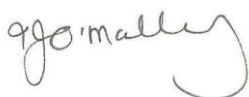
Ideally the Convention would structure their Strategic Plan to recognise that there are several different groups of contracting parties: those with existing conservation management legislation and policies that are implemented and those (typically developing) nations that do not. This would allow a more “sophisticated” approach for those countries with more progressed legislative and policy structures. We encourage this opportunity to be investigated at future CoPs.

Further, with respect to Target 6, although Australia has no Transboundary sites, we suggest consideration should be provided within Australia’s Plan for protecting the Ramsar site network at an international scale. Particularly the staging areas for migratory shorebirds that spend the northern hemisphere winter in Australia at many Ramsar sites. For example, declines in international migratory shorebirds have been linked to the decline in habitat in staging areas, particularly in the Yellow sea (MacKinnon et al. 2012, Murray et al. 2015). This is driven by land reclamation of tidal flats for industrial projects to support a growing population and economy (Yang et al. 2011). We suggest Australia investigate the development of policy and mechanisms to encourage countries in breeding and staging areas to maintain habitat to support international populations of shorebirds. This would be supporting the initial purposes of the Convention.

We will be pleased to provide examples of any of the activities discussed in this submission.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Kim Wilson on (08) 6369 8800 or email [admin@peel-harvey.org.au](mailto:admin@peel-harvey.org.au).

Yours sincerely



Jane O’Malley  
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