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28 June 2019

Director General  
Mr Ralph Addis  
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development  
Via email: SalinityReview@agric.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Addis

### **A New Direction for Salinity Management in Western Australia: A consultative Review**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this initiative.

The Peel-Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC) are very encouraged by the State Government's initiative to make management of salinity a priority once again.

The (PHCC) is the NRM regional body responsible for the Peel-Harvey Natural Resource Management (NRM) Region, covering over 1.1 million hectares of the Serpentine, Murray, Hotham, Williams and Harvey River catchments. Of this, 573,350 hectares is within the Hotham-Williams Catchment where waterlogging, salinization and acidification are key issues impacting farm productivity.

Dryland salinity/salinization is one of a number of important NRM issues in our catchment, closely linked to the management of soils, vegetation and water. Our approach to working with farmers who have saline and or waterlogged areas is to pool multiple resources across private-public and community sectors to ensure maximum NRM outcomes. This integrated approach means that a range of agricultural and environmental objectives can be met through the one planning-investment-implementation pathway.

To reflect a more integrated approach, the State's New Directions draft actions should be revised to consistently support state government working directly with the community sector (including regional NRMs and landcare groups), Australian Government, and industry to meet multiple and inter-connected outcomes. This integrated approach has already been outlined in the State NRM Framework and should be implemented in the manner in which state agencies work with regional NRM organisations and local landcare groups, among others, to deliver on each recommendation.

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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*

In terms of other over-arching comments on the New Directions document, the PHCC:

- 1) Strongly supports the Government's renewed commitment to work with all stakeholders to reduce the impact of salinity on biodiversity, water resources, agricultural production, and built infrastructure.
- 2) Strongly supports the re-establishment of the Soil and Land Conservation Council (SLCC).
- 3) Seeks a significant increase in the resources available to the Soil and Land Commissioner to address issues of salinization, drainage and soil conservation, noting that significant reduction in funding in this area over the past 10 years or more.
- 4) Are encouraged to see that DPIRD will be asked to:
  - a. facilitate improved integration of government actions across salinity management and broader land degradation issues.
  - b. facilitate increased engagement, coordination and collaboration with regional NRM, catchment, grower, and Landcare groups.
- 5) However, calls on the government to appropriately resource DPIRD to provide this improved facilitation and greater engagement, coordination and collaboration with regional NRM, catchment, grower, and Landcare groups.
- 6) Calls on all government agencies to apply an integrated, catchment management approach to implementation of all of the report's recommendations (not just DPIRD). The Review mostly adopts a '*salinity first*' approach to NRM; this should be replaced by a '*salinity and...*' approach.
- 7) Seeks a much stronger Government focus on on-ground action at the catchment scale that yields multiple NRM benefits. As explained above, much of the on-ground work that the PHCC supports (e.g. on-farm revegetation, fodder crops, fencing of remnant vegetation, threatened species conservation etc.) achieves multiple NRM outcomes, including water and salinity management. **It is strongly suggested that 'Support of on-ground action' should be a fifth pillar of the New Directions**, to ensure all of the other Pillars of the program are orientated, and measured against, on-ground action and results.
- 8) Seeks a clear connection between the government's New Direction approach and regional/sub-regional NRM plans and strategies. For example, the Hotham-Williams NRM Plan has a number of priorities related to salinity management, including the management of mid-slope salt outbreaks and the restoration of production values in waterlogged and saline floors.
- 9) Brings to government's attention growing farmer interest in increasing production of salt-affected lands. For example, farmers in the Hotham-Williams sub-catchment are actively involved in new plantings of improved varieties of saltbush. These plantings are beginning to 'stack up' financially for farmers when well-planned and managed.
- 10) Will work with state government within the constraints of our current funding, and looks forward to new opportunities to deliver services to the community to meet State NRM objectives (including salinity).

All the recommended actions in Table 1 of the Review are supported with the following amendments:

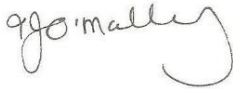
- The Information action '*Information on salinity management options to be revised in consultation with key knowledge providers with effective knowledge transfer to land managers and decision-makers.*' needs to be assigned to a 'Responsible Lead' (Who is responsible for this action, and when by) (DPIRD, 2020).

- The Governance Action '*WA Government to establish the Soil and Land Conservation Council (SLCC) to provide strategic advice on salinity and other land degradation as a priority*' needs a 'when by' date. (Immediately, DPIRD).
- The Investment action '*Prepare a Salinity Investment Framework Phase III*' needs a Responsible Lead and a when by date. The Framework needs to be developed in consultation with all major stakeholders, including the landcare community and regional NRM organisations (development by DPIRD, by 2020).
- The Investment action '*DPIRD and DBCA to engage with Commonwealth government departments on priorities for salinity management for NRM programs*' should also include engagement with regional NRM organisations and grassroots landcare community.

The Peel-Harvey Catchment Council looks forward to the further development of the State's New Direction approach to salinity management, and opportunities to contribute towards its implementation.

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

Yours sincerely



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