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## Media Release

### Lakes & Coorong councils offer solidarity to Darling River communities

Saturday 19 January 2019

The communities of Alexandrina, Coorong and Murray Bridge express our dismay at recent fish kills in the Darling River and offer our solidarity to those working for the return of a healthy, connected Northern Basin.

The Lower Murray, Lakes and Coorong communities understand firsthand the environmental, economic and social devastation wrought by a combination of drought and poor upstream water management and we are deeply saddened to see communities in western NSW experience the same kind of trauma as we did during the Millennium Drought.

These terrible fish kill events reinforce the need for all Basin States to remain focused on further environmental water recovery as required by the Basin Plan – in a changing climate, protecting environmental flows will provide resilience in times of drought.

Drought however is just one of a number of factors contributing to the current ecological disaster in the Darling River – whilst the complexities still need to be unravelled, it seems clear that ineffective upstream water management has also played a part.

We know it will take many years of concerted effort to bring about ecological recovery in the Darling. We know this because the Coorong is still suffering from the effects of the Millennium Drought. We are thankful the South Australian Government recently secured \$70m in funding for Coorong recovery but urge that efforts now turn to ensuring NSW in particular does all it can to make good on their Basin Plan commitments. Water resource planning in NSW is well behind schedule and it is critical that future water sharing rules in the Barwon-Darling system factor in a higher level of downstream flows.

Did you know that native fish populations in South Australia such as Golden Perch rely on recruitment in the Menindee Lakes and Lower Darling? The Menindee Lakes system is a critical fish nursery that helps stock the entire river system. For this and many other reasons, the ecological health of the Barwon-Darling should matter to South Australians in the same way that we expect the health of the Coorong and Lower Lakes to matter to upstream river communities.

We all drink water. We all live upstream and downstream from each other. We all want future generations to enjoy the bounty of a healthy Murray-Darling Basin.

Alexandrina Council Mayor Keith Parkes, Rural City of Murray Bridge Mayor Brenton Lewis and Coorong District Council Mayor Paul Simmons

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