

Comment on Lower lakes and Coorong Draft Report

The draft report describes in detail the problems affecting the Lower Lakes, the attempts to date to mitigate the problems and the methodology used.

The report concludes that a freshwater solution is “reasonable” and describes in great length the methods to be used whilst awaiting the necessary flows which it estimates would need to be in the order of 3500 GL/y end of river flows.

It describes the current Basin inflows as “atypically low” and “highly abnormal”. Yet a study of Fig.5 of the report of historical total basin inflows for this and previous drought periods shows:-

1998-2008	5700 GL/y over an 11 year period, or
2002-2008	3800 GL/y over 7 years
1938-1946	6200 GL/y over 9 years
1896-1903	5600 GL/y over 8 years, or
1896-1915	7100 GL/y over 20 years

These figures show that there have been, in the past, long drought periods of flows of similar magnitude to those of today and that the required flow of 3500 GL/d for a freshwater solution is a large proportion of **total basin inflows** during these periods even without the future impact of climate change. There are also other environmental, human consumption and irrigation requirements to be considered.

Is not the emphasis on a freshwater solution therefore yet another example of “hope over experience” (see Forward of draft report) and would it not be more prudent to develop low flow plans more fully in the final report rather than trying to maintain an artificial freshwater environment?

This report and others admit that in the longer term rising sea levels will change the Lower Lakes to an estuarine environment so why not start planning for that eventuality now?

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