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### WATER QUALITY KEY RISK FOR LOWER LAKES

The State Government is moving to minimise the volume of seawater entering the Lower Lakes to maintain water quality as lake levels decline.

Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald says already, the State Government has restricted lockages at the Goolwa Barrage, in consultation with community and stakeholder groups.

“There is the potential for seawater to enter the lakes through the barrages or by overtopping the island spillways during high tides or a storm surge,” she said.

“To prevent the risk of this occurring, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and SA Water will construct a 300 millimetre high bund along 1.6 kilometres of the lowest sections of the spillways to prevent overtopping.

“Divers will also work on minimising leakage of seawater through the barrage into the lakes, which would otherwise increase salinity of the freshwater.”

Minister Maywald says water levels in Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert continue to fall rapidly because of low Murray-Darling Basin inflows and high temperatures and evaporation rates.

“The current average level is at 0.31m AHD and when it is below 0.35m AHD, accessing water from the lakes for irrigation and stock and domestic supplies is difficult,” she said.

“To help water users continue access, the State Government has fast-tracked the approvals process for dredging, but this is a short-term solution.”

Minister Maywald says the State Government is micro-managing flows to South Australia to keep lake levels as high as possible to enable irrigators to continue operating through the current season.

“The lakes are forecast to drop to critical levels by the end of March and the State Government is working with communities surrounding the lakes on how to continue water supply for stock and domestic use beyond this period.

“The situation will be closely monitored and communities will be provided with regular updates on Lower Lakes’ water quality.”