Water Allocation Plan for the
River Murray Prescribed Watercourse
Review of Environmental Land Management Allocations (ELMA)

This paper outlines why ELMA policy is being reviewed and the approach to engaging the community on the findings of the review.

Background
Environmental Land Management Allocations (ELMA) are water allocations provided to landholders within the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area (LMRIA).

The allocations are provided to manage the effects of rising saline groundwater on irrigated pasture or on land that has been retired from irrigation. ELMA also assists with managing acid sulfate soils and minimising soil cracking and movement.

Why has the ELMA policy been reviewed?
The South Australian Murray-Darling Natural Resources Management Board (the Board) committed to undertake a comprehensive review of how ELMA is used and administered following community feedback from the 2017 draft Plan.
How has the review been undertaken?

The review has been guided by a sub-group of the River Murray Advisory Committee (RMAC), a community-based committee that assists the Board in water policy development. The sub-group members are water users from the LMRIA, the Chief Executive of Regional Development Australia – Murraylands and Riverland and other members of RMAC.

The review has:

- considered scientific work on the effect of water application in the LMRIA;
- analysed recent water use information;
- surveyed water entitlement holders to better understand how they use and value ELMA; and
- commissioned the University of Adelaide to assess how much water needs to be applied to land to successfully leach salt from the root zone.

The review has not considered:

- changes to the total volume of water set aside for land management in the Lower Murray (22.2 gigalitres);
- changes to the non-tradable status of allocations and entitlements associated with ELMA licences; and
- changes to the NRM water levy exemption for ELMA licences.

What changes have been made to the Plan?

The Board has not changed any policies for ELMA in the 2019 version of the Plan. The Board would like to engage the LMRIA community in discussion about the review findings and seek input into how these issues might be addressed. No changes will be made until this has been undertaken.

What does this mean for water users?

All existing arrangements for ELMA water entitlement holders will be maintained under the new Plan. ELMA water entitlements will be extended to allow for the review to be completed.

How can I be involved in the review?

The Board will contact LMRIA landholders to share the results of the ELMA review and to discuss findings with the community. There will be opportunities to be involved in working through options to address the issues raised.