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Executive Officer
Environment, Natural Resources and
Regional Development Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE 3002

Dear Sir/Madam

**INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE AND USE OF ENVIRONMENTAL WATER
SUBMISSION BY GOULBURN VALLEY WATER**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the above inquiry.

Goulburn Valley Water (GVW) is one of 13 Victorian rural urban water corporations and provides drinking water and sewerage services to around 135,000 people in 54 towns in the Goulburn Valley region. We also service many major industries in the State's foodbowl, including SPC Ardmona in Shepparton, BEGA Cheese in Tatura and Devondale Murray-Goulburn in Cobram.

We operate 37 Water Treatment Plants (WTP), 19 that source raw water from the regulated Goulburn River system, 6 that source raw water from the regulated Murray River system and 12 that source raw water from various unregulated waterways.

GVW actively collaborates with our key partners that manage regional waterways, namely the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) and Goulburn Murray Water (GMW), to ensure our operations consider short and long term waterway issues.

The nature of most of our water supply systems is that they draw directly from waterways and channels and are subject to real time variations in raw water quality. In order to protect public health by providing a reliable and consistent quality of potable water supply it is preferable that our WTPs, including those that supply key towns like Shepparton, have a constant and reliable source of raw water. The quality of the raw water notably impacts on water treatment costs and also the aesthetic qualities of the final potable water delivered to our customers. For example, in periods of low waterway flow or after notable catchment rainfall events, raw water quality can deteriorate and fluctuate significantly resulting in increased public health risk and increased treatment costs.

In recent years a number of regulated and unregulated waterways across the Goulburn Murray catchment have experienced Blue-Green Algae (BGA) and blackwater events that significantly degraded raw water quality and negatively impacted on GVW operations.

These events typically coincided with the extremes of either extended periods of low waterway flow or flooding with rainfall events washing catchment based organic material in to the waterways. The impact of these events is usually a severe increase in raw water turbidity and colour, leading to increased potential pathogen risk and also a severe reduction in Dissolved Oxygen. All of this has an impact on the Corporation's potable water treatment processes, causing additional public health risk, increased treatment costs and also degraded taste and odour of the final water.

By way of example in January 2017, a blackwater event in the lower Goulburn River resulted in the Shepparton WTP experiencing treatment difficulties. The resultant water quality being supplied to town was impacted aesthetically with widespread taste and odour complaints being made to GVW from customers. This required preventative action to be undertaken with the Department of Health and Human Services. Similarly, a BGA bloom on the Murray River in 2016 increased our treatment requirements, with additional treatment processes put in place at a number of WTPs. The event also required the tankering of water to a number of towns to ensure supply was maintained and public health protected.

While year on year comparison of waterway quality is hard to quantify, it is our observation that during BGA or blackwater events, effective Environmental Water management can play an important role in reducing the impacts of the event by assisting in the restoration of key raw water quality parameters. This in turn assists in maintaining aquatic health during such events and also hastens general river health recovery.

Overall, GVW supports regional initiatives to maximise the effectiveness of Environmental Water management and will continue to work with our key regional waterway partners on initiatives that increase regional catchment health and raw water quality.

If you require any further information regarding this matter please contact Alan Tyson on

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Yours sincerely

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Peter Quinn
MANAGING DIRECTOR