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SWAN CANNING RIVER SYSTEM IS NOT ADEQUATELY PROTECTED; DESPITE SOME SYMPTOMS OF POOR HEALTH BEING TREATED

Today Auditor General Colin Murphy tabled a report in Parliament that found the Swan Canning river system is not adequately protected, despite a range of plans, strategies and actions by the Swan River Trust.

Auditor General Colin Murphy was concerned about the future of the Swan Canning river system, long term monitoring shows that water quality in the middle and upper reaches is declining.

Symptoms include low oxygen levels, high nutrient levels and fish deaths that exceeded the Trust's target in four of the past 10 years.

"There has never been comprehensive and easily understood reporting to Parliament and the public on the overall health status of the river system, and without this understanding we may not be giving priority to what needs to be done," said Mr Murphy.

"Improving the health of the Swan Canning river system is achievable, but as experiences elsewhere show, rapid solutions are unlikely."

More collaborative and concerted effort by government, agencies and the community is needed to halt the decline in the river's health, and begin improving its condition.

"The capacity to manage threats to the river is hampered for various reasons, partly because there are overlapping authorities from state and local government agencies and gaps in accountability."

"The Trust has spent considerable effort in preparing plans and developing strategies, and I am encouraged to see that some of their improvement strategies such as the four oxygenation plants have been proving helpful in combating the decline of the river system."

"My report includes a number of recommendations which I hope the Swan River Trust will find useful in managing this difficult task, however success will also depend upon state government agencies meeting their mandated roles."

The Auditor General's report '*Our Heritage and Our Future: Health of the Swan Canning River System*' (Report 16 – August 2014) can be downloaded from the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au

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