Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

(RIS) - 2009-2014 version

Available for download from http://www.ramsar.org/doc/ris/key_ris_e.doc and http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/ris/key_ris_e.pdf

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX. 22 of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2005).

Notes for compilers:

- 1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands.* Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
- 2. Further information and guidance in support of Ramsar site designations are provided in the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 17, 4th edition).
- 3. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers should provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of all maps.

1. Name and	address	of the c	compiler	of this	form:
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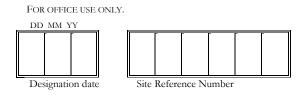
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2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

May 2014

3. Country:

Australia

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

The precise name of the designated site in one of the three official languages (English, French or Spanish) of the Convention. Alternative names, including in local language(s), should be given in parentheses after the precise name.

Banrock Station Wetland Complex

5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

This RIS is for (tick one box only):

- a) Designation of a new Ramsar site \square ; or
- b) Updated information on an existing Ramsar site ✓

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area

The Ramsar site boundary and site area are unchanged: ✓
or If the site boundary has changed: i) the boundary has been delineated more accurately ii) the boundary has been extended □; or iii) the boundary has been restricted** □
and/or
If the site area has changed: i) the area has been measured more accurately ii) the area has been extended □; or iii) the area has been reduced** □
** Important note: If the boundary and/or area of the designated site is being restricted/reduced, the Contracting Party should have followed the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to COP9 Resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.
b) Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site, including in the application of the Criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:
The site has undergone a change in hydrological regime in 2007-2009. At listing the main wetland, Banrock Lagoon, site was a permanently inundated flow through floodplain wetland complex. This part of the site is now considered intermittent via artificial intervention (e.g. introduction of dry/wet cycle).
Returning to a more natural water regime has promoted positive ecological changes. Lignum and red gum patches have increased (aerial surveys will be done at the end of October 2013 to confirm this). Please see images at Appendix A confirming improvement in ecological character. Regeneration of red gum and black box is apparent on site. To date these have not affected the criteria for which the site was listed. However, since the previous RIS the Australian Government has shifted to using the Australian Drainage Division as the bioregionalisation approach for applying criterion 1 and 3. Until supporting data is collected and analysed at the scale of the drainage division it is not currently possible to determine if the site meets criterion 1.
In addition, the change in water management on site since 2007 has lead to a change in wetland types present. Wetland type O (Permanent freshwater lakes) no longer occurs at the site, being replaced by type P (Seasonal/intermittent freshwater lakes). This change more closely reflects the natural environment prior to the development of locks on the River Murray. It is, however, dependent on access to environmental water allocations, priorities for which are determined at the scale of the whole Murray-Darling Basin.
7. Map of site: Refer to Annex III of the Explanatory Note and Guidelines, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps, including digital maps.
a) A map of the site, with clearly delineated boundaries, is included as: i) a hard copy (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): ☑;
ii) an electronic format (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) ☑ ;

iii) a GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables ${\bf \boxtimes}$.

b) Describe briefly the type of boundary delineation applied:

e.g. the boundary is the same as an existing protected area (nature reserve, national park, etc.), or follows a catchment boundary, or follows a geopolitical boundary such as a local government jurisdiction, follows physical boundaries such as roads, follows the shoreline of a waterbody, etc.

Banrock Station Wetland Complex is bounded by three river bends and is adjacent to Weir and Lock 3 on the River Murray (located at 431.4 km - River Murray kilometers from the Mouth). The river boundary extends approximately 3.2 km upstream from Lock 3 and 11.5 km downstream. On the landward side, the Banrock Station Wetland Complex encompasses Sections 275, 662, 681 and 682 of the Hundred of Moorook.

A map of the site is provided at Appendix B.

8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude, in degrees and minutes):

Provide the coordinates of the approximate centre of the site and/or the limits of the site. If the site is composed of more than one separate area, provide coordinates for each of these areas.

Latitude: 34° 11' South; Longitude: 140° 20' East

9. General location:

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s) the site lies and the location of the nearest large town.

Banrock Station Wetland Complex lies on the floodplain of the south western side of the River Murray downstream from the township of Kingston on Murray, and opposite the township of Overland Corner, approximately 26 km North West of Berri in the Riverland of South Australia. The site straddles Lock 3 on the River Murray.

10. Elevation: (in metres: average and/or maximum & minimum)

The floodplain wetland zone is 5 - 10 metres above sea level, the adjoining mallee buffer zone rises 40-50 metres above the floodplain, and the highest point on the site is 62 metres above sea level.

11. Area: (in hectares)

The Ramsar site covers 1,375 ha which includes 1,068 ha of floodplain and 307 ha of mallee.

The site excludes 426 ha of viticulture area.

12. General overview of the site:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

Banrock Station Wetland Complex is a floodplain wetland complex typical of the lower River Murray floodplain. It comprises areas of freshwater and areas of secondary salinised floodplain with discrete wetland basins and channels. The site straddles the boundary of the Mallee Trench and Mallee Gorge geomorphic tracts of the River Murray. Within the Ramsar site boundary the wetlands exist as discrete depositional basins and active channels on an incised ancestral floodplain which is approximately 5-10 m above sea level.

The largest wetland basin is referred to as Banrock Lagoon. The Eastern Lagoon is joined to Banrock Lagoon during high flows and together forms the major freshwater wetland area of the site. Surrounding these lagoons are significant areas of samphire and lignum dominated floodplain, much of which is affected by rising saline groundwater. On the narrow floodplain within the Mallee Gorge geomorphic tract lie several intermittent wetlands which are not connected to Banrock and Eastern lagoons, and fill during moderate sized floods. The mallee highland areas of the site rise to 40-50 m above the floodplain with the highest point on the site being 62 m above sea level.

The dominant wetland vegetation types on the floodplain include River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) woodland, Black Box (*Eucalyptus largiflorens*) Woodland, Lignum (*Duma florulenta*) shrubland, Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Narrow-leaf Bulrush (*Typha domingensis*) sedgeland. Aquatic herblands are present in Banrock Lagoon providing significant habitat value for aquatic biota.

The site adjoins a commercial viticulture enterprise which is managed in a manner complementary to conservation of the wetland. The nearby Wine and Wetland Centre promotes wetlands conservation and ecologically sustainable land use practices. Walking trails and boardwalks around the wetland provide interpretive information which explains the importance of the wetland, how the site has been rehabilitated and the principles and approaches to ecologically sustainable development. This combination of wetland conservation and rehabilitation, with raising awareness of wetland values and functions, and private enterprise, is a good demonstration of the Ramsar wise use concept.

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Tick the box under each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11). All Criteria which apply should be ticked.

1	•	2 •	3 •	4 •	5 •	6 •	7	8	• 9
		$\overline{\mathbf{V}}$	$\overline{\mathbf{V}}$	$\overline{\mathbf{A}}$					

14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Criterion 2: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.

Banrock Station Wetland Complex supports two nationally listed species, the Vulnerable Regent Parrot (Polytelis anthopeplus monarchoides) and the Vulnerable Southern Bell Frog (Litoria raniformis). Currently there are no estimates on the size of the Southern Bell Frog population on site. The Regent Parrot colony found on site is one of the largest regional breeding colonies, with 100 nesting birds being recorded at the time of listing. Breeding surveys for the species restarted in October 2013.

Scientific name	Common name	IUCN status	CMS	CITES	National
			status	status	Listing
Polytelis anthopeplus	Regent Parrot	Least concern*	-	-	Vulnerable
monarchoides		(see below)			
Litoria raniformis	Vulnerable	Endangered	-	-	Vulnerable
· ·	Southern Bell Frog				
Notopala sublineata	River snail	Endangered	-	-	-

^{*} Please note that the IUCN listing in the table below for the Regent parrot is for the whole taxon. The subspecies *anthopeplus* found in south-west Western Australia is still considered healthy. However, the subspecies *monarchoides* found along rivers in south-west New South Wales, north-west Victoria, and south-east South Australia is currently decreasing, with at maximum 2,000 individuals left in the wild.

The River Snail *Notopala sublineata* was once common in the wetlands of the lower River Murray and is now considered rare due to predation by introduced Common Carp (Cyprinus carpio). With the reduction in the population of Common Carp within the Banrock Station Wetland Complex, efforts are underway to re-introduce the River Snail. The early indications are that a breeding population is becoming established. While the Threatened Species Scientific Committee tasked with assessing national species listing provided advice to the Australian Government Environment Minister that both subspecies are likely to be extinct in their natural habitats, the Minister concluded that the distribution and abundance of this species is not well known, and that there is not enough evidence to justify listing the species. The

River Snail is listed as "Threatened" in Victoria. A breeding program and reintroduction in the wild project is currently (2013) being developed in association with the University of Western Sydney.

Lignum *Duma florulenta* Shrubland, is a threatened plant community in the South Australian part of the Murray-Darling Basin, due to the impacts of grazing, un-natural water regimes and salinity (Kahrimanis *et al.* 2001). This plant community has recovered strongly within the Banrock Station Wetland Complex and is now a dominant part of the wetland ecosystem. At the end of October 2013, an aerial survey is organized with University of Adelaide to enable comparison of the distribution and extent of lignum patches on Banrock with previous aerial surveys.

The Common Reed *Phragmites australis* and the Narrow-leaf Bulrush *Typha domingensis* sedgeland communities are regionally threatened in the South Australian part of the Murray-Darling Basin, and susceptible to threat from changed water regimes and grazing (Kahrimanis *et al.* 2001. Recognised for their importance as habitat for terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, birds, fish and frogs, the reestablishment of these communities at the Banrock Station Wetland Complex offers a significant resource for biodiversity conservation in the region.

The Broad-shelled Tortoise (Chelodina expansa) is classified as "Vulnerable" in South Australia. This species was captured at Banrock in 2008 during fish sampling (Conallin et al. 2012). Banrock creeks in the north of property are ideal habitat for Freshwater Catfish (Tandanus tandanus) which are extremely rare in South Australia and always found in low numbers. The Freshwater Catfish is Endangered state wide and due to significantly reduced numbers in the River Murray, is the subject of a fishing ban in South Australia. A pair of Peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus) is breeding on Banrock, the species is considered as Rare under the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPWA) and under the Murrayland Regional Status. Musk Duck (Biziura lobata) and Freckled Duck (Stictonetta naevosa) pairs have been spotted on site, with display occurring. Musk Duck is listed as Rare under the NPWA and Vulnerable in Victoria & the Murrayland region. Freckled Duck is listed as Vulnerable under the NPWA in New South Wales and Murrayland region, and Endangered in Victoria and advertised as "Australia's rarest waterfowl" by BirdLife Australia.

The "Blue Mallee Eucalyptus cyanophylla Open mallee plant community" is present on the site and considered in a poor conservation state in SA.

Criterion 3: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.

This site supports the range of biological diversity (including habitat types) found in the region. The site is located at the transition between the Mallee Trench and Mallee Gorge, resulting in a large number of habitat types found in the lower part of the Murray Darling Basin occurring in a relatively small area. The flora and fauna of the site are typical of a lower River Murray freshwater wetland complex in a semi-arid environment. The Banrock Station Wetland Complex offers a refuge during adverse conditions to sustain species' populations during times of drought.

The site contains a significant proportion of species adapted to special environmental conditions (such as temporary wetlands in semi-arid or arid areas). Whilst 70 per cent of the lower River Murray wetlands have changed from intermittent to permanently inundated, the Banrock Station Wetland Complex is one of only 20 sites that have been returned to intermittent inundation and a near-natural hydrological regime. As such, the Banrock Station Wetland Complex will play an increasingly important role as a biodiversity 'reservoir' for the region and will be a source of biodiversity for reintroductions and recolonisation into the adjoining areas.

The site supports particular elements of biological diversity that are rare or particularly characteristic of the biogeographic region. It is one of the few locations in South Australia where the rare River Snail

(Notopala sublineata) has been successfully bred. The reintroduction of a near-natural hydrological regime has favoured reestablishment of plant communities which are important for maintaining the biological diversity of the region. These include Lignum *Duma florulenta* Shrubland and Common Reed *Phragmites australis* /Narrow-leaf Bulrush *Typha domingensis* Sedgeland.

The site supports the Common Long-necked Tortoise (*Chelodina longicollis*) which is considered as near threatened in the Murrayland region.

Criterion 4: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.

The Banrock Station Wetland Complex provides non-breeding habitat for migratory waterbirds listed under JAMBA, CAMBA and ROKAMBA agreements. However the numbers of individuals are not large nor are most of the species recorded regular visitors. The exception is the Eastern Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) which occurs at the site on a regular basis with records for eight of the past ten years. In addition, the site has also supported large numbers of moulting Australian Shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*) (M. Harper, DEH, pers. comm.), however the frequency of moulting events has not been recorded and this remains a knowledge gap. Australian Shelduck have been observed breeding on site, for example, a creche of 21 shelduck ducklings were spotted on 2 October 2013 and a family of 4 ducklings the same week on another part of the site. (Christophe Tourenq, site manager, pers. comm.)

Table 2: The Banrock Station Wetland Complex provides seasonal habitat for migratory birds listed nationally and under the Bonn Convention, CAMBA, JAMBA and ROKAMBA agreements.

Common name	Scientific name	National listing (EPBC Act)	International
Australian White Ibis	Threskiornis molucca	Migratory	JAMBA
Glossy Ibis	Plegadis falcinellus	Migratory	CAMBA, JAMBA
Eastern Great Egret	Ardea alba	Migratory	CAMBA, JAMBA (listed as A. alba)
Common Greenshank	Tringa nebularia	Marine, Migratory	Bonn, CAMBA, JAMBA, ROKAMBA
Latham's Snipe	Gallinago hardwickii	Marine, Migratory	Bonn, CAMBA, JAMBA, ROKAMBA
White-bellied Sea Eagle	Haliaeetus leucogaster	Marine, Migratory	CAMBA
Red-necked Stint	Calidris ruficollis	Marine, Migratory	Bonn, CAMBA, JAMBA, ROKAMBA
Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola	Marine, Migratory	Bonn, CAMBA, JAMBA, ROKAMBA
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Calidris acuminata	Marine, Migratory	Bonn, CAMBA, JAMBA, ROKAMBA
Caspian Tern	Hydroprogne caspia	Marine, Migratory	CAMBA, JAMBA
Fork-tailed Swift	Apus pacificus	Migratory	CAMBA, JAMBA, ROKAMBA
Red-capped Plover	Charadrius ruficapillus	Marine	
Red-necked Avocet	Recurvirostra	Marine	

Common name	Scientific name	National listing (EPBC Act)	International
	novaehollandiae		
Musk Duck	Biziura lobata	Marine	

Lateral migration of small bodied native fish species, for example, *Hypseleotris sp., Craterocephalus stercusmuscarum fulvus*, *Retropinna semoni*, *Nematalosa erebi* occurs via the inlet and outlet creeks, and the site may provide a downstream pathway around Lock 3 for large bodied fish in high flows. The relative importance of the site for fish migration in high flows has not been established. Fish surveys have been reinitialized with DEWNR in October 2013 with the hope of being able to compare data with the 2008-2009 surveys.

In the semi-arid environment in which it is found, the Banrock Station Wetland Complex offers a refuge during adverse conditions to sustain species' populations during times of drought.

Table 3: Fish species recorded at the Banrock Station Wetland Complex (Smith and Fleer 2007; Fredberg et al. 2009):

Common name	Scientific name
Small bodied natives	
Australian smelt	Retropinna semoni
Unspecked hardyhead	Craterocephalus stercusmuscarum fulvus
Carp gudgeons	Hypseleotris spp
Dwarf flat-headed gudgeon	Philypnodon macrostomus
Flat-headed Gudgeon	Philypnodon grandiceps
Murray River Rainbowfish	Melanotaenia fluviatilis
Bony Herring	Nematalosa erebi
Large bodied natives – juveniles only	
Freshwater Catfish	Tandanus tandanus
Golden Perch (Callop)	Macquaria ambigua

15. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:

Drainage Division IV: Murray Darling Division (DEWHA 2007).

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

Commonwealth of Australia (Bureau of Meteorology), 2011, Australian Hydrological Geospatial Fabric. For more info on the Geofabric see - http://www.bom.gov.au/water/geofabric/.

16. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Upstream of Banrock Station Wetland Complex the River Murray has cut through the Murray Group Limestone creating an extensive floodplain area (5-10 km wide) which narrows to a 1 km wide floodplain within the Mallee Gorge. The floodplain areas contain the highly conductive semi-confined Monomon Formation overlain by the Coonambidgal Formation. Banrock Station Wetland Complex lies at the

junction of the Mallee Trench and Mallee Gorge geomorphic tracts of the River Murray. The main wetland areas were ephemeral prior to the construction of Lock 3 in 1925, at which time the wetland became permanently connected to the raised weir pool above Lock 3. Since 1992 control structures have allowed some manipulation of water levels within the system and in 2007 the wetland's water regime was returned to an intermittent inundation pattern with complete drying of the main wetland bed. The river and floodplains are discharge areas for regional groundwater which in general leads to an upward hydraulic gradient from the Murray Group to the Monomon Formation and Coonambidgal Formation (Crosbie et al. 2007). The groundwater is saline and secondary salinisation of areas of the floodplain has occurred within the boundary of the site.

Observations of the floodplain surface soils reveals that the alluvial soils of the floodplains comprise a grey cracking clay base (Coonambidgal Formation) overlying a coarse sand aquifer (Monoman Formation). The surface soils have been shaped by surface water processes including flooding and erosion, thereby creating a surface soil mix of sands, silts and clays of varying portions. Recent aeolian sand deposits have been blown onto the floodplain forming lunettes whose subsequent erosion has resulted in sand dispersion onto floodplain clays. Cliff face erosion has also resulted in sandy deposits over the floodplain soils.

Banrock Station Wetland Complex is a predominantly freshwater system and although salinity fluctuates (mainly reflecting changes in the River Murray source water), the system remains fresh at all times with electrical conductivity typically between 500 and 1000 μ S/cm (Olsen 1997; Tucker 2003). Turbidity at the time of listing ranged from 50 NTU to over 300 NTU (Olsen 1997; Tucker 2003). There is limited data on nutrient levels at the time of listing and currently, this remains a knowledge gap for the site.

The climate is relatively unpredictable with moderate to high inter-annual variation. The regional climate is characterised as semi-arid with warm to hot, dry summers and cool winters with variable rainfall. Approximately 80 % of the rainfall falls between May and October, with the highest monthly average rainfall between 17 - 21 mm per month. Total annual rainfall is approximately 260 mm per year. Temperatures are warm to hot in summer ranging from a minimum of 15.5° C to a maximum of 31.1° C. During winter temperatures are cooler with maximum temperatures or 15.2° C falling to a minimum of 5.3° C (data for Berri 1926-1963) (Bureau of Meteorology 2009). Total annual net evapotranspiration was calculated for Banrock Lagoon to be approximately 1300 mm (Gippel 2006).

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, and climate (including climate type).

The Murray-Darling Basin occurs within five states of Australia and has a surface area of 1.06 million square kilometres (14% of Australia). It covers 14 degrees of latitude (24 to 38 degrees South). The River Murray is 2,530km long from its source in the Australian Alps to its mouth. Banrock Station Wetland Complex is located near the lower end of the basin, approximately 430 km from the river mouth. Much of the Basin is flat, with highlands occurring in the east and south where metamorphic and igneous rocks outcrop, providing the greatest relief in the basin. Sandstones and other sedimentary rocks also outcrop in the Basin (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council 1987). The Murray has five geomorphological tracts (Mackay and Eastburn 1990): The Headwaters: extending about 450 river km from the source. This tract is <2% of the Basin area, but contributes nearly 40% of the discharge. The Riverine Plains: a flat, 800 river km tract of river and lake deposits where the River Murray flows in shallow, branching, meandering channels. The Mallee Trench: an 850 river km plain of marine origin, crossed by the river in a well-defined incised channel. The Mallee Gorge: a 350 river km channel flanked by steep limestone cliffs. The Lakes and Coorong: including the terminal lakes, Lake Alexandrina and Albert, and the Coorong. This area also is a Ramsar site.

The Banrock Station Wetland Complex Ramsar Site straddles the boundary of the Mallee Trench and Mallee Gorge.

The plains of the Basin's southern rivers have poor grey and brown clay soils. These alluvial plains occupy one third of the Basin (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council 1987).

Rainfall varies from over 1400mm per annum in the highlands to below 300mm in the west and northwest. Annual variability of rainfall increases inland. The regional climate is highly variable, with the occurrence of floods and drought an accepted natural phenomenon. Temperatures range from average summer maxima of over 30° C in the northwest, to winter maxima averaging less than 0° C in alpine areas. Except in alpine areas, potential evaporation far exceeds rainfall (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council 1987).

18. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

This wetland has limited influence on the local hydrology. The wetland is believed to influence the local expression of groundwater, however the degree to which the wetland operates as a recharge versus a discharge site (depending on inundation levels) is still being investigated. The fact that the Banrock Lagoon is able to be dried to cracking soils indicates that the main wetland area may not be a significant discharge site.

19. Wetland Types

a) presence:

Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar "Classification System for Wetland Type" present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the Explanatory Notes & Guidelines.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)

Inland: L • \underline{M} • \underline{N} • O • \underline{P} • Q • \underline{R} • Sp • Ss • Tp Ts • U • Va • Vt • \underline{W} • \underline{Xf} • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

b) dominance:

List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.

P, R, W, Xf, M, N (estimated) (current water regime is intermittent in the main wetland areas as opposed to permanent inundation at listing see section 6).

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site, and the ecosystem services of the site and the benefits derived from them.

The Banrock Station Wetland Complex comprises two main ecosystem types: floodplain wetlands and the adjoining open mallee-box woodland community. The floodplain wetlands are dominated by River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), Black Box (*Eucalyptus largiflorens*), Lignum, Samphire and sedge and grassland communities. There are large expanses of open water when Banrock Lagoon is fully inundated. Eastern Lagoon is a Samphire dominated, salt affected, wetland and the Wigley Reach wetlands are predominantly intermittent wetlands with a Eucalyptus overstorey. Inlet and Banrock Creek provide flowing water habitat when connected to the river. The site provides habitat for a wide range of species including 61 species of waterbirds and several locally, regionally or nationally threatened species.

Prior to the re-introduction of wetting and drying cycles, and related management actions, the Banrock Station Wetland Complex was a highly degraded system and landscape. The rehabilitation of the site, which is ongoing, has seen the re-emergence of many plant species and the return of waterbird species that used the site previously. Active human intervention is also encouraging further re-establishment of vegetation communities.

The adjoining mallee-box woodland community is intimately linked to the floodplain wetland system. Species such as the vulnerable Regent Parrot depend on River Red Gums in the wetland (in which it breeds), and the adjacent mallee ecosystem for feeding. The Blue Mallee (*Eucalyptus cyanophylla*) Open mallee plant community found at Banrock Station is considered poorly conserved in South Australia (Neagle 1995).

Critical ecosystem services supplied by the site are all supporting services, including hydrological processes, physical habitat, biodiversity, ecological connectivity and threatened wetland species, habitats and ecosystems. A number of other ecosystem services are also provided by the site, with the cultural services, notably education and recreation, being particularly important.

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14, Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present* – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.

The dominant wetland vegetation types on the floodplain include River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) woodland, Black Box (*Eucalyptus largiflorens*) woodland, Lignum (*Duma florulenta*) shrubland, Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Narrow-leaf Bulrush (*Typha domingensis*) sedgeland. Over 120 species of plants have been recorded on the site (data from Kuys and Clarke 2003; Constellations Wines Australia 2008; DEH unpublished). Species considered threatened in South Australia are presented in Appendix A.

In the mallee woodland ecosystem Blue Mallee (Eucalyptus cyanophylla), Red Mallee (Eucalyptus oleosa), Beaked Red Mallee (Eucalyptus socialis), Dryland Tea Tree (Melaleuca lanceolata), Umbrella Bush (Acacia ligulata), Oswald's Wattle (Acacia oswaldii) and Bullock Bush (Alectryon oleifolius ssp. canescens) are the dominant species with various Maireana spp. and other annual herbaceous and perennial grasses (Kuys and Clarke 2003). The vegetation association Blue Mallee (Eucalyptus cyanophylla), Open mallee (open scrub) with sparse sclerophyllous shrubs is endemic to the 'Mallee Block' where it is restricted to far northwestern Victoria and the upper Murray Mallee in South Australia (Kahrimanis et al. 2001). This association is poorly conserved in South Australia and considered a high conservation priority (Kahrimanis et al. 2001).

Over 2012/13, an increased effort in flora surveys and field observations at Banrock boosted the floristic diversity records for Banrock to 266 species. The result was a double edged sword with the known introduced species and population sizes increasing substantially by 49 species (See <u>Appendix D</u> for species of concern). Detailed records of weed management within the conservation zone have been kept since 2008 whilst older records are rather patchy. Our current weed management practices fall into line with Australian and state government priorities and include localised priorities for Banrock as listed in Appendix D.

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Table 4: Inva	sive flora	a species	prioritized	for management.

Common name	Scientific name
	Aster sp.
Spiny Rush	Juncus acutus
Noogoora Burr	Xanthium occidentale
Thistles	including Onopordum acanthium
Boneseed	Chrysanthemoides monilifera ssp. Monilifera
African Boxthorn	Lycium ferocissimum
Gazania	Gazania linearis
Salvation Jane	Echium plantagineum

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.

A number of vertebrates recorded from the site are listed at the state level or are considered regionally important (see Appendix C).

Bird records from Banrock Station Wetland Complex list 138 species (Birds Australia 2009; DEH unpublished). Fourteen species of waterbirds and wetland dependent birds recorded at Banrock Station Wetland Complex are listed as threatened species in South Australia (see Appendix C).

Banrock Station Wetland Complex supports a diverse number of woodland birds with over 85 species recorded at the site. Eight species are considered rare in South Australia (Appendix C).

Seven native mammals have been recorded from the site, 14 species of reptiles and 8 amphibians have been also been recorded on site.

During the last two drying cycles of the wetland (2008-2009 & 2012-2013), approximately six tons of carp were removed from the wetland. The reestablishment of dry-wet cycles is the only way to limit the impact of the carp on the wetland. Eastern gambusia (*Gambusia holbrooki*) and goldfish (*Carassius auratus auratus*) were also recorded attempting to enter Banrock Station Wetland Complex, with goldfish occurring in large numbers (Fredberg et al. 2009).

On land, feral cats (Felis catus), Red fox (Vulpes vulpes), European rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus) and European hare (Lepus europaeus) are present and subject of a strict control and management plan (e.g. feral proof fence and baiting).

23. Social and cultural values:

a) Describe if the site has any general social and/or cultural values e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values:

The site is recognised for its cultural significance to Indigenous Australians. Around the wetland are numerous indications of former habitation such as camp fires, stone implements and tools, shield and canoe trees. To-date up to four camp-sites, 17 hearth/fire places, 1 midden, 394 lithic artefacts and 17 scar trees have been recorded on site.

In terms of the social and cultural significance of the wetland to the early European settlers in Australia, Banrock Station was formerly part of a larger holding called Thurk Station. Each year, since 1997, for the National Police Remembrance Day, on 27th September, a special event takes place at Banrock.

Representatives of the South Australian Police meet by a memorial on the shores of the River Murray, to attend a service in memory of police officers killed in the execution of their duty.

In the close vicinity of the memorial, on the 7th May 1847, Police Corporal William Murray Wickham and Mounted Constable John Dunning Carter drowned while trying to cross the river on a canoe. They were the first casualties of the then only nine-year-old South Australian Police. The memorial was built out of stones from the old Thurk Station (now Banrock Station) chimney and was unveiled on Police Foundation Day in 1997 just 'three kilometres from the accident scene 'to honour the officers and mark the 150th anniversary of their deaths.

The site has growing social significance for the region and the local community. The site provides a model or demonstration for how degraded floodplains, common along the River Murray, can be restored to productive ecosystems. This is an important social asset offered by the Banrock Station Wetland Complex.

We have in average one school visit per month. Through a network of relationships with local schools, we are able to engage children in habitat restoration and wetland monitoring programs. In 2012-2013, we planted 6,600 seedlings of native trees, bushes and grasses with approximately 200 children and dozens of volunteers.

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning?

If Yes, tick the box **\Delta** and describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
 - The site has high value as a demonstration site for the Ramsar concept of 'wise use' and provides for recreation, tourism, education and scientific research. Up to 100,000 people visit the site per year, which gives Accolade Wines Australia significant potential to showcase 'wise use'. The self-guided walks through the wetland and bird hides enhance the experience and serve to educate visitors.
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland:
- sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

a) within the Ramsar site:

The Banrock Station Wetland Complex is Crown land under perpetual lease to BRL Hardy Wine Company, owned by Accolade Wines.

b) in the surrounding area:

The Banrock Station Wetland Complex is bounded to the north-west, north and east by the River Murray. Land adjoining the site to the south and south-west is privately held. To the south-east, across the River Murray is the Loch Luna Game Reserve managed by the South Australian Department of Environment and Heritage, and the Overland Corner floodplain managed by the National Trust of South Australia, and some smaller parcels of privately held land.

25. Current land (including water) use:

a) within the Ramsar site:

Conservation, education, science and recreation.

At listing, irrigation pumps extracted water from the main wetland, however these were relocated to the River Murray in 2006. This modification allowed the reintroduction of wetting and drying cycles similar to the ephemeral wetlands that existed prior to the construction of locks on the River Murray.

b) in the surroundings/catchment:

Viticulture, irrigated perennial horticultural, conservation, cropping, residential, and some grazing of modified pastures. Agriculture is the dominant economic activity in the Basin, which is Australia's most important agriculture region. Most of the basin's area is devoted to pastoral and dryland farming (sheep, cattle and grain crops). However there are parts of the Basin where irrigation dominates the landscape and involves the growing of pasture, fodder and grain crops, cotton, and horticulture crops. Almost 75% of Australia's irrigated crops occur in the Murray-Darling Basin. Forestry, mining and electricity generation are also significant economic activities within the Basin. Irrigated agriculture is a major landuse in the Riverland region of South Australia.

26. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

a) within the Ramsar site:

Past basin wide water management/use led to an alteration of the natural water regime resulting in loss of small to medium floods, altered ecological connectivity, loss of habitat diversity, facilitation of invasive species, and stressed riparian vegetation. Establishment of Lock 3 in 1925 resulted in the original ephemeral wetland system becoming permanently inundated, leading to River Red Gum death. Rising groundwater leading to salinisation of the floodplain has led to severe stress in the riparian vegetation and establishment of Samphire vegetation associations.

Invasive species are a significant issue on site, particularly the Common Carp (Cyprinus carpio). Impacts of carp are known to include: predation on eggs and larvae of aquatic fauna species (including its own); feeding on seeds and seedling of native aquatic flora; competition for food resources; breeding/spawning habitat alteration for native fish; uprooting vegetation; increase of turbidity then anoxia (through prevention of solar light to reach bottom of wetland); and increase in organic material through excretion of fecal matter.

Sixty tons of Common Carp were removed from Banrock Lagoon in 1994 when the wetland was dried. Carp returned to the wetland as juveniles underwent spawning and recruitment each year (Smith and Fleer 2007). Management of the water regime prior to the pumps being relocated from the main wetland may have favoured recruitment by lowering water levels in winter and raising them in spring. This water regime promoted floodplain grasses and vegetation to establish during winter months thus providing spawning and nursery habitat for carp in spring (Smith and Fleer 2007, Conallin, et al. 2012). Complete drying of the wetland in 2007 and in 2013 resulted in over an estimated 6 tons of Common Carp perishing in Banrock Lagoon. Carp screens on the inlet and outlet creek combined with complete drying of the wetland bed will significantly reduce adult carp numbers within the system.

As the wetland has been permanently flooded for several decades, this might have resulted to ideal conditions for the development of Acid Sulphate Soils. At present this is not considered a major threat as long as the dry and wet cycle is respected. Soil samples have been taken after the complete dry—out of 2007, and again this year (2013). Analyses are under process by the CSIRO.

Impacts from recreation and tourism activities are well managed and considered minor. Irrigation for vineyard operations is closely monitored but has the potential to contribute to rising groundwater and associated ecological impacts.

b) in the surrounding area:

Water management and use, such as river regulation and irrigated cropping and horticulture are the most significant ongoing threats to the Ramsar site. Other catchment scale issues are deteriorating water quality and habitat degradation. Competition for water resources – Access to a water allocation for environmental purposes is critically important to ongoing rehabilitation of the Banrock Station Wetland Complex. Drought conditions in south-eastern Australia have been severe with water restrictions limiting access to environmental water allocations.

27. Conservation measures taken:

a) List national and/or international category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site:

In particular, if the site is partly or wholly a World Heritage Site and/or a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, please give the names of the site under these designations.

b) If appropriate, list the IUCN (1994) protected areas category/ies which apply to the site (tick the box or boxes as appropriate):

Ia \square ; Ib \square ; II \square ; III \square ; IV \square ; VI \square

- c) Does an officially approved management plan exist; and is it being implemented?: Accolade Wines Australia (2008) Banrock Station Wetland Complex Wetland of International Importance. Ramsar site 1221, Management Plan 2008 to 2014. Revision June 2008. This management plan is being implemented.
- d) Describe any other current management practices:
 - Development of, and implementation of the Water Act 2007; including establishment of the Murray Darling Basin Authority and the development of the Basin Plan.
 - Establishment of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to manage Commonwealth water holdings in accordance with the environmental watering plan (a component of the Basin Plan).

Site management

- Improvement of visitor educational and awareness facilities including the 8 km walking trail
- Improvements in water management/use e.g. irrigation offtake relocated.
- Site monitoring of water quality and biota in response to current watering regime.
- Revegetation work; improved habitat connectivity.
- Feral animal eradication and feral-free enclosures.
- Weeding

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

The planned project to install a carp cage on the outlet creek in 2009/2010 had to be abandoned through lack of funding and commitment of partner organisation.

To improve native fish passage a new inlet was constructed in August 2013. Possibilities for new outlets are being investigated.

Revegetation of mallee and black box vegetation to reconnect isolated vegetation associations.

Environmental water allocation to stressed River Red Gum communities on Wigley Reach.

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

Several research organisations, Universities and government agencies are involved in research on site. In addition Banrock Station staff are actively involved in undertaking ecological monitoring and rehabilitation activities. The research has been focused on understanding floodplain ecology, drivers and stressors to the site, with the view of improved sustainable management of the site adopting wise use principals. Current activities include:

Soil health monitoring

Groundwater monitoring

Tree health assessments

Threatened fauna surveys including Southern Bell Frog, Regent Parrot, etc.

Fish surveys

Threatened flora surveys

Invasive species monitoring

Waterbird and woodland bird observations Reptile and small mammal trapping Restoration activities – vegetation planting

30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site:

e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

Banrock Station Wetland Complex includes the Wine and Wetland Centre which was designed to capture the imagination and interest of those that come to the site. Built in 1999 the design of the building, and its location overlooking the floodplain wetland, mallee woodland buffer zone and the grape growing areas focus visitors attention on the wetland and the concepts of wise use. Information panels within the Centre are designed to inform visitors and encourage them to take one of the walks available which will provide them with more detailed information about the site and its integrated management regime.

A series of self-guided walks were opened in May 2000 and a boardwalk trail was completed in 2001, which included information huts and 5 bird hides for observing waterbirds. Banrock Station offers four self-guided walks around the wetland; one of 2 kilometres, 4.5 kilometres and one of 8 kilometres around the main lagoon, with an additional 1 km section across the wetland bed when it is dry. Along the walking trails there are strategically placed Story Centres and Information Shelters which provide detailed information about the site.

Banrock Station Winery has produced a comprehensive, well illustrated, 90 page field guide to the property and Ramsar site. The guide introduces visitors to the sites Indigenous and European history, the management of the winery and describes in detail the ecology of 6 landscape zones found on site. The guide includes information on significant species as well as a list of flora and fauna and is designed to be used as an informative guide on the walking trails.

Banrock receives on average the visit of one school per month. Through a network of relationships with local schools, we are able to engage children in habitat restoration. In 2012-2013, we planted 6,600 seedlings of native trees, bushes and grasses with approximately 200 children and dozens of volunteers. Open air class workshops are organised (waterbirds, water quality, etc.).

The site is showcased by the company and Banrock staff welcomes approximately one business group per month for a guided tour on the wetland. Information on the wetland is also showcased during fairs and business events, where the Banrock Station-Accolade Wines group has a presence.

Information on the wetland is also well distributed to the 1800 + staff of the company worldwide through a monthly internal web-based publication.

The public has access to information bulletins, rangers notes and pictorial material on the wetland through the Banrock website.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

Approximately 100,000 people visit the site per year. Recreation and tourism are a key feature of the site and activities have been done in a sustainable manner with location of boardwalks and trails being sensitive to maintaining the natural environment and minimising disturbance.

The main activities are interpretive nature walk along designated trails.

32. Jurisdiction: Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

The Banrock Station Wetland Complex is privately managed under the guidance of the Department of Environment and Heritage South Australia.

33. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

The day to day management of the site is the responsibility of the wetland manager and staff of the Banrock Station Wine and Wetlands Centre.

Contact: Dr. Christophe Tourenq, Wetland Manager, Banrock Station PO Box 346, Kingston-on-Murray, SA 5331 Tel +61 8 8583 0299, Fax +61 8 8583 0166 Email: christophe.tourenq@banrockstation.com.au

34. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

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Appendix A: Example of significant changes in habitat at Banrock Station Wetland Complex between 1993 (start of rehabilitation) and 2005. (The next photopoint monitoring is scheduled for November 2013).

April 1993



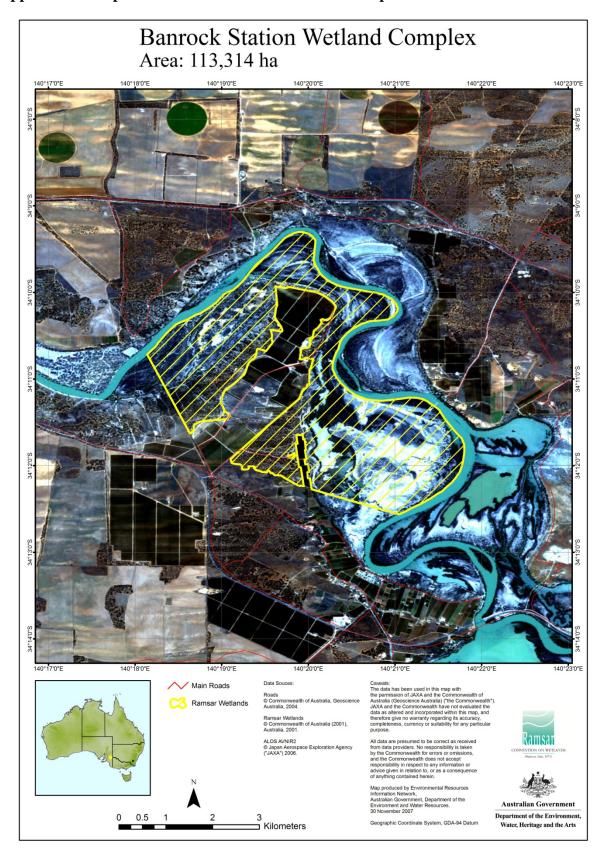
May 1998



November 2005



Appendix B: Map of the Banrock Station Wetland Complex Ramsar site



Appendix C: Listed species and communities of conservation significance at Banrock Station Wetland Complex

Plant species conservation status based on Baker et al. (2005) and regionally threatened communities based on Kahramanis et al. (2001). Data sourced from DEH (unpublished).

Bird records based on data supplied by Birds Australia (2009) and DEH (unpublished).

Fish conservation status at the State level is based on Hammer et al. (2007).

E = endangered, R = rare, V = vulnerable, CE= Critically Endangered, E IUCN = globally endangered.

Group	Common Name	Scientific Name	National/ International	State
Waterbird	ls			
	Australasian Shoveler	Anas rhynchotis		R
	Australasian Darter	Anhinga novaehollandiae		R
	Intermediate Egret	Ardea intermedia		R
	Musk Duck	Biziura lobata		R
	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta		R
	Latham's Snipe	Gallinago hardwickii		R
	Blue-billed Duck	Oxyura australis		R
	Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps cristatus		R
	Baillon's Crake	Porzana pusilla		R
	Spotless Crake	Porzana tabuensis		R
	Freckled Duck	Stictonetta naevosa		V
	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola		R
Wetland a	ssociated non waterb	irds		
	White-bellied Sea Eagle	Haliaeetus leucogaster		Е
	Regent Parrot eastern	Polytelis anthopeplus	Е	V
Woodland	l birds			
	Bush-stone Curlew	Burhinus grallarius		V
	Pink Cockatoo	Cacatua leadbeateri		V
	Golden-headed Cisticola	Cisticola exilis		R
	White-winged Chough	Corcorax melanorhamphos		R

	Brown Quail	Coturnix ypsilophora		V
	Blue-faced honeyeater	Entomyzon cyanotis		R
	Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus		R
	Major Mitchell Cockatoo	Lophochroa leadbeateri		V
	Restless Flycatcher	Myiagra inquieta		R
	Gilbert's Whistler	Pachycephala inornata		R
	Little Friarbird	Philemon citreogularis		R
	Striped Honeyeater	Plectorhyncha lanceolata		R
Fish				
	Freshwater catfish	Tandanus tandanus		Е
Amphibians	S			
	Southern Bell Frog	Litoria raniformis	E IUCN, V	V
Mammals				
Introduced to the site	Brush-tailed Bettong	Betongia penicillata	Е	
Introduced to the site	Greater Bilby	Macrotis lagotis	Е	
	Common Brushtail Possum	Trichosurus vulpecula		R
Reptiles				
	Broad-shelled Tortoise	Chelondina expansa		V
	Lace Monitor (Tree Goanna)	Varanus varius		R
Plants				
	Swamp Daisy	Brachyscome basaltica var. gracilis		R
	Tufted Burr- Daisy	Calotis scapigera		R
	Spiny Lignum	Muehlenbeckia horrida ssp. horrida		R
	Creeping Boobialla	Myoporum parvifolium		R
Regionally '	Threatened Commu	nities within the South Austra	lia Murray Dar	ling

Basin	
River corridor woodlands, <i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i> and <i>E. largiflorens</i> woodlands – no priority category but listed by Kahrimanis et al. (2001) as threatened.	
Lignum <i>Duma florulenta</i> Shrubland – no priority category but listed by Kahrimanis et al. (2001) as threatened.	
Common Reed <i>Phragmites australis</i> /Narrow-leaf Bulrush <i>Typha domingensis</i> Sedgeland – no priority category, but listed as threatened by Kahrimanis et al. (2001).	
Eucalyptus cyanophylla Open mallee (open scrub) with sparse sclerophyllous shrubs – priority 3 – poorly conserved	

Appendix D: Priority weeds within Banrock Station Ramsar/Conservation Zone from national importance (red) to local importance (yellow). Whilst this is not a comprehensive list of the fifty plus weed species these are currently the species requiring the most attention.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status
Lycium ferocissimum	African Boxthorn	WoNS
Tamarix aphylla	Athel Pine	WoNS
Chrysanthemoides monilifera ssp. monilifera	Boneseed	WoNS
Cruscuta campestris	Golden dodder	WoNS
Salix sp	Willow	WoNS
Xanthium spinosum	Bathurst Burr	Regional
Marrubium vulgare	Horehound	Regional
Echium plantagineum	Salvation Jane	Regional
Chondrilla Juncea	Skeleton Weed	Regional
Senecio pterophorus	African Daisy	Local
Gazania linearis	Gazania	Local
Psilocaulon granulicaule	Match-Head Plant	Local
Xanthium strumarium	Noogoora Burr	Local
Asphodelus fistulosus	Onion weed	Local
Cirsium vulgare	Spear Thistle	Local
Juncus acutus	Spiny Rush	Local
Nicotiana glauca	Wild Tobacco	Local

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