

Community-focused research centre praised for uniting science and local knowledge to tackle climate change at end of Murray-Darling Basin

An Australian Government review of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Research Centre has highlighted the success of its community-first approach to vital climate change research in the internationally significant region. The Department for Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water review found that the Centre has not only enhanced research quality and relevance but established trust and mutual respect with community groups – a rare achievement in environmental management.

The CLLMM Research Centre considers the knowledge and experience of communities, First Nations Peoples, scientists and managing agencies equally as it addresses climate change challenges. The Centre is based in Goolwa, South Australia, where Australia's longest river system meets the sea – a region of immense cultural, spiritual, environmental and economic importance.

“Communities and First Nations Peoples hold significant knowledge that can be used alongside western science to create shared learning and inform decision making. The model that we're delivering through the CLLMM Research Centre can be rolled out in other locations, to help provide 'active hope' and community purpose to address our future challenges,” said Dr Alec Rolston, Director of the Goyder Institute for Water Research and CLLMM Research Centre.

Thousands of people have connected with the Centre with many contributing to its science program's design and delivery.

“The CLLMM Research Centre has been invaluable for the local community. People feel heard, and their knowledge and ideas have been incorporated, where they are largely missed elsewhere,” a survey respondent said.

The review found that the CLLMM Research Centre, although only launched in January 2024, had established itself as a critical resource connecting different forms of knowledge and science to inform decision making. The science program's outputs were seen to significantly advance our understanding of how the region will change and to be highly applicable to management and decision making in the future.

“The Centre acts as a neutral convener, creating opportunities for dialogue and relationship-building across sectors,” said one survey respondent.

“Working together in partnership is so important to address the uncertainty that our changing climate will bring. The Centre is viewed as essential for building resilience and preparedness for future challenges,” said Dr Rolston.

The review found strong consensus that the Centre must continue beyond its current funding cycle, which ends on 30 April 2026. Climate change, ecological degradation, the need for long-term data collection, and maintaining community and First Nations involvement and momentum were cited as the main reasons for sustained investment.

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Full report: goyderinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/CLLMM-Research-Centre-Science-Program-Mid-term-review-Aug-2025.pdf

About the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) region

The CLLMM region is listed as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, is an Icon Site under the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's The Living Murray Program, and the Coorong is a National Park. The area is the only location within the Murray-Darling Basin which will be impacted by climate change through changes in river flows, water quality and sea level rise.

About the CLLMM Research Centre

The CLLMM Research Centre, launched in January 2024, is part of the Goyder Institute for Water Research. It works with communities, First Nations, managing agencies and scientists to investigate the impacts of climate change on the CLLMM. It hosts the largest ever scientific collaboration in the region, with over 150 project team members, including scientists, community and managers, and more than 17 local organisations, and 26 state, national and international collaborators involved in the delivery of 29 scientific projects.

Australian Government funding for the Centre ends on 30 April 2026. The sustainability of the Centre is critical to continue momentum and community and First Nations buy-in and participation in research and knowledge generation for the region's future.

<https://cllmmresearchcentre.org/>

About the Goyder Institute for Water Research

The Goyder Institute for Water Research is a collaborative partnership of the South Australian Government through the Department for Environment and Water, Australia's national science agency CSIRO, Flinders University, the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia.

<https://goyderinstitute.org/>

Media contacts and resources

Dr Alec Rolston, Director Goyder Institute for Water Research and CLLMM Research Centre
Ph: 0405 846 275 Email: director@goyderinstitute.org

Jane French, Centre Manager, CLLMM Research Centre, Goyder Institute for Water Research
Ph: 0438 793 400 Email: jane.french@goyderinstitute.org