

South Australia's Land-based Protected and Conserved Area Strategy

Draft version



Government
of South Australia



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Your views are important

South Australia's Draft Land-based Protected and Conserved Area Strategy provides direction for expanding and enhancing protected and conserved areas, so that biodiversity can thrive and places of special value are protected.

It is released for public comment to provide members of the community an opportunity to express their views on how protected and conserved areas should be expanded and enhanced over the next 10 years.

Feedback received will be considered before the development of a final strategy. Once developed, the final strategy will be submitted to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for consideration.

I encourage all interested people to assist in shaping the strategic direction of park additions by making a submission on this draft strategy.

Strategy on a page

Vision: To build a system of protected and conserved areas that enables South Australia's b

Purpose: To drive the strategic expansion and enhancement of South Australia's protected and

Guiding principles:

- Target areas that protect biodiversity and conservation values
- Increase comprehensiveness, adequacy, and representativeness
- Enable species and ecosystems to persist, adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing climate

Goals:

1

Build a comprehensive, adequate and representative protected area system that safeguards and enhances biodiversity

2

Develop a protected area system that enables biodiversity to persist, adapt and thrive despite climate change

3

Strategic priorities:

Increase protection of underrepresented IBRA bioregions and subregions

Increase protection of land with priority conservation and wilderness values

Increase protection of land that enhances climate resilience

Increase protection of biodiversity at risk to the impacts of climate change

Protect areas and landscapes that are significant to First Nations

Enabling actions:

- **Develop and implement an investment framework** to guide how government works with conservation partners to fund the expansion and enhancement of the protected and conserved area system.
- **Complete an audit of Crown land** identified for inclusion in the protected and conserved area system, and identify priorities for the addition of these areas based on the values outlined in this strategy.
- Following the prioritisation of Crown land, **provide annual updates on progress** to convert lands to the protected and conserved area system.
- **Convene a biennial forum** with private land conservation partners and the philanthropy sector to discuss priorities and coordinate action.

biodiversity to thrive and protects places of special value.

and conserved areas.

- Improve ecological integrity, connectivity and resilience
- Safeguard places that are important to people
- Include land for restoration that can support biodiversity at risk of extinction

Protect places that are important to people

4

Develop a robust protected and conserved area system that leverages diverse tenure arrangements

as, objects ape features nificant to s people	Protect places with significant heritage and geological values	Protect places with significant recreational and landscape values	Grow the private land contribution to our protected and conserved areas	Grow the contribution of land outside of formal designation to our conserved area network
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- **Update spatial prioritisation** using the 'outcomes assessment' and 'wilderness assessment' to support data-driven acquisitions, identify priority restoration opportunities, and support the adaptation of key ecosystems to climate change.
- **Develop and implement a long-term communications strategy** to showcase the value of protected areas and better understand community aspirations for the protected and conserved area system.
- **Seek to better understand First Nations social, economic, and cultural aspirations for Country**, and work with communities to support capacity and identify locations of cultural significance that require protection.
- **Develop options for an expanded suite of private land covenants** for improving conservation outcomes.
- Work with the Australian Government to **implement trials** that test tools, frameworks, and policy settings in support of **Conserved Areas** in South Australia.

Introduction

Background and context

South Australia is home to a diverse range of plants, animals, fungi and other organisms, which make up our state's biodiversity. From deserts and salt lakes in the north, through to mallee scrub and temperate forests in the south, these species have adapted to a variety of environments and climates. This biodiversity, which underpins the state's ongoing environmental, cultural, economic, and physical wellbeing, is under threat.

South Australia's biodiversity is in decline due to several ongoing pressures, including invasive species, land clearing and degradation, climate change, altered fire and water regimes, and unsustainable use of resources (Biodiversity Council 2023; Legge et al., 2023). This biodiversity loss follows global patterns – with the predicted rate of species extinction at approximately 1,000 times faster than the expected normal variation. In South Australia, 12 per cent of native animals, and over 800 native plants, are now threatened with extinction. It is vital that steps are taken to halt and, where possible, reverse this trend.

In response to global biodiversity challenges, parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). This framework includes the ambitious goal of protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030, which has set a clear direction for conservation across the globe.

As one of the signatories to the GBF, Australia is committed to achieving the ambitious target of protecting 30% of land by 2030 – commonly known as “30 by 30”. The South Australian Government has agreed to work towards this ambitious goal, contributing to a coordinated, national effort. To drive this work, the Australian Government has developed the National roadmap for protecting and conserving 30% of Australia's land by 2030, along with guidance on implementing conserved areas to complement protected areas towards meeting the target. Achieving 30 by 30 will require contributions from all sectors, and the role of private protected areas is becoming increasingly important, with sector strategies being reshaped to align with and support this national ambition.



The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

On 19 December 2022, all parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The GBF is made up of 4 global 2050 goals, and 23 global 2030 targets. These targets relate to different aspects of biodiversity conservation and restoration, including commitments to nature's contribution to people, access and benefit sharing, and tools and solutions for mainstreaming and implementation.

Target 3

“Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.”

What does this strategy do?

The Department for Environment and Water (the department) and the Parks and Wilderness Council (the council) have developed this strategy to drive meaningful action in expanding and enhancing our protected and conserved areas over the next ten years. It builds on past efforts, uses the latest science, and strives to achieve national and global ambitions.

By setting a clear vision and direction, this strategy will help guide collaboration between all levels of government and conservation partners, including the Aboriginal nations, industry, landholders and environmental organisations, to focus on agreed priorities and shared outcomes.

Purpose: to drive the strategic expansion and enhancement of south australia's protected and conserved areas.

Vision: to build a system of protected and conserved areas that enables South Australia's biodiversity to thrive and protects places of special value.

This strategy applies to both private and public lands, and includes Country formally managed by First Nations peoples, for instance, through Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs). It focusses on land-based areas, including inland waterway, rivers, lakes, estuaries and some intertidal locations. It does not address marine parks or the management of reserves, as these are guided by other mechanisms, for instance park management plans.

How will the strategy operate?

The department will lead the delivery of the strategy, working closely with the council and conservation partners to achieve its vision. The roles and responsibilities of each group are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Roles and responsibilities

The Department	Parks and Wilderness Council	Partners
- Owner of the strategy - Makes key decisions - Drives strategy delivery - Report to the council - Delivers relevant enabling actions	- Reports to the Minister on progress - Provides ongoing advice - Supports relevant enabling actions	Support relevant enabling actions

The department will report annually to the council on progress to ensure accountability and transparency. The department will formally review the actions at the 5-year mark, and this may be informed by broader reviews of Australia’s progress toward the 30 by 30 target, both nationally and internationally.

Implementation will be guided by the best available scientific knowledge, and First Nations’ knowledge, expertise, and connections with Country. Delivery will require collaborative partnerships, recognition of community aspirations, and flexibility and responsiveness.

The outcomes of the strategy will be influenced by and seek to achieve community aspirations and intergenerational equity, but its highest priority is to protect, conserve, and where possible, improve biodiversity.

What are protected and conserved areas?

Protected areas

The term protected area is used to describe land specifically managed for conservation. This is distinct from other land where conservation may be a secondary outcome rather than the primary goal.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines a protected area as:

“A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”

To provide a framework for categorising protected areas, the IUCN has developed 6 Protected Area Management Categories, ranging from strict nature reserves and wilderness areas (Category 1a and 1b) through to protected areas with sustainable use of natural resources (Category VI).

In Australia, protected areas exist across public and private lands, and include Country formally managed by First Nations peoples, for instance, through IPAs. Together, these areas form part of Australia's National Reserve System (NRS), which recognises and tracks areas managed for conserving Australia's unique landscapes, plants and animals across the country.

In South Australia:

- Protected areas on public land are established under a range of legislative frameworks - these frameworks offer different levels of protection and management outcomes depending on their intent, which is reflected according to the IUCN category they are assigned.
- Protected areas on private land are secured through legally binding conservation covenants or heritage agreements.
- IPAs can occur on either public or private land, and are managed by First Nations peoples, protecting ecological values while supporting cultural connection and Indigenous land management practices.



Table 2 outlines the different types of protected areas in South Australia, including the legislation under which they are established. Refer to Appendix 1 for more detail, including the IUCN categorisation of each protected area type.

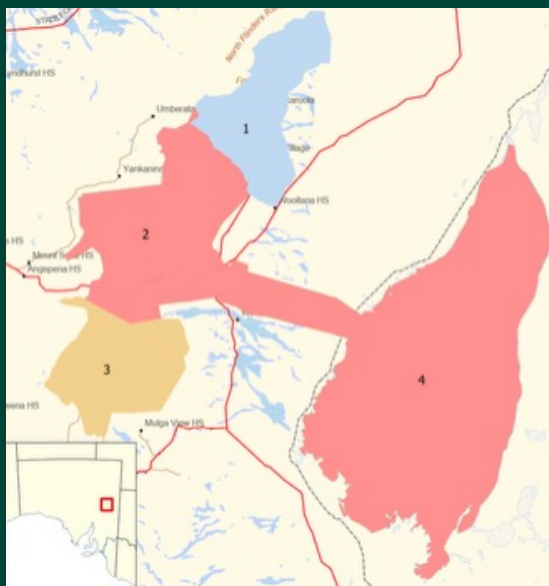
Table 2: South Australia's protected areas

Type of land	Protected Area	Legislation
Public land	• Conservation Parks including co-managed parks • Game Reserves • National Parks including co-managed parks • Recreation Parks • Regional Reserves	<i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972</i>
	Crown Land Reserve	<i>Crown Lands Management Act 2009</i>
	Native Forest Reserve	<i>Forestry Act 1950</i>
	Wilderness Protection Areas and Zones including co-managed Areas	<i>Wilderness Protection Act 1992</i>
Public or private land	IPAs	Through agreement with the Australian Government
Private land	Private conservation reserves	Through agreement with the Australian Government
	Arkaroola Protection Area	<i>Arkaroola Protection Act 2012</i>
	Heritage Agreements	<i>Native Vegetation Act 1991</i>



Case Study: Private and public protected areas working together to protect a landscape

North Flinders Ranges is home to a variety of diverse wildlife, rich cultural heritage, and impressive geological features. In the northeastern corner there are 4 contiguous protected areas, spanning approximately 109 km north to south, and 106 km east to west. These protected areas, which exist on both public and private lands, combine to achieve landscape-scale conservation and cultural heritage outcomes.



1 Arkaroola Protection Area

Private protected area on a pastoral lease, managed by the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary.

2 Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park

Public protected area on public land, co-managed by the Adnyamathanha people and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

3 Nantawarrina IPA

IPA on private land, managed by the Nipapanha Community.

4 Lake Frome National Park

Public protected area on public land, managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Conserved areas

Conserved areas are an emerging in-situ classification that supports conservation outcomes on land that cannot be formally protected. Unlike protected areas, conserved areas' primary management objective does not need to be the conservation of biodiversity, but they must still achieve a conservation outcome. They are not legally designated, and do not contribute to the NRS or align with the IUCN protected area categories. Despite these differences, they are expected to become an important part of our conservation approach and will help contribute to achieving 30 by 30.

The concept of conserved areas comes from the IUCN's Other Effective Area based Conservation Measures (OECMs), which are defined as a way to identify, encourage, and spatially define places where conservation outcomes are achieved outside the formal protected area system.

To support this concept nationally, the Australian Government has developed guidelines to help define and establish OECMs, which are referred as conserved areas in Australia.

Through the CBD, Australia has agreed to a definition for conserved areas, which is:

“A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values.”

As this framework develops, it will be important to ensure that definitions are consistent with national and international guidance, to support transparent reporting and delivering lasting outcomes for biodiversity. Since there are yet to be defined conserved areas in South Australia, much of this strategy will be in relation to protected areas.



Why are protected and conserved areas important?

By conserving habitats and safeguarding ecosystems, our protected and conserved areas provide essential habitat for threatened species and promote ecological resilience.

Protected areas

Protected areas have been shown to contribute significantly to preserving biodiversity, with the likelihood of species survival increasing in regions with higher coverage of protected lands. Because of this, protected areas have an important role to play in halting and reversing the trend of biodiversity loss globally.

In South Australia, protected areas represent a critical tool for conservation, ensuring the survival of our unique biodiversity while allowing ecosystems to function effectively. They also serve as benchmarks for ecological health, providing valuable opportunities for research, education, and community engagement.

Beyond their ecological significance, protected areas are essential for the social and cultural wellbeing of South Australian communities. They offer spaces for recreation, relaxation, and connection with nature. They help protect important cultural landscapes and provide opportunities for cultural engagement in the management of parks through the co-management, or cultural leadership through the IPA program. They foster social cohesion and provide opportunities for education and stewardship, allowing individuals and groups to engage with their environment and contribute to its preservation.

Conserved areas

Although the role of conserved areas in South Australia is still taking shape, they are expected to be important in supporting conservation outcomes, especially where formal protection is not feasible. Protected areas will continue to provide the basis of formal land protection, with conserved areas helping to preserve and improve South Australia's biodiversity outcomes.

Status of South Australian protection and future priorities

South Australia's protected area system includes some of our most biologically rich and iconic landscapes, and currently covers 28,281,153 ha, or 28.8% per cent of the state's land. This includes 23,269,672 ha of public land and 5,011,481 ha private land (see Map 1 in Appendix 2).

To understand how well our land is protected, and where we should focus future efforts, the department has considered four key measures:

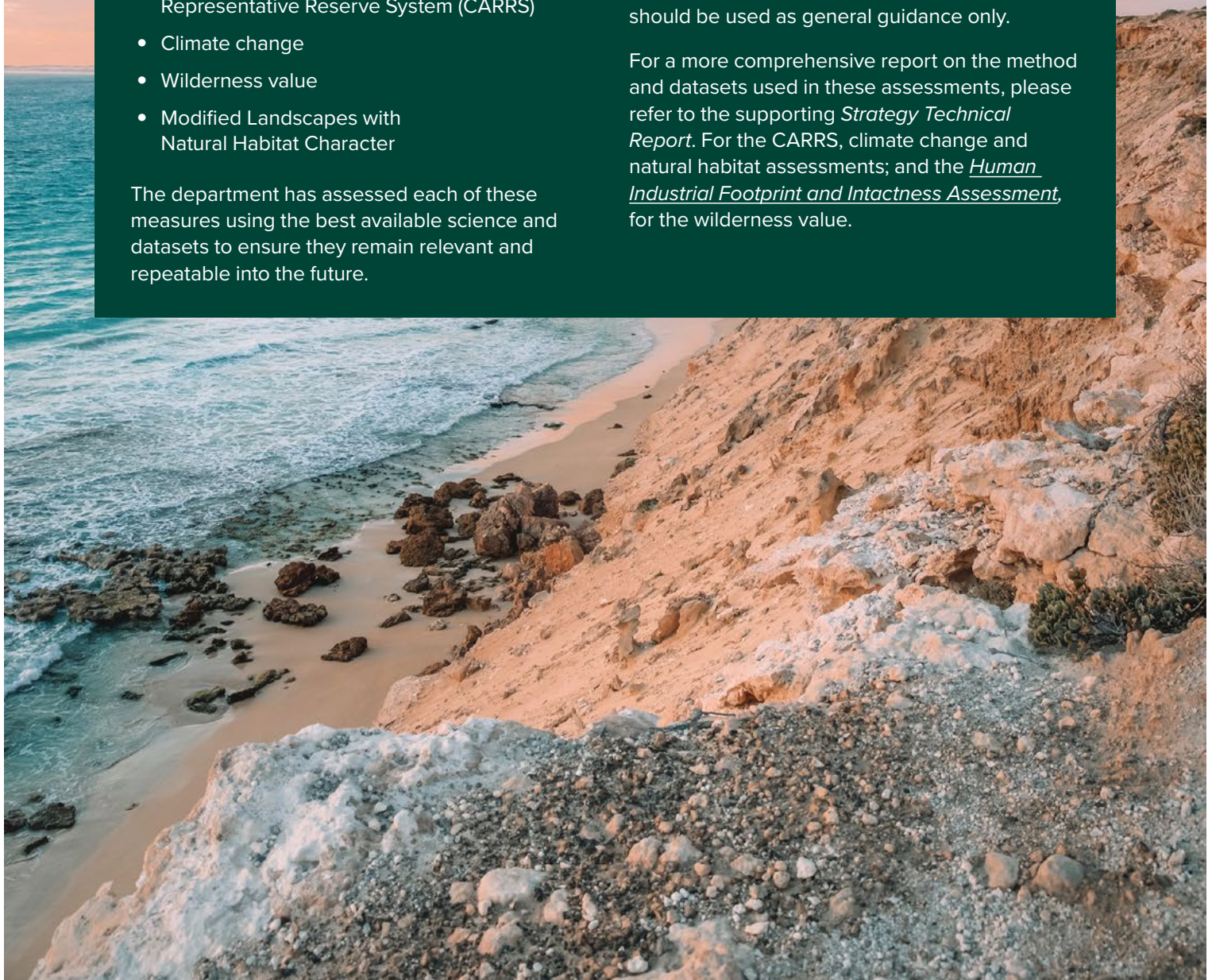
- Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System (CARRS)
- Climate change
- Wilderness value
- Modified Landscapes with Natural Habitat Character

The department has assessed each of these measures using the best available science and datasets to ensure they remain relevant and repeatable into the future.

The following section of the strategy provides a summary of the method, findings, and application of these assessments, with a series of maps (see Appendix 2) that identify the resulting priorities.

These assessments are designed to guide, not determine, decisions about protected and conserved area expansion. While they help identify priority areas according to biodiversity values, they do not account for feasibility, cultural and land use considerations, and therefore should be used as general guidance only.

For a more comprehensive report on the method and datasets used in these assessments, please refer to the supporting *Strategy Technical Report*. For the CARRS, climate change and natural habitat assessments; and the *Human Industrial Footprint and Intactness Assessment*, for the wilderness value.



CARRS

Over the past 30 years, protected area planning in Australia has been guided by the goal of building a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System (CARRS). This framework helps to determine how well the protected area system encompasses different aspects of biodiversity, as well as identifying priorities where coverage could be improved.

Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA)

CARRS is underpinned by the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA), which divides Australia's landscapes into:

- 89 bioregions - regional-scale ecosystems with common climate, geology, landform, native vegetation and species.
- 419 subregions - smaller, more uniform ecological areas nested within the bioregions.

In the context of South Australia, our state is divided into 17 bioregions and 66 subregions.

The CARRS principles of comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness aim to support the protection of the full range of ecosystems and their variability, with sufficient protection to ensure ecological viability.

As part of the development of this strategy, the department has updated its approach to assessing CARRS, using an 'outcomes approach' alongside the traditional 'geographic approach', to ensure protected area planning contributes to improving biodiversity outcomes.

Method

Geographic approach

The traditional approach to assessing CARRS focusses on:

- **Comprehensiveness:** the inclusion of all regional-scale ecosystems (IBRA bioregions) in the protected area network to help ensure the full diversity of South Australia's natural environment is protected.
- **Adequacy:** the amount of each ecosystem that is protected as a guide to whether they have enough area to remain healthy and viable in the long term.
- **Representativeness:** the inclusion of all subregional-scale ecosystems (IBRA subregions) to ensure local variations of ecosystems are protected.

Bioregions and subregions with less than 10% protection

are identified as priorities for additional protection. The 10% threshold is still being applied in South Australia but under the GBD a more ambitious target of 30% has been proposed.

While straightforward and widely used, this method may miss critical biodiversity and conservation values, or prioritise areas where there is not much left to protect.

Outcomes approach

To address these limitations, a new outcomes method identifies bioregions and subregions containing irreplaceable and unprotected habitat essential for species survival.

This approach gives a more direct measure of how protected areas contribute to biodiversity outcomes; however, it is currently only available within the state's agricultural zone due to data availability.

Table 3: Priority areas identified by the CARRS assessment

Bioregion	%*	Subregion	%*	Geographic approach	Outcomes approach
Broken Hill Complex**	4.7	Barrier Range**	2.8	High Priority	Not assessed
		Barrier Range Outwash**	0.8	High Priority	Not assessed
		Bimbowrie	25.7	Mid priority	Not assessed
		Curnamona	0.1	High Priority	Not assessed
Channel Country**	11.0	Sturt Stony Desert**	6.6	Mid priority	Not assessed
		Diamantina-Eyre**	0.0	Mid priority	Not assessed
		Cooper-Diamantina Plains**	5.3	Mid priority	Not assessed
Eyre Yorke Block	15.4	Southern Yorke	8.5	Mid priority	Mid priority
		St Vincent	1.3	Mid priority	Low priority
		Talia	20.3	Low priority	Mid priority
Finke**	4.6	Tieyon**	0.4	High Priority	Not assessed
		Pedirka	0.0	High Priority	Not assessed
Flinders Lofty Block	9.2	Mount Lofty Ranges	5.8	High Priority	High priority
		Broughton	0.5	High Priority	High priority
		Olary Spur	1.0	High Priority	Not assessed
		Southern Flinders	4.7	High Priority	Not assessed
		Northern Flinders	22.6	Mid priority	Not assessed
		Central Flinders	11.9	Mid priority	Not assessed
Gawler	15.0	Arcoona Plateau	0.1	Mid priority	Not assessed
		Kingoonya	6.9	Mid priority	Not assessed
		Roxby	0.2	Mid priority	Not assessed
		Commonwealth Hill	0.9	Mid priority	Not assessed
Kanmantoo	20.6	Fleurieu	4.0	Mid priority	High Priority
Murray Darling Depression**	19.4	Wimmera**	2.3	Mid priority	Low priority
		Braemer**	0.3	Mid priority	Not assessed
		Murray Mallee	14.1	Low priority	Mid priority

Bioregion	%*	Subregion	%*	Geographic approach	Outcomes approach
Naracoorte Coastal Plain**	9.8	Bridgewater**	11.3	Mid priority	High priority
		Glenelg Plain**	12.7	Mid priority	Mid priority
		Lucindale	4.2	High priority	Mid priority
		Tintinara	12.3	Mid priority	Low priority
Stony Plains**	6.8	Breakaways**	5.5	High priority	Not assessed
		Oodnadatta	2.8	High Priority	Not assessed
		Murnpeowie	2.2	High Priority	Not assessed
		Peake-Dennison Inlier	0.0	High Priority	Not assessed
		Macumba	3.3	High Priority	Not assessed
		Baltana	1.7	High Priority	Not assessed
Southern Volcanic Plain**	2.2	Mount Gambier	3.0	High Priority	Mid priority

* % protected

** Bioregions and subregions not wholly contained in SA

Findings

The findings from these two assessments are visualised in Maps 2 and 3 (see Appendix 2) and summarised in Table 3. The geographic approach classifies South Australia's bioregions and subregions as high, mid or low priorities, and the outcomes approach does the same for the subregions found in the agricultural zone.

Table 3 provides a summary of these findings, and shows that:

- 35 of the 66 subregions are a mid or high priority, according to the geographic approach
- 10 of the 19 subregions in the agricultural zone are a mid or high priority, according to the outcomes approach.

Because these approaches assess CARRS differently, they can generate different results. For instance, the subregion of Talia is only considered a priority according to the outcomes assessment. This is because Talia contains substantial unprotected habitat for biodiversity values that are not well protected within the existing protected area network.

Application

These findings can help guide where the department targets additions into the protected area estate. The outcomes approach provides the most ecologically meaningful guidance, so should be applied wherever possible. For instance, the St Vincent subregion has minimal significant opportunities for additional protection, so would not be considered a priority, despite being flagged for additional protection through the geographic assessment. In instances where the outcomes approach is not yet available, the geographic approach can still provide coarse insights.

Climate Change

Climate change poses a significant threat to South Australia's biodiversity, and protected area planning can help our ecosystems to adapt. Strategies for building resilience include reconstructing habitat, increasing population viability, and protecting mesic areas with the potential to form refugia.

As part of the development of this strategy, the department has used the outcomes approach to identify where additional protection will be most important to increase climate change resilience for biodiversity. This involved assessing both climate sensitivity and priorities for restoration.

Method

Climate sensitivity

The department has identified subregions with a high proportion of species sensitive to climate change. This highlights areas where increasing ecological resilience will be a critical component of successful long-term conservation.

Restoration priority

Recognising that increasing ecological resilience will require the protection and reconstruction of habitat, climate refugia and population viability, the department has also identified **subregions that are a priority for restoration, based on their importance for long-term species conservation.**

Findings

The findings from this assessment are presented in Map 4 (see Appendix 2), which classifies subregions in the agricultural zone as high, mid or low priorities. Table 4 provides a summary of these findings, and shows that:

- 7 of the 19 subregions in the agricultural zone are a mid or high priority, according to the climate sensitivity assessment
- 13 of the 19 subregions in the agricultural zone are a mid or high priority, according to the restoration potential assessment.

Application

This information can help identify additional needs and opportunities to improve resilience and adaptive capacity under future climates in the agricultural zone.

Table 4: Priority areas identified by the climate change assessment

Bioregion	Subregion	Climate sensitivity	Restoration potential
Eyre Yorke Block	Talia	Low priority	High priority
Flinders Lofty Block	Mount Lofty Ranges	High priority	Mid priority
	Broughton	Low priority	High priority
Kanmantoo	Kangaroo Island	High priority	Mid priority
	Fleurieu	High priority	High priority
Murray Darling Depression	Murray Lakes and Coorong	Low priority	High priority
	Lowan Mallee	Low priority	Mid priority
	Wimmera	Mid priority	High priority
Naracoorte Coastal Plain	Bridgewater	Low priority	High priority
	Glenelg Plain	High priority	High priority
	Lucindale	High priority	High Priority
	Tintinara	Low priority	High priority
Southern Volcanic Plain	Mount Gambier	High priority	High Priority

Wilderness value

Protecting wilderness areas is another priority of protected area planning in South Australia. Under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*, areas with high wilderness quality are those largely unaffected by exotic organisms or modern technology, or capable of being restored to a pre-European condition.

Method

In 2023, the department partnered with the University of Queensland to assess the state's wilderness quality by producing a new wilderness inventory. This project updated previous assessments using modern methods and current data, and uses the Human Industrial Footprint Index to identify **areas with minimal industrial or technological disturbance**.

Findings

The findings from the wilderness assessment are visualised together in Map 5 (see Appendix 2). While many areas with high wilderness quality are already protected, there are some exceptions; the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands and other traditional lands of the Anangu people have high wilderness values. These lands are not formally protected but are managed for cultural conservation outcomes.

Application

The wilderness inventory helps identify areas to be made, or existing protected areas to be reclassified, as Wilderness Protected Areas.



Modified Landscapes with Natural Habitat Values

The department recognises that not all critical habitats are found in undeveloped areas. Some species depend on landscapes that have been altered by people but keep important habitat features, and the way these modified areas are used can actually help maintain their value for wildlife. In these instances, conserved areas will play an important role in recognising and supporting land management for multiple outcomes.

Method

Using the data generated through the outcome assessment, the department identified modified landscapes, primarily used for other purposes, that retain habitat features critical to biodiversity conservation. This helped identify **subregions with a high proportion of modified landscapes retaining natural habitat values**. These areas often support biodiversity not found elsewhere and are usually found in low-input primary production systems where continued land management supports species persistence.

As with other CARRS values and outcomes assessments, this analysis is limited to the agricultural zone.

Findings

The findings from this assessment are presented in Map 6 (see Appendix 2) which classified subregions as high, mid or low priorities. Table 5 provides a summary of these findings, and shows 7 subregions considered priorities according to this assessment.

Application

These findings can be used to help identify potential locations for conserved areas where formal protection is unfeasible or undesirable.

Table 5: Priority areas identified by the modified landscapes with natural habitat character assessment

Bioregion	Subregion	Modified landscapes with natural habitat values
Eyre Yorke Block	St Vincent	High priority
Flinders Lofty Block	Mount Lofty Ranges	Mid priority
	Broughton	High priority
Kanmantoo	Fleurieu	High priority
Murray Darling Depression	Murray Lakes and Coorong	Mid priority
	Wimmera	High priority
Naracoorte Coastal Plain	Lucindale	Mid priority

Goals and strategic priorities

To help achieve the vision, the strategy contains 4 goals and 9 supporting strategic priorities that are outlined below.

Goal ① Build a comprehensive, adequate and representative protected area system that safeguards and enhances biodiversity

To ensure the protection of key species and ecosystems, our network of protected areas needs to deliver comprehensive, adequate and representative protection. This will support biodiversity through a data-driven approach and provide alignment with national and international best practice.

Strategic Priority 1.1 Increase protection of underrepresented IBRA bioregions and subregions

South Australia's protected areas help conserve the full diversity of our ecosystems. Some IBRA bioregions and subregions remain underrepresented, as shown in Map 2. These areas are be priorities for future additions to the protected areas estate

Strategic Priority 1.2 Increase protection of land with priority conservation and wilderness values

Our protected areas support healthy ecosystems by maintaining natural processes and connecting landscapes; and safeguard large, relatively untouched areas that have been cared for by First Nations peoples over generations. Areas that best reflect these conservation and wilderness values, guided by Maps 3 and 5, will be considered for future protection.



Goal ② Develop a protected area system that enables biodiversity to persist, adapt and thrive despite climate change

Climate change is a fundamental risk to the values the protected area system seeks to conserve. Our protected area system needs to enable biodiversity to persist and thrive, despite the pressures climate change will exacerbate.

Strategic Priority 2.1 Increase protection of land that enhances climate resilience

Our protected areas are central to maintaining healthy and resilient ecological systems that can cope with changes in climate. Guided by Map 4, we will focus on strengthening the reserve system by restoring habitat, improving connectivity, and protecting areas critical for long-term resilience.

Strategic Priority 2.2 Increase protection of biodiversity at risk to the impacts of climate change

Our protected areas play an important role in conserving species at risk to the impacts of climate change. For some threatened species, we will prioritise key sites identified in Map 4, especially those with significant populations, essential resources, and fewer threats.



Goal ③ Protect places that are important to people

Additional to protecting key biodiversity values, our protected areas should also protect places that are important to people.

Strategic Priority 3.1 Protect areas, objects and landscape features that are significant to First Nations people

Our protected areas provide opportunities to conserve places and features that have cultural and spiritual importance to First Nations people. Identification, planning and protection of these places will only occur in collaboration with, and with the support of, First Nations people, and align with our Reconciliation Action Plan.

Strategic Priority 3.2 Protect places with significant heritage and geological values

Our protected areas provide opportunities to protect South Australia's historic places, and sites that reflect our rich geological and evolutionary origins. Opportunities will be sought to add land that supports these values where compatible with conservation objectives.

Strategic Priority 3.3 Protect places with significant recreational and landscape values

Our protected areas provide a multitude of opportunities for nature-based recreation - from picnics and events, cycling and hiking, organised tourism, to adventure experiences in landscapes that are wild and remote. We'll look to add places that support recreation and wellbeing, while ensuring conservation remains the core objective.

Goal 4 Develop a robust protected and conserved area system that leverages diverse tenure arrangements

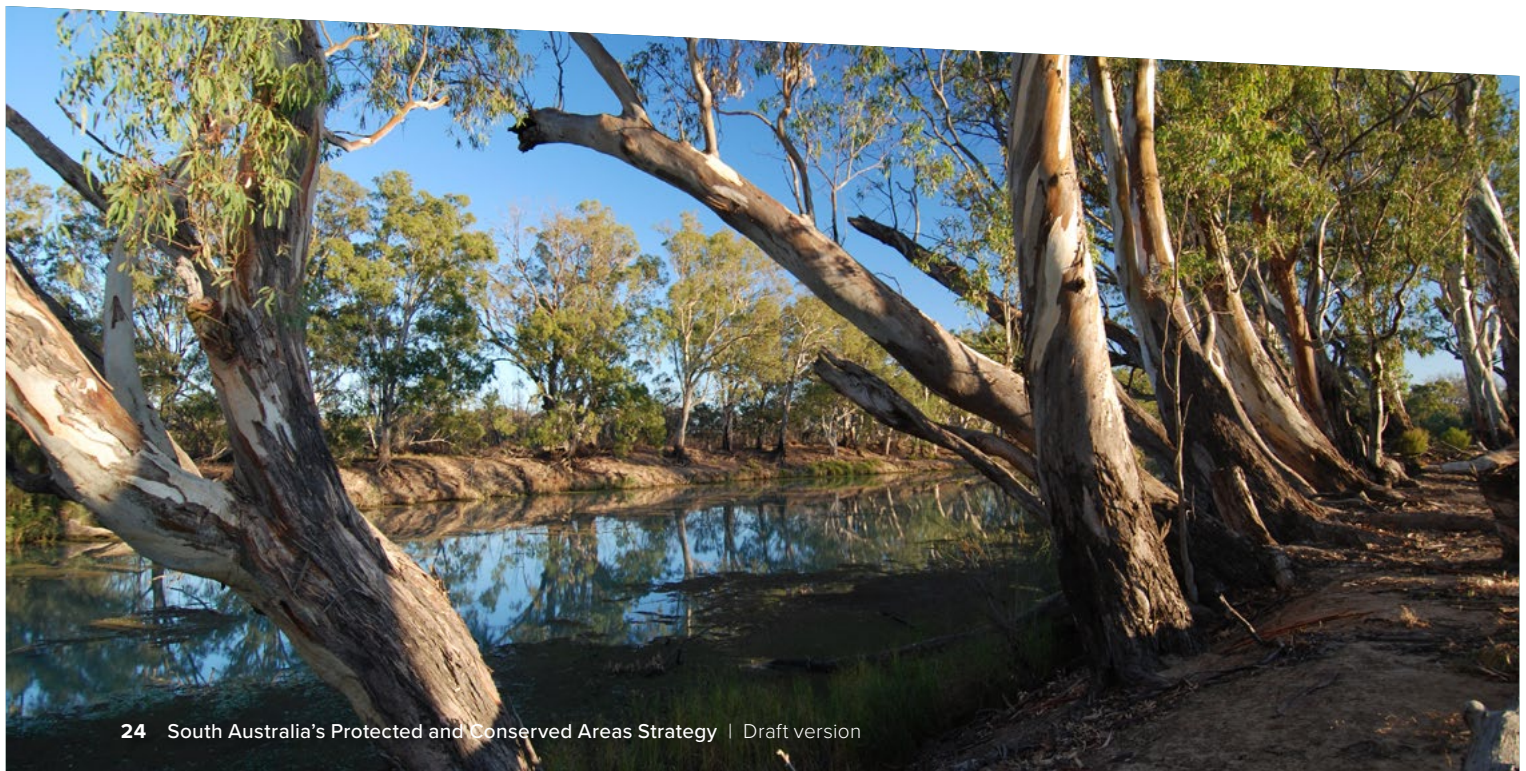
This strategy recognises that a public protected area system alone will not be able to meet the demands that will be placed on it, and to achieve the above goals, a diverse range of land tenures and covenants will need to be involved.

Strategic Priority 4.1 Grow the private land contribution to our protected and conserved areas

Private land plays a key role in conserving biodiversity and landscape values across South Australia. We will work with conservation partners to expand protections using a range of tenures that meet the IUCN definition, including those focused on ecological restoration.

Strategic Priority 4.2 Grow the contribution of land outside of formal designation to our conserved area system

Conservation extends beyond formally declared protected areas, as well-managed land outside the protected areas estate can support biodiversity and ecological health. We will explore and implement effective ways to integrate conserved areas into South Australia's conservation approach.



Enabling actions

To drive the delivery of this strategy, we have developed a series of tangible actions.

Enabling action	Relevant goal	Timing
Develop and implement an investment framework to guide how government works with conservation partners to fund the expansion and enhancement of the protected and conserved area system.	1 2 3 4	October 2026
Complete an audit of Crown land identified for inclusion in the protected and conserved area system, and identify priorities for the addition of these areas based on the values outlined in this strategy.	1 2 3 4	June 2026
Following the prioritisation of Crown land, provide annual updates on progress to convert lands to the protected and conserved area system.	1 2 3 4	Annually
Convene a biennial forum with private land conservation partners and the philanthropy sector to discuss priorities and coordinate action.	1 2 3 4	Biennial (<i>every 2 years</i>)
Update spatial prioritisation using the 'outcomes assessment' and 'wilderness assessment' to support data-driven acquisitions, identify priority restoration opportunities, and support the adaptation of key ecosystems to climate change.	1 2	As data is available, or biennial (<i>every 2 years</i>)
Develop and implement a long-term communications strategy to showcase the value of protected areas and better understand community aspirations for the protected and conserved area system.	3	Ongoing
Seek to better understand First Nations social, economic, and cultural aspirations for Country , and work with communities to support capacity and identify locations of cultural significance that require protection.	3	Ongoing
Develop options for an expanded suite of private land covenants for improving conservation outcomes.	4	Ongoing
Work with the Australian Government to implement trials that test tools, frameworks, and policy settings in support of Conserved Areas in South Australia.	4	Early 2027

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
30 by 30	The goal to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030 (derived from Target 3 of the GFB)
Co-management	Co-management is a formal arrangement between the state government and Aboriginal groups to help manage national parks, conservation parks, and wilderness protection areas, that combines traditional knowledge with contemporary park management. Co-management is achieved through co-management boards and advisory committees. Co-management boards replace the Director of National Parks and Wildlife as the management authority for a park, and advisory committees advises the Director of National Parks and Wildlife as the management authority for a park.
Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System (CARRS)	The objective of CARRS is to develop a 'comprehensive, adequate and representative' system of protected areas CARRS to ensure that all ecosystems are protected within the NRS.
Conserved areas	Land that delivers in-situ conservation regardless of the primary management objective. They are not legally designated, are distinct from a protected area, and will contribute to the Conserved Area Network. This is Australia's version of the IUCN's OECMs.
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	The CBD is an international treaty whose goals include the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources. It came into effect in 1993.
Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA)	IBRA divides Australia's landscapes into 89 bioregions (regional-scale ecosystems with common climate, geology, landform, native vegetation and species) and 419 subregions (smaller, more uniform ecological areas nested within the bioregions) to support planning and decision-making.
Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs)	IPAs are areas of land and sea Country managed by First Nations groups to deliver biodiversity conservation outcomes while supporting cultural connection and Indigenous land management practices. They are formed through voluntary agreement with the Commonwealth Government.
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	An international organisation whose work focuses on nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.
Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)	The GBF is made up of 4 global 2050 goals, and 23 global 2030 targets. These targets relate to different aspects of biodiversity conservation and restoration, including commitments to nature's contribution to people, access and benefit sharing, and tools and solutions for mainstreaming and implementation.

Term	Definition
Land-based protected and conserved areas	This includes all protected and conserved areas on inland waterways, rivers, lakes, estuaries and some intertidal areas. It does not include marine parks.
Other Effective Area based Conservation Measures (OECMs)	The IUCN's version of a conserved area.
Private land	Land that is held under a Certificate of Title, or Crown Land with a Crown Lease.
Protected areas	Land that conserves biodiversity as its primary objective. They are protected through legal means, are distinct from conserved areas, and contribute to the National Reserve System.
Protected Area Management Categories	Six categories developed by the IUCN to set global standards for the planning, establishment and management of protected areas.
Public land	Unalienated Crown Land that is owned and managed by the government.
National Reserve System (NRS)	Australia's network of protected areas.



Appendix 1

Types of Protected Areas

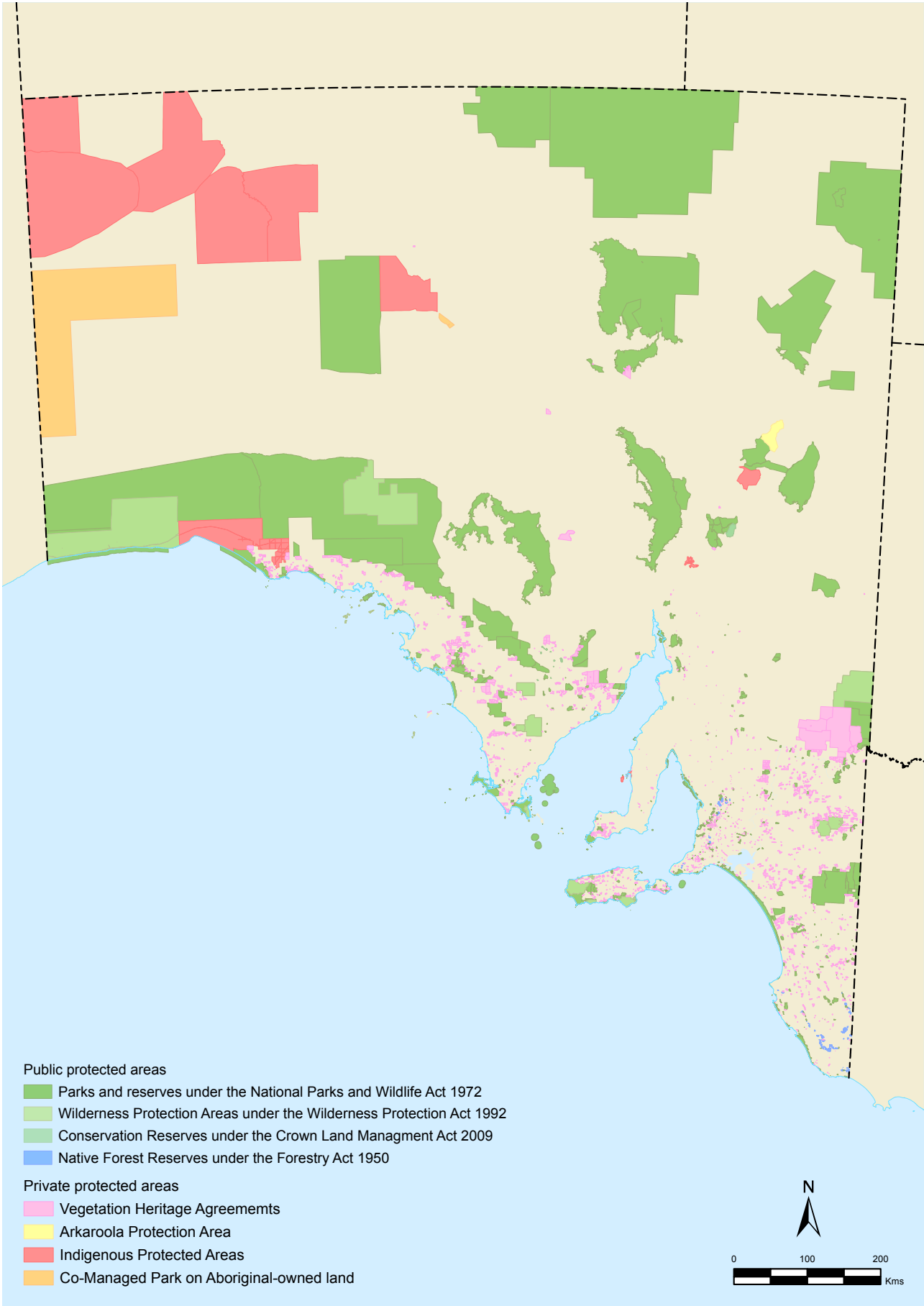
Table 4 Types of Protected Areas in South Australia

	Protected Area	Underpinning framework
Public Land	Conservation Parks including co-managed parks	Reserves that protect biodiversity and support recreation and visitation. Mining is not permitted unless jointly proclaimed.
	Game Reserves	Reserves that protect biodiversity and support recreation and visitation, including hunting in open seasons. Mining is not permitted unless jointly proclaimed.
	National Parks including co-managed parks	Reserves that protect biodiversity and large-scale ecological processes, and support recreation and visitation. Mining is not permitted unless jointly proclaimed.
	Recreation Parks	Similar to conservation parks but they permit more recreation and visitor opportunities. Mining is not permitted unless jointly proclaimed.
	Regional Reserves	Multi-use reserves that jointly protect biodiversity and the use of natural resources. Mining is permitted.
	Crown Land Reserve	Reserves that protect biodiversity but are not always actively managed. Available for mining application.
	Native Forest Reserve	Reserves generally adjacent plantation forests that protect biodiversity, support recreation and visitation, and support plantation forest operations. Mining is not permitted unless jointly proclaimed.
	Wilderness Protection Areas and Zones including co-managed Areas	Reserves that contain large and unmodified areas that retain their natural character. Mining is never permitted.
Private Land	Indigenous Protected Areas	Areas of land and sea Country managed by First nations groups for biodiversity conservation in accordance with Traditional Owners' objectives.
	Arkaroola Protection Area	A portion of the Arkaroola station supports large-scale ecological processes, protects biodiversity, and supports recreation and visitation. Mining is never permitted.
	Private conservation reserves	Private land managed by landholders for biodiversity conservation purposes.
	Heritage Agreements	Smaller conservation areas on private land that contribute to protecting and/or restoring biodiversity.

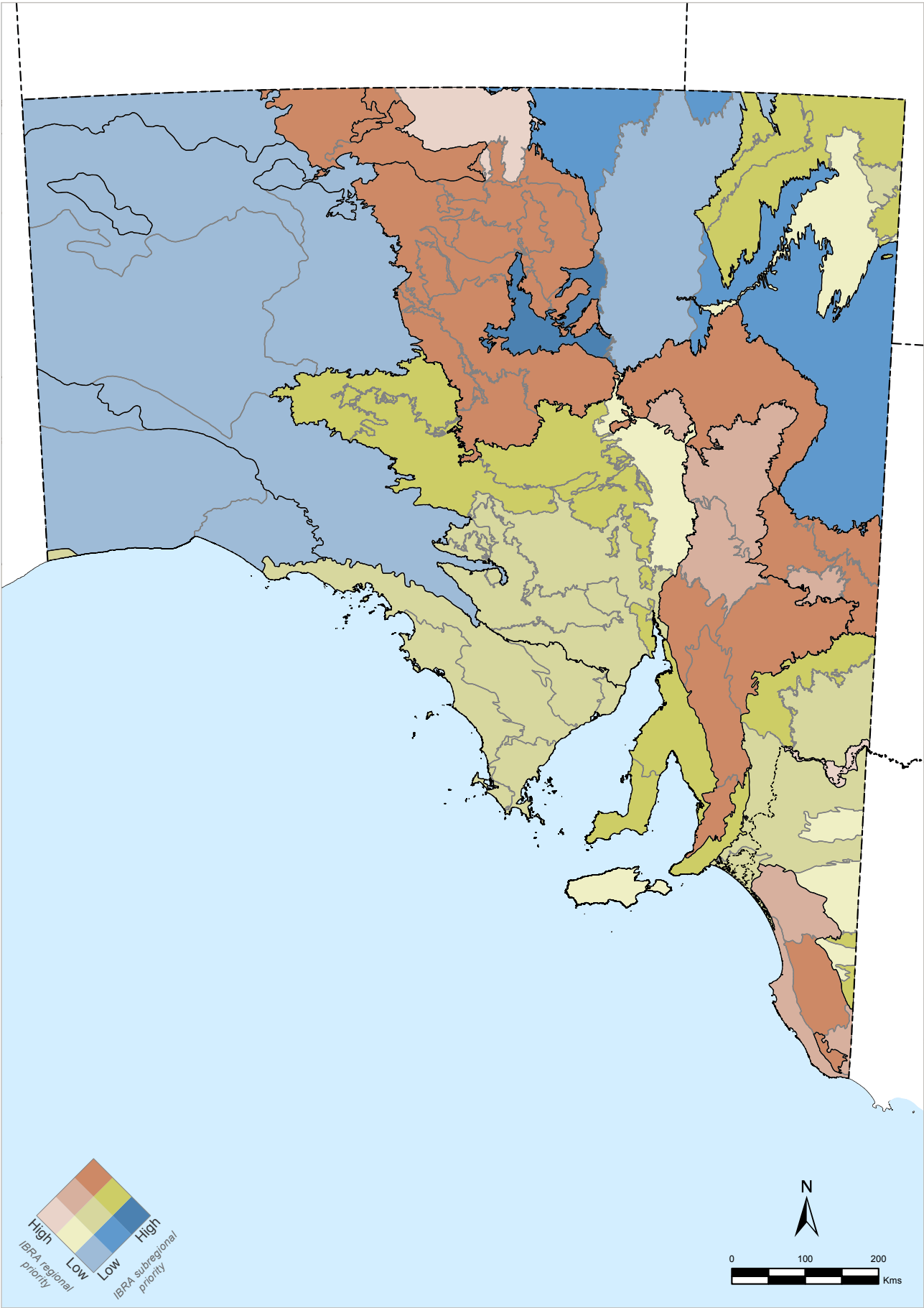
IUCN Category		Legislation
Primary	Secondary	
III. Natural Monument or Feature	VI. Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources Ia. Strict Nature Reserve V. Protected Landscape or Seascape	National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972
VI. Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources	NA	
II. National Park	VI. Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources Ia. Strict Nature Reserve	
III. Natural Monument or Feature	IV. Habitat or species management area VI. Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources	
VI. Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources	NA	
VI. Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources	NA	Crown Lands Management Act 2009
IV. Habitat or species management area	NA	Forestry Act 1950
Ib. Wilderness Area	NA	Wilderness Protection Act 1992
VI. Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources	II. National Park	Through agreement with the Australian Government
II. National Park	NA	Arkaroola Protection Act 2012
IV. Habitat/species management area	NA	Through agreement with the Australian Government
III. Natural Monument or Feature	NA	Native Vegetation Act 1991

Appendix 2 - Maps

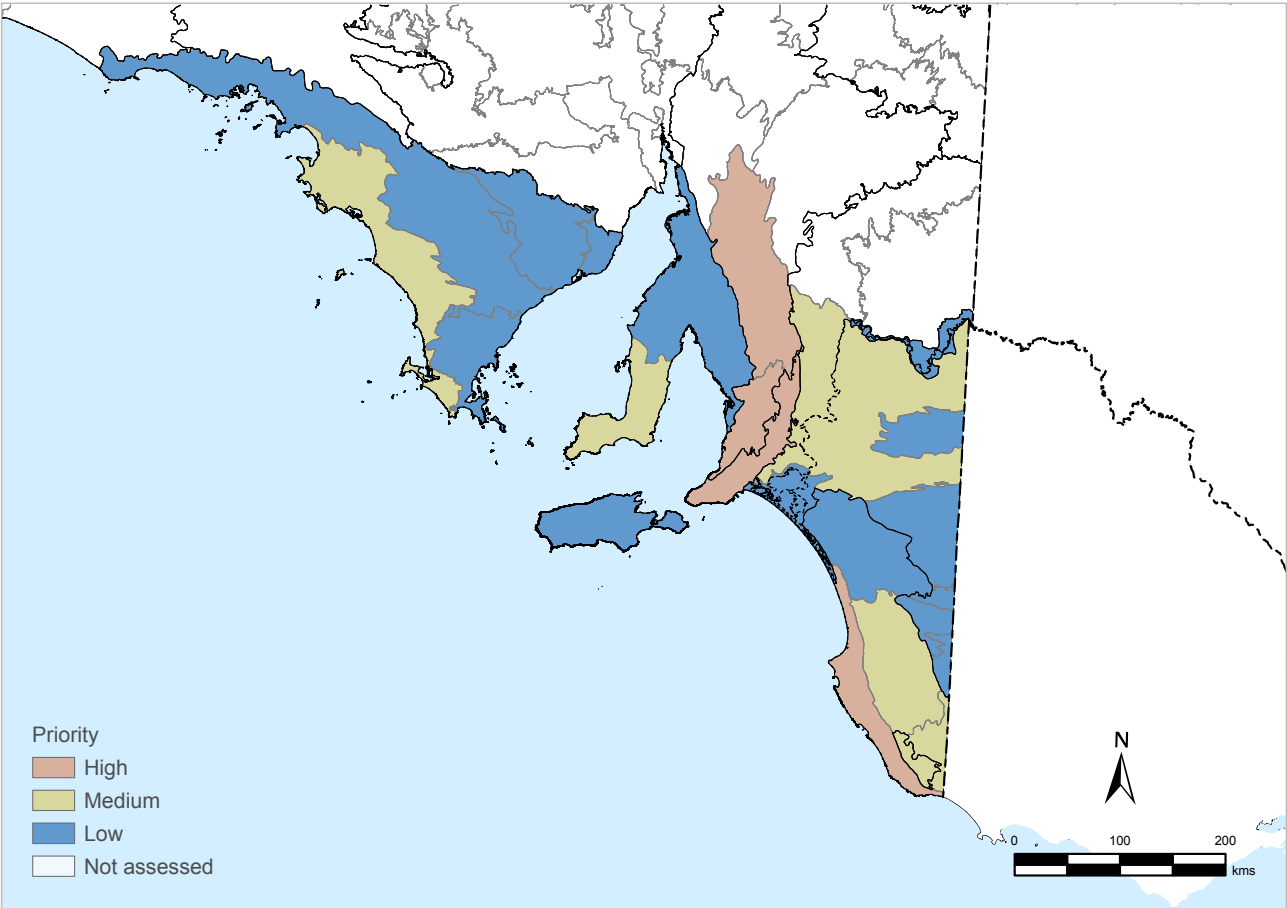
Map 1: SA Protected Area System



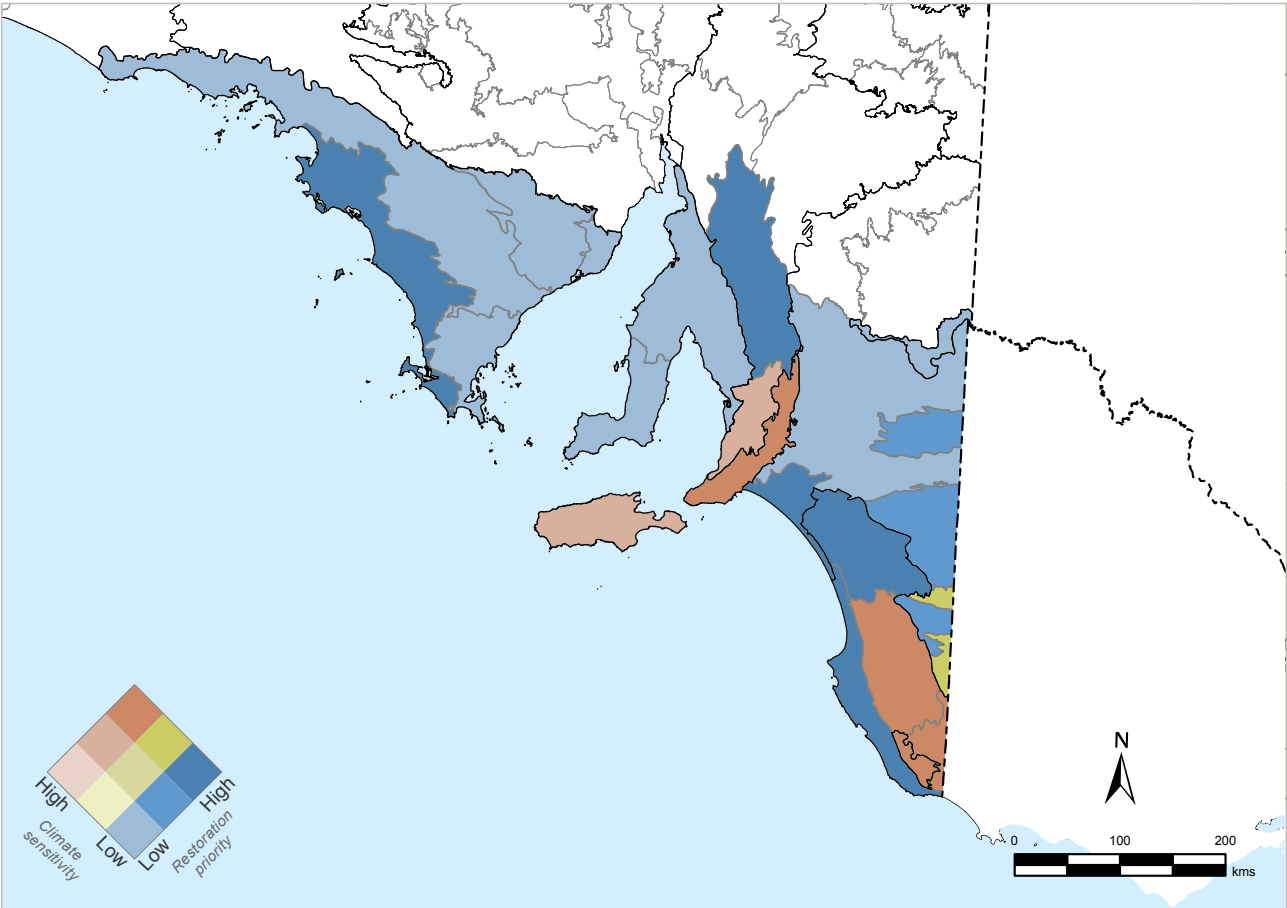
Map 2: Geographic CARRS assessment



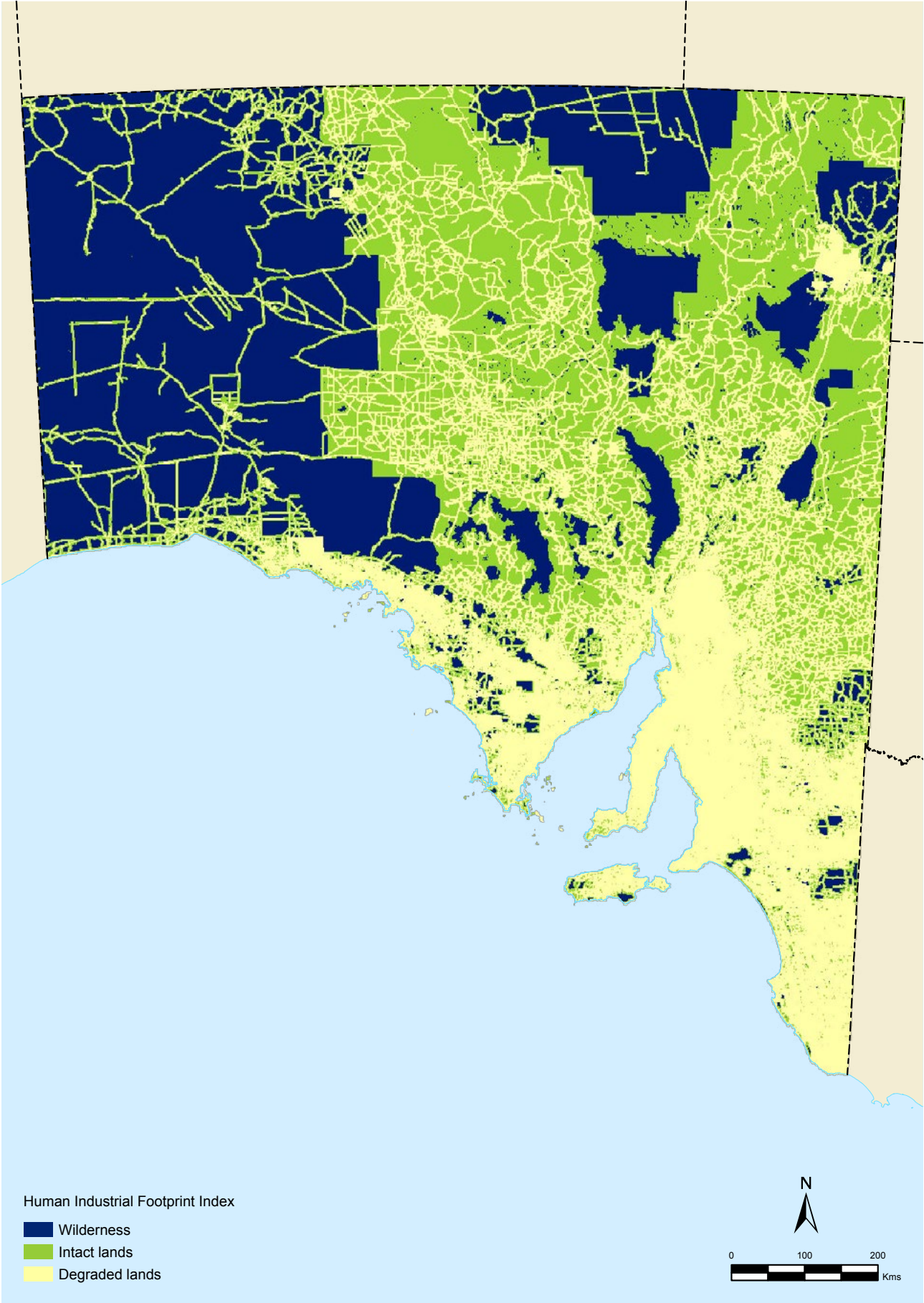
Map 3: Values and outcomes CARRS assessment



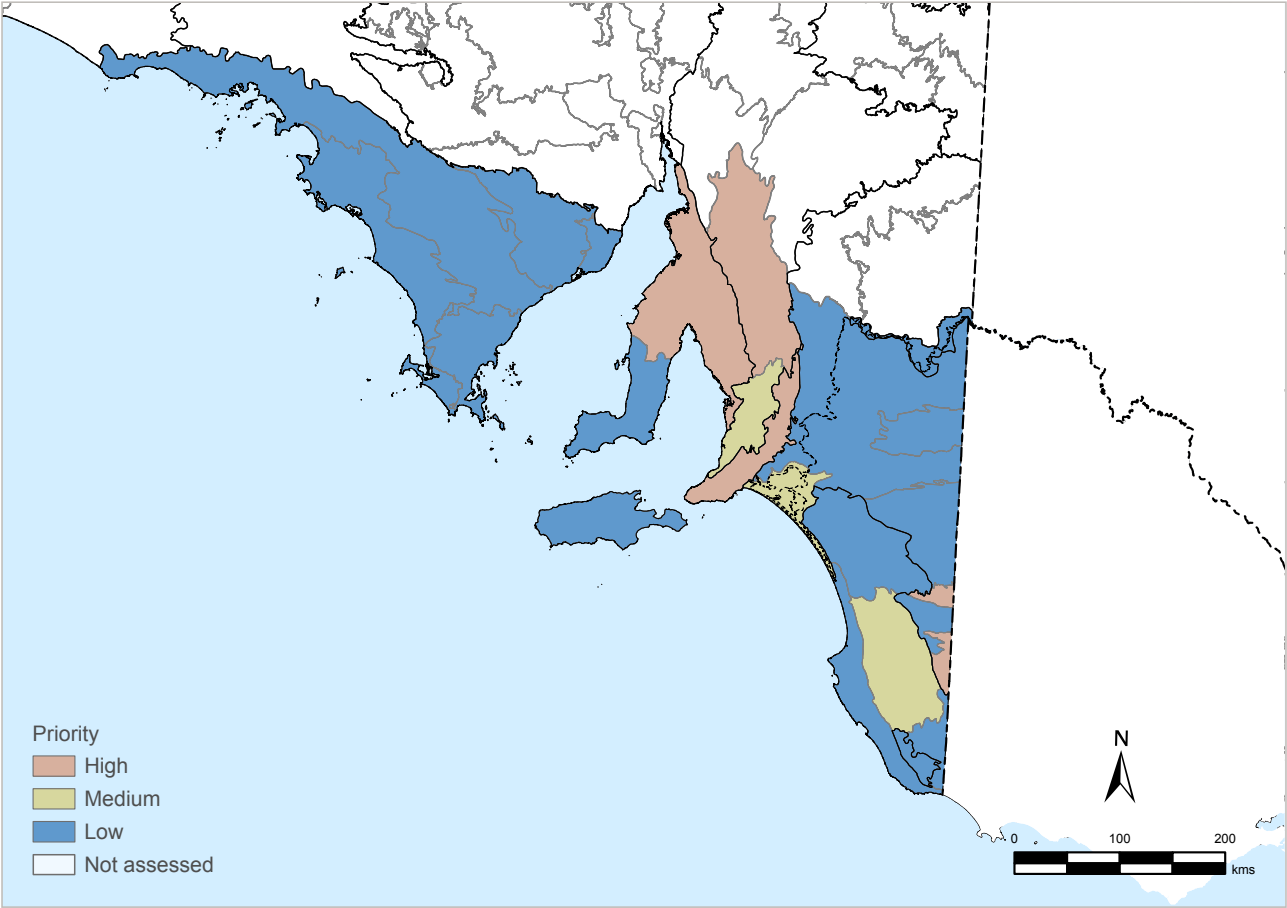
Map 4: Climate change assessment



Map 5: Human Industrial Footprint



Map 6: Modified landscapes assessment





The Department thanks the Parks and Wilderness Council for their partnership and contribution to the development of this strategy. Their insight and ongoing collaboration have been instrumental throughout the process.

We also thank the many stakeholders who participated in workshops over the past few years. Their time, knowledge and expertise have played a vital role in shaping the direction and content of this strategy.



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