GRAIN PRODUCERS SA
The voice of South Australian growers

Grain Producers SA Ltd
Level 2, 180 Flinders Street Adelaide SA 5000
PO Box 7069 Hutt Street Adelaide SA 5000
P: 1300 734 884 F: 1300 734 680
ABN: 43 154 897 533
grainproducerssa.com.au

1 March 2024

Biodiversity Coordination Unit
Department for Environment and Water
GPO BOX 1047
ADELAIDE SA 5001

By email: biodiversityact@sa.gov.au

Submission re: South Australia's new Biodiversity Act

I write regarding development of a new *Biodiversity Act* and the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) request for submissions.

Grain Producers SA (GPSA) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission through this process.

GPSA is the peak industry body representing the 4,500 grain farming businesses in South Australia. Our grain producers and their communities manage the majority of South Australia's cultivatable land and plant more than 4 million hectares of cereals, pulses, and oilseeds annually.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) notes Australia uses only 4.4 per cent of its land for dryland cropping. On these lands we produce an average of 7.9 million tonnes of grain each year, which contributes more than $4 billion to South Australia's gross food revenue. Grain production output has a strong export focus, with bulk shipments accounting for 76 per cent of South Australia's grain usage. South Australian canola, for example, is highly sought after, particularly in Europe, which is where a large portion of sustainably grown canola is exported for use in biofuels and stockfeed.

GPSA observes that as well as biodiversity, various legislation and regulations intersect land degradation, conservation of water, crop inputs, weed and vertebrate pest managements. It also traverses interconnected legislation, including planning development and infrastructure, hydrogen and renewable energy, and petroleum and mineral exploration and mining impact farm management practices.

Recently, the Australian Parliament passed the Nature Repair Bill 2023. The Bill establishes a framework for a national, voluntary, and legislated Nature Repair Market. The Market is intended to enable funding for the repair and protection of the natural environment and to reward landholders for protecting biodiversity.

GPSA recommends South Australia's new Biodiversity Act supports farm management mechanisms recognising the biodiversity stewardship work of grain producers, minimises impact on sustainable grain production and considers potential conflict with the intent of the Nature Repair Market.

DEW biodiversity Q&A spokesperson Tim Jarvis says 'finding pragmatic solutions to global environmental sustainability issues', is an important consideration as it is from natural assets that crops are produced. Managing the conflict between various land-use alternatives, means in terms of conflict management that choices must be made between biodiversity conservation and agricultural activities in cultivatable landscapes. Focusing an

impact through legislation to grain production to provide for the establishment of protected areas is an example. While this approach is effective for biodiversity, intensive agriculture and food production ceases. Has a clear discussion on the scope of the legislation impacting on biodiversity, on dryland cropping be conducted?

This Discussion Paper predominantly refers to biodiversity in a general sense. It is in 'Assessing Risk of Extinction' that it becomes evident the intention of the legislation is to focus on threatened and vulnerable species and ecological communities. Many of the habitats that might be valued now for biodiversity are a direct result of traditional agricultural practices established during agricultural expansion. A clearer articulation that it is concerned with exactly which species and ecological communities identified as under threat by rigorous scientific and community-based assessment process should have been envisioned.

GPSA recommends a clearer definition to the scope of biodiversity and protections for dryland cropping activities are included in governance and decision making.

Investment in biodiversity and environmental protection is a way forward to protect and care for critically endangered and vulnerable species and their communities on South Australia's cultivatable land. An example of practical action is the; 'Revegetation for enhanced biocontrol of pest conical snails project', funded by the South Australian Grain Industry Trust, Grains Research and Development Corporation, Viterra Limited, and partnering with Trees for Life, GPSA and Yorke Peninsula grain producers. The revegetation study is investigating the impact of native revegetation on suppressing exotic conical snail populations on the Yorke Peninsula. The establishment of revegetation strips adjacent to grain cropping paddocks and near silos can enhance the survival of a beneficial parasitoid fly by providing essential floral food resources and refugia, boosting parasitism rates and suppression of pest conical snails.

GPSA acknowledges there are funding arrangements providing incentives for nature conservation on private land (E.g. Heritage Agreements, National, State and Regional Grants) and it is not clear what the new legislation would achieve beyond that which exists now. There needs to be consideration of funding of the cost to protect, manage and enhance the persistence of critically endangered and vulnerable species and ecological communities, particularly so this is not borne farmers.

Penalties and options for enforcement within South Australia's dryland cropping areas should reflect detriment of the environment. Climatic factors, such as temperature and rainfall, are most likely to negatively influence grain production suggesting those South Australian farms are most exposed to unintended impacts on biodiversity. Dryland cropping areas in South Australia cleared of vegetation are not able to be subject to the high rates of native vegetation clearing experienced recently in New South Wales and Queensland or areas of concern in Victoria and Tasmania. Consequently, responses to biodiversity decline or threat, should not seek to punish dryland cropping grain producers wedged between climate and preparing for further local drying or warming, reduced fossil fuel emission regulations, capturing or storing carbon, and community or market expectations concerning grain production. Our collective goal should be to reduce the hardship and collective pain for grain producers and their rural and regional communities. Penalties should reflect the risk in deliberate and wilful acts that harm biodiversity stewardship.

In managing enforcement, efforts to ensure areas of native vegetation are safeguarded for the benefit of a healthy and balanced ecosystem should focus on sharing common understanding and knowledge. Managing biodiversity is a shared responsibility. The new Act could include a statutory Duty of Care with specific intent(s)

and scope to inform legal and social responsibilities to provide a consistent approach. Well-informed response by authorised officers can ensure inaccurate, incorrect, false, untrue, or mistaken allegations are dealt with appropriately, or if probable then escalated empathetically for further investigation and enforcement.

GPSA recommends the South Australian government does not introduce stronger penalties and more options for enforcement within South Australia's dryland cropping areas, and that non-government parties should not be prescribed by regulation as approved to bring proceedings against primary producers.

First Nations knowledge and practices considering local conditions, climatic factors, fire to manage the landscape, and culture must be appreciated for mutual benefit. GPSA encourages First Nations grain producers to participate directly and to share knowledge of managing the landscape alongside grain production.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide a submission to development of new biodiversity legislation for South Australia.

Yours sincerely,



Brad Perry
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
GRAIN PRODUCERS SA