



Government
of South Australia

Department for
Energy and Mining

GAWLER RANGES EAST

PROPOSED RELEASE AREA

INFORMATION PACK



Department for Energy and Mining

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South Australian Resources Information Gateway (SARIG)
map.sarig.sa.gov.au

September 2024



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205921-Information Pack

Date	Comment
September 2024	First published.



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Introduction

The South Australian government is proposing to declare an area of pastoral land in the Gawler Ranges as a release area under the *Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023*. It is known as the Gawler Ranges East proposed release area.

We are seeking your feedback on this proposal.

Public consultation is open from 9 September to 22 October 2024.
Submissions can be made by:

- uploading a submission through the YourSay website
- sending an email to ReleaseAreas@sa.gov.au

This initial area is a **proposal** for feedback. It is **not** the final declaration.

This is your opportunity to provide feedback.

The *Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023* (HRE Act) is Australia's first dedicated licencing and regulatory system for large-scale hydrogen and renewable energy projects.

The HRE Act introduces a mechanism for renewable energy development over government-owned, designated land (pastoral land, prescribed Crown lands and state waters) called release areas. Government starts the release area process by working with Native Title groups and other landowners, representative organisations, communities and interest groups to identify areas of land that can sustainably host large-scale renewable energy development.

The government has identified a proposed release area under the new framework. The Gawler Ranges East proposed release area spans approximately 5,200 km² on the Upper Eyre Peninsula, wholly located in the Gawler Ranges Native Title Determination Area. It includes part or all of seven pastoral leases.

Public consultation on the Gawler Ranges East proposed release area has now commenced, and we invite your feedback on the location, boundaries and any sensitivities and constraints that may be affected by development on the land. Renewable energy developers are also asked to identify specific areas where they may wish to develop projects within the proposed release area.

Once a release area is declared, renewable energy companies will submit competitive tenders to develop large-scale renewable energy projects on the land. This will ensure only the most suitable projects are awarded access.

The release area process will ensure development is strategic, sustainable, supportive of regional development objectives, and is the best use of the land, while co-existing with existing land uses.

Community engagement doesn't end at the release area stage. The HRE Act requires consultation and agreement-making throughout the development process to ensure projects are developed in line with landowner, community and state expectations.

Following consultation, the Minister for the HRE Act will consider the feedback, and with the agreement of the Minister for the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*, will make a decision regarding the declaration of a release area.

Gawler Ranges East Proposed Release Area

Area: 5,220 km²



Source: Department for Energy & Mining
Date: 23/07/2024
Spatial Reference: GDA2020 SA Lambert
MapID: 20240723-01
Disclaimer: There is no warranty that
this map is free from errors or omissions.
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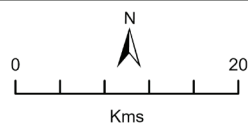


Figure 1 Gawler Ranges East proposed release area, comprising part or all of seven pastoral leases and over 5,200 km².



About Gawler Ranges East proposed release area

OVERVIEW

Gawler Ranges East proposed release area (Fig 1):

- Approximately 5,200 km²
- Gawler Ranges Native Title Determination Area
- Includes part or all of seven pastoral leases
- 15 km northeast of Kimba
- 80 km west of Whyalla at its southern point
- Adjacent to Lake Gairdner National Park to the northwest and Lake Gilles National Park to the southeast.

This area of the state has been the subject of significant industry interest in recent years with several large renewable energy projects proposed here. This is due to world-leading wind and solar resources (Figs 2 & 3) and proximity to existing government projects in and around Whyalla, including the Hydrogen Jobs Plan and Port Bonython Hydrogen Hub.

[A link to SARIG \(including downloadable shape file\) is available here](#)

LAND TENURE AND USE

High level analysis has identified the following land tenure that interacts with the proposed release area.

- **Native Title** – Extensive engagement with the Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Corporation has informed the design of the proposed release area.
- **Pastoral properties** – Early engagement has occurred with the affected pastoralists.
- **Resources tenements** – As of August 2024 the proposed release area contained part or all of:
 - 6 petroleum and geothermal exploration licence applications
 - 28 mineral exploration licences
 - 1 mineral exploration licence application
 - 1 mining lease application

The declaration of a release area operates in parallel with existing rights, and future rights where compatible. Future licensing and decision-making processes will take into consideration other land uses and aim to accommodate all land users where appropriate.

Wind Production Potential - Gawler Ranges East Proposed Release Area

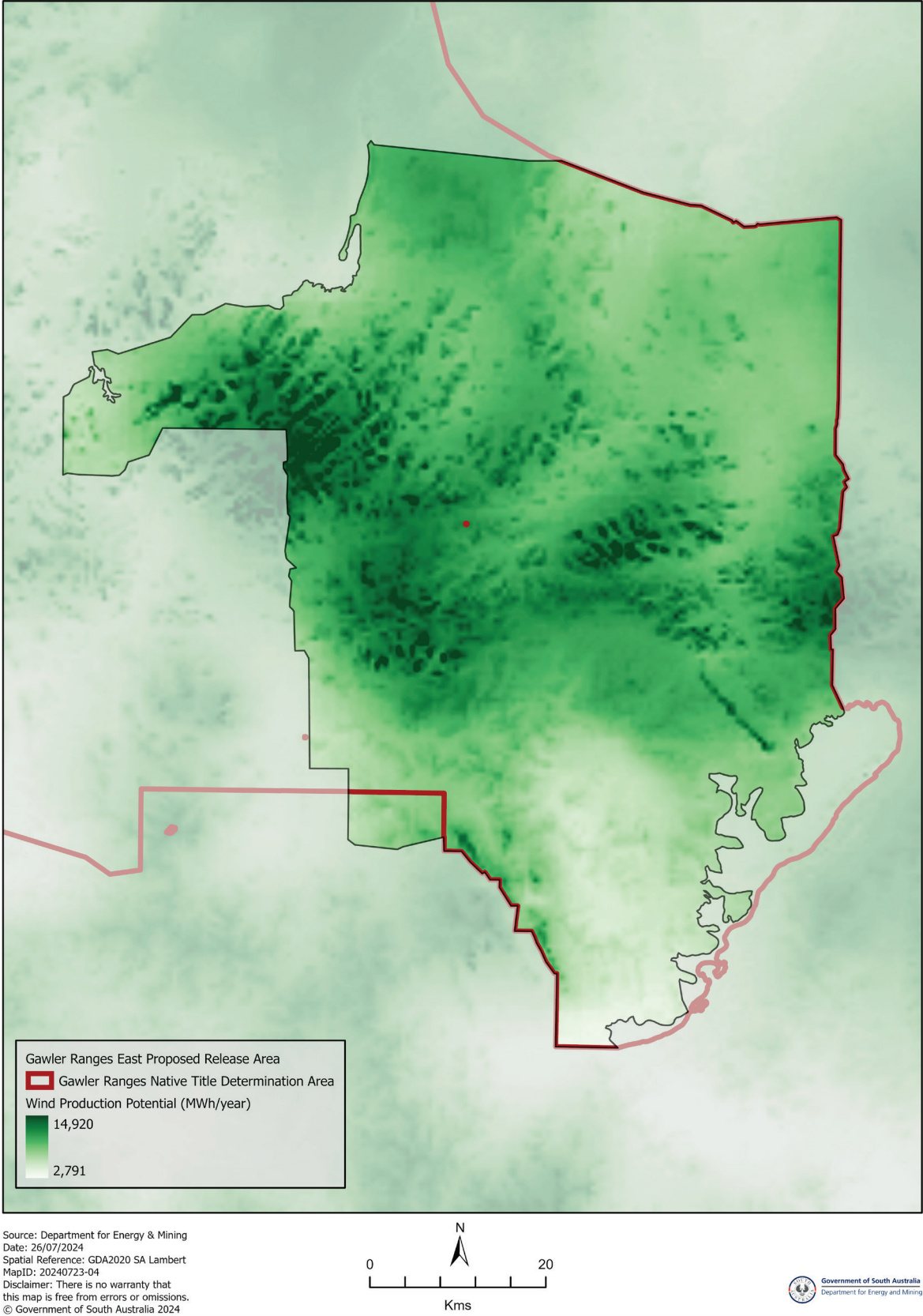


Figure 2

Wind potential, derived from the Global Wind Atlas.

Solar Production Potential - Gawler Ranges East Proposed Release Area

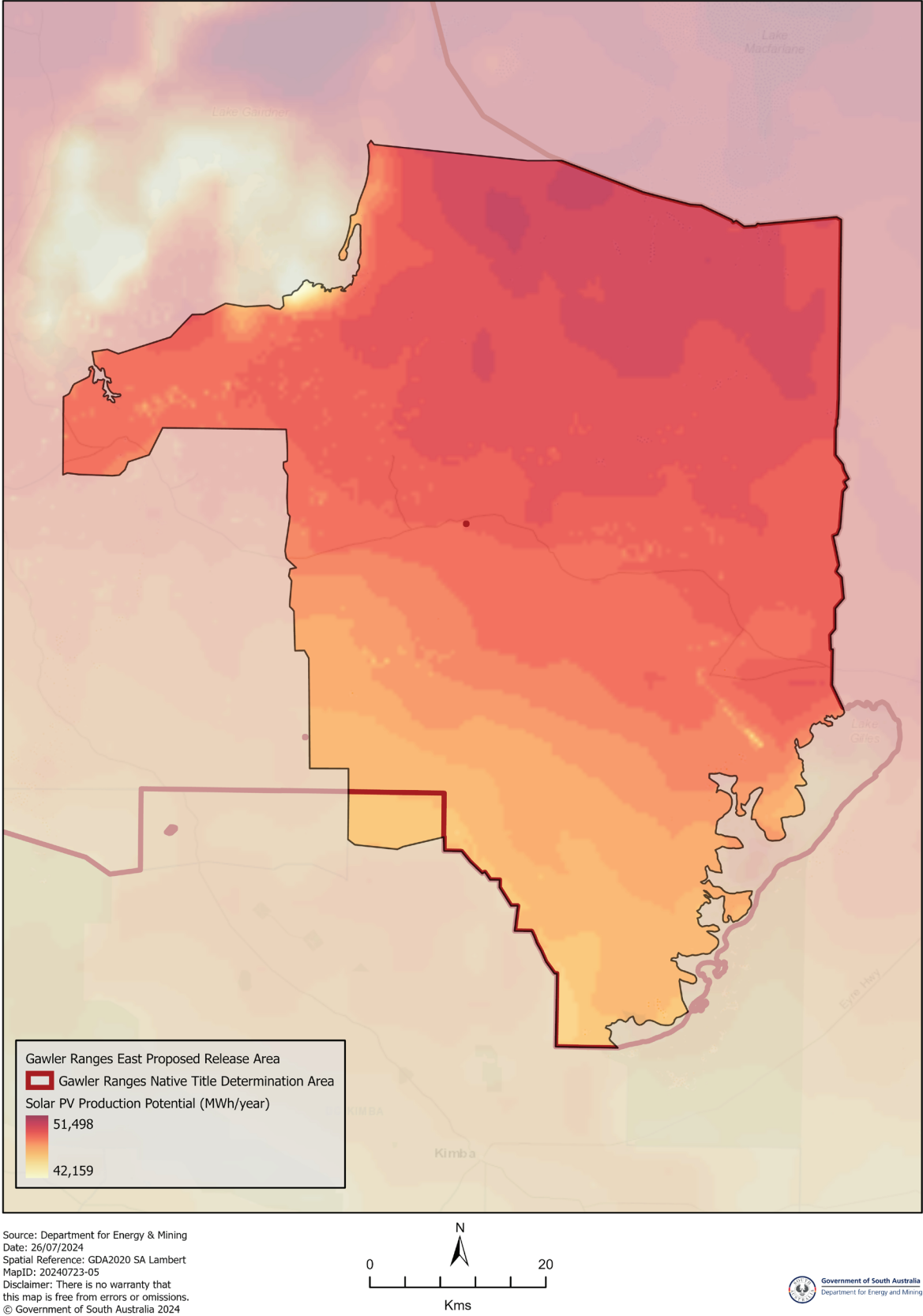


Figure 3 Solar potential, derived from the Global Solar Atlas.

Having your say

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Before deciding whether to release the proposed area, the Minister must consult the public. This is the public's first opportunity to share their views.

This consultation determines if an area may be able to support large-scale renewable energy development, and the terms and conditions that should be applied to ensure the development occurs sustainably with least impact.

Consultation is six weeks long (30 business days), and features both targeted and public consultation. The Minister must issue a notice describing the area and invite submissions from the public and prescribed relevant people.

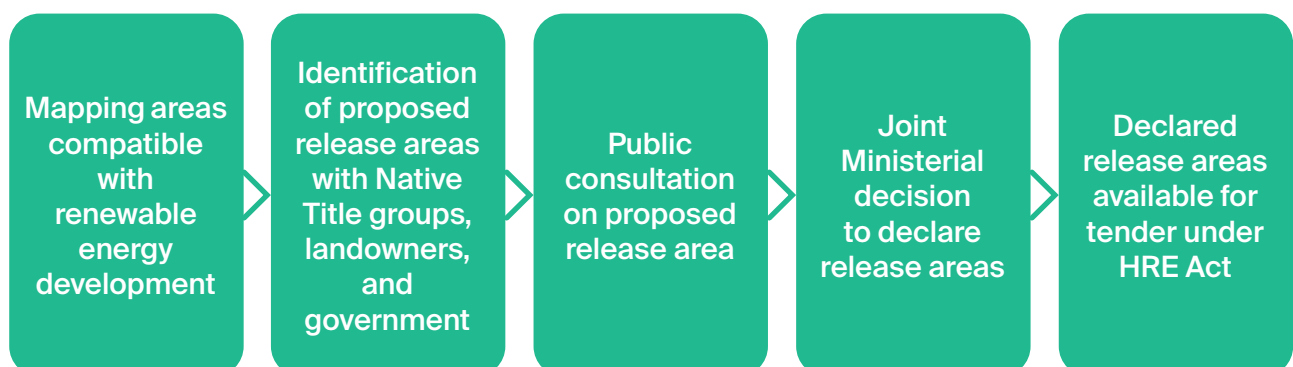
Following consultation, the feedback will be considered and a decision made on whether or not to declare a release area.

Before declaring a release area, the Minister must have agreement (or concurrence) from the Minister administering the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989* for projects on pastoral land, or the Minister administering the *Harbors and Navigation Act 1993* for projects in South Australian waters.

Following consultation and relevant concurrence, the Minister can declare a release area by placing a notice in the *South Australian Government Gazette*.

Consultation on potential renewable energy projects will happen at multiple stages of the regulatory process. Licensees are required to continue consultation and engagement throughout the life of the renewable energy project.

Release area process diagram





GENERAL FEEDBACK

Release area consultation allows the department to hear the views of the public and other interested parties over a designated area.

The Minister is seeking feedback on, but not limited to, the boundaries, size, location, sensitivities and constraints that may exist within the proposed release area. This may include:

- information gaps or omissions that are relevant in defining the release area
- new information – something that hasn't been considered in determining the release area, for example information that is not currently available through government databases
- recommendations on boundaries, or areas that may need to be excluded from the proposed release area, and reasons for these variations.

Submissions may address issues such as:

- existing and successive land uses
- proximity and access to existing infrastructure/access routes, impacts, grid connection, roads, housing, storage, transport, and export
- conservation values, flora/fauna, threatened and endangered species
- biosecurity matters
- soils and geology
- any cultural and heritage values
- nomination of tender selection criteria based on local context.

This information will be used to inform the final boundaries of any declared release area following consideration by both the Minister for the HRE Act and Minister for the Pastoral Act.

Feedback on the proposed release area may also shape the tender criteria that will govern the competitive tender process.

INDUSTRY NOMINATIONS

In addition to broad public consultation, the Minister is specifically seeking feedback from renewable energy developers and industry proponents that may look to participate in a future competitive tender process over the proposed release area.

Industry proponents are asked to nominate where **within the proposed release area** they would seek a Renewable Energy Feasibility Licence (REFL). The information required by government includes:

- the location/boundaries and size of the licence
- the renewable energy resource type sought in the licence (ie wind, solar or both)

- a delivery model with a projected path to market/offtake
- the preferred timing for government to conduct a call for tender.

Note that multiple licences may be proposed in a nomination with a different resource type assigned to each licence (ie wind, solar or both).

Please consider that the nominations within the proposed release area are for a **REFL**, which authorises land access to assess the feasibility of a renewable energy resource. The holder of a REFL will have exclusive right to apply for a Renewable Energy Infrastructure Licence (REIL) **within the area of the REFL**.

The REIL authorises the development of renewable energy generation infrastructure such as wind turbines and solar panels.

The information provided by industry in this nomination will be kept strictly confidential. It will allow government to assess the most prospective areas within the proposed release

area for consideration in the competitive call for tender stage.

Nominating an area is not a requirement to participate in a future call for tender process, nor a guarantee of success for the company. However, any information provided will ensure the areas of highest interest and commerciality are considered by the Minister.

MAKING A SUBMISSION

The consultation period on the proposed release area is now open, with submissions accepted until 22 October 2024.

Submissions can be made by one of the following methods:

- Uploading a submission through the [YourSay website](#)

- Sending an email to: ReleaseAreas@sa.gov.au
- Mail: GPO Box 618 Adelaide, SA, 5001
- Lodged in person or by courier to Level 4, 11 Waymouth Street, Adelaide, SA

If you require assistance to lodge a submission, please contact DEM via email ReleaseAreas@sa.gov.au to discuss your requirements.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Information provided to assist with making a submission:

- [South Australian Resource Information Gateway \(SARIG\)](#)
- [HRE Act and Regulations](#)
- [Further DEW information](#)



How a release area is identified

MAPPING AND MULTI-CRITERIA ANALYSIS

To begin to identify appropriate areas for release, we used high-level mapping and a multi-criteria analysis to find areas where high-quality wind and solar resources coincide. This analysis accounted for existing critical infrastructure such as transmission lines, water, gas pipelines and roads.

It also identified current land uses, such as primary industries, resources, tourism and conservation, industry interest, and existing constraints such as Aboriginal heritage and protected areas.

This process:

- mapped wind and solar production potential
- applied a multi-criteria sensitivity analysis to develop a combined constraints layer that identifies and categorises compatibility with wind and solar development across the state
- used a range of infrastructure and utility layers, including roads, railways, electricity,

water and gas transmission to determine their proximity for potentially suitable renewable energy production areas

- considered locations where industry has already shown interest in developing renewable projects and have a history of stakeholder interest and engagement.

This led government to confirm the Upper Spencer Gulf as the ideal location for the first release areas.

The Upper Spencer Gulf has a unique convergence of renewable resources, is near to significant mineral resources and has emerging green hydrogen and green iron sectors. It is set to become a central hub for sustainable industries in South Australia. The transformation of the Upper Spencer Gulf will help South Australia's transition to a net-zero carbon future, including reducing emissions for industry to contribute to a sustainable future for our environment.

ENGAGING WITH LANDOWNERS

Following the mapping process, the government approached landowners - Native Title holders and pastoralists - to understand their interest in participating in a release area process. These discussions have helped identify preliminary areas that may be appropriate for large-scale renewable energy development following further refinement and investigation.

Engagement at this stage involved building a shared understanding about the process by establishing relationships, sharing information between government and landowners, asking questions and highlighting issues or opportunities.

The Department for Energy and Mining (DEM) has worked collaboratively with the Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Corporation and

identified pastoralists to design the proposed release area, and identify the area's existing constraints and sensitivities.

CONSTRAINTS MAPPING

DEM has conducted considerable work with relevant bodies to understand the existing environmental, cultural heritage, and mineral and petroleum resource constraints that exist within the proposed release area. This constraints mapping reflects only a desktop analysis from existing data sets and early advice from discussions with Traditional Owners and landowners.

The analysis and mapping for a proposed release area in no way replaces the detailed environmental and cultural heritage analysis that successful proponents will have to undertake.

Successful tenderers must undertake detailed feasibility assessments. Following feasibility assessments and discussions, there may be areas where further constraints are identified and development cannot be supported.

BIODIVERSITY VALUES MAPPING

The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) has developed mapping that indicates biodiversity values protected by state and Commonwealth environmental legislation and policies. DEW's maps integrate data from all available sources to identify likely biodiversity values within the proposed release area.

Specific biodiversity values and legislation in the proposed release area include:

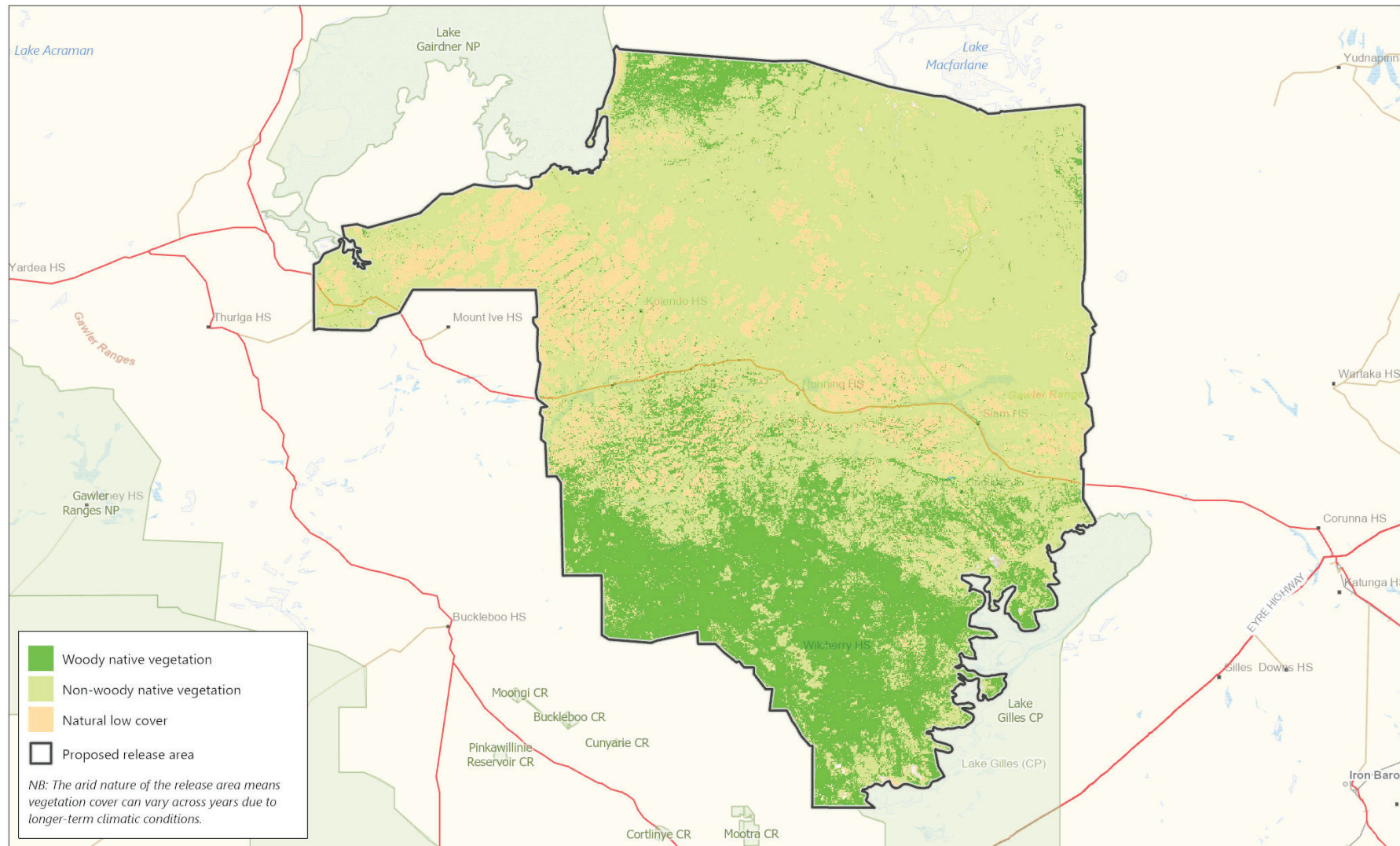
- native vegetation under the South Australian *Native Vegetation Act 1991* (Native Vegetation Act)
- threatened species and ecological communities under the national *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)
- threatened species under the South Australian *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (NPW Act).

DEW's biodiversity values mapping indicates biodiversity values that must be considered for:

- delineating broad landscape areas
- identifying particular land units or habitat types
- targeting surveys so that developments can be designed to avoid and/or mitigate impacts
- developing environmental objectives and environmental impact reports by proponents to address the impacts of development operations.

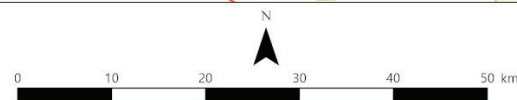
Native vegetation occurrence and classes - Gawler Ranges East Proposed Release Area

This map does not constitute a legal interpretation under relevant legislation. All matters in the release area require approvals under relevant legislation, including the Native Vegetation Act and the HRE Act.



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For more information, please contact DEW at DEW.Science@sa.gov.au.



[click here to view full size maps](#)

Figure 4 Native vegetation occurrence and classes in the proposed release area.

NATIVE VEGETATION MAPPING

Landsat satellite imagery shows native vegetation coverage in the proposed release area (Fig 4).

This map shows native vegetation occurrence and types of cover.

The arid nature of the proposed release area means vegetation cover can vary across years due to longer-term climatic conditions.

Project development will require approvals under relevant legislation, including the Native Vegetation Act and the HRE Act.

SPECIES MAPPING

Species listed as threatened at both the state (NPW Act) and Commonwealth (EPBC Act) levels occur in the proposed release area. DEW has identified all the listed species likely to occur within the proposed release area and mapped their likely modelled distribution. This process broadly involved:

- collating all available data from existing biological data repositories, including over 29 million species records
- identifying state or Commonwealth-listed species likely to occur in the proposed release area
- identifying threatened species likely to occur in the proposed release area
- generating special distribution models at 90-metre resolution, or generating habitat association models for species with insufficient data to generate a species distribution model.

Outputs:

- GIS datasets for the 138 individual species likely to occur within the proposed release area

- Summary GIS datasets that overlay the spatial outputs for each species and present this data against the relevant Acts, creating:
 - a GIS dataset for the likely occurrence of any EPBC Act listed species (Fig 5)
 - a GIS dataset for the likely occurrence of any NPW Act listed species (Fig 6)
- A summary of the species identified as likely to occur within the proposed release area including:
 - their common names, if they have one
 - the likely subspecies that occur within the proposed release area
 - their ratings under the EPBC Act and NPW Act
 - whether the spatial outputs were based on spatial distribution modelling or habitat associations.



Species mapping interpretation and considerations

- All matters in the proposed release area require approvals under relevant legislation, including the EPBC Act, NPW Act and the HRE Act.
- The number of listed species should not be interpreted as an indicator of biodiversity value or risk. An area with fewer listed species can be as critical as an area with multiple listed species and have the same level of legal protection.
- The number of listed species likely to occur was calculated from spatial distribution models, or habitat association models (where there was insufficient data for a distribution model), generated for each species.

Species data collection issues

- Existing biological data within the proposed release area is sparse, resulting in some (approximately 22 percent) species having insufficient data for spatial distribution modelling, necessitating the use of coarser habitat association approaches.
- There are also likely to be species that occur within the proposed release area that have no presence data.
- Existing outputs can be used to help developers avoid known areas of significance to listed species, as well as target survey methods and timing for species likely to occur as part of their detailed project designs and impact mitigation measures.
- DEW's mapping outputs in this information pack only include species listed as threatened under state or Commonwealth legislation. They do not include species assessed as threatened against the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List criteria but not yet gazetted under legislation, or non-threatened species with a large proportion of their distribution within the proposed release area.

More information on biodiversity mapping

More information on the detailed biodiversity values modelling conducted by DEW can be found here: [Mapping of legislated biodiversity values to inform DEM HRE release areas: Summary of DEW approach, outputs, and interpretation considerations](#) (September 2024)

A technical report on DEW's mapping of legislated biodiversity values and further information will be made available made available through [Enviro Data SA](#).

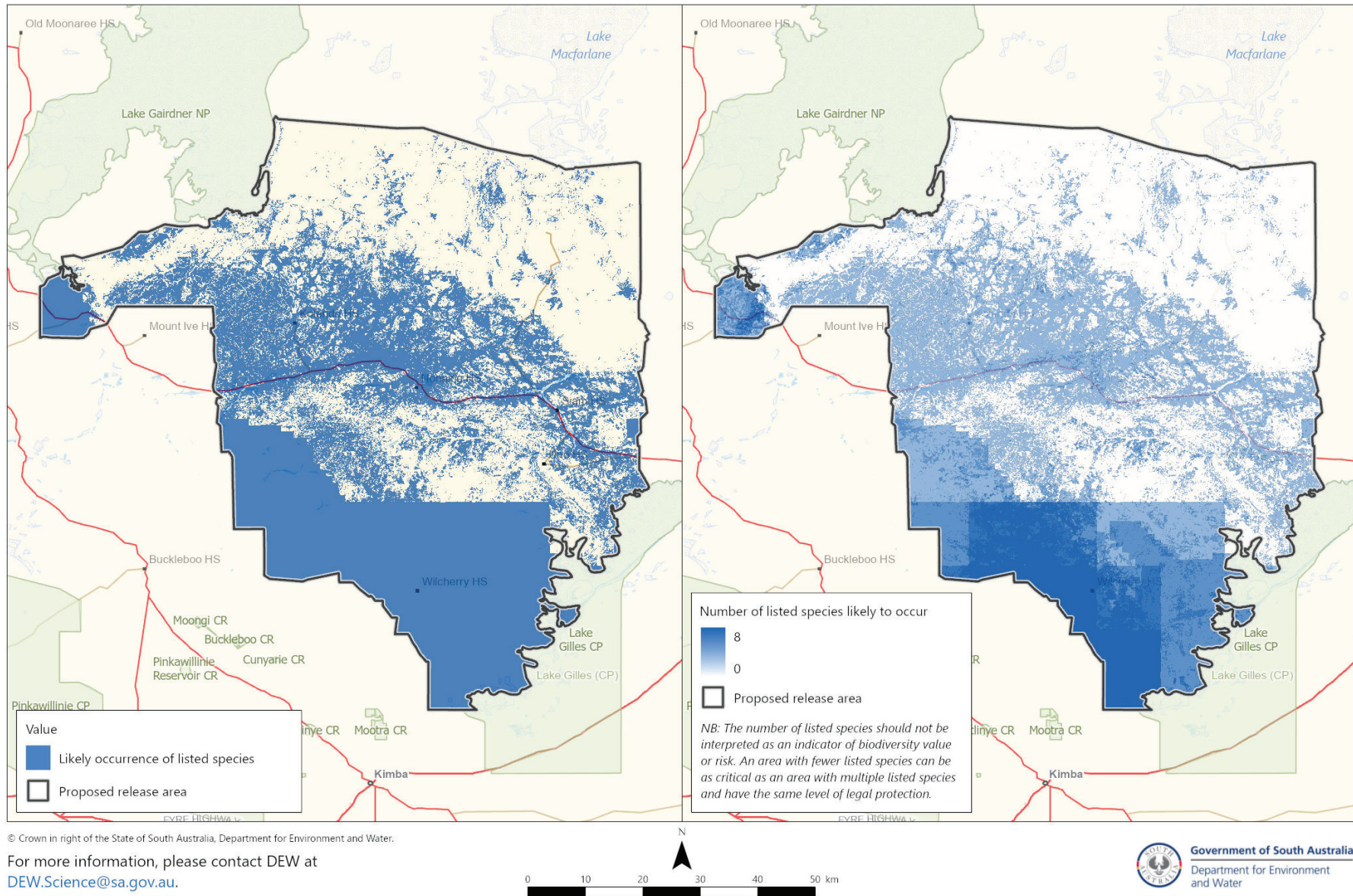
DEW provides evidence-based biodiversity data to support strategic planning and environmental impact assessments, ensuring compliance with state and Commonwealth environmental legislation and policies to support sustainable development.

These maps and the modelled outputs generated by DEW (September 2024 version) are for informational purposes only. They do not constitute a legal interpretation under relevant legislation.

For more information, please contact DEW at DEW.Science@sa.gov.au and environment.sa.gov.au

Likely occurrence of EPBC Act listed species - Gawler Ranges East Proposed Release Area

This map does not constitute a legal interpretation under relevant legislation. All matters in the release area require approvals under relevant legislation, including the EPBC Act and the HRE Act.



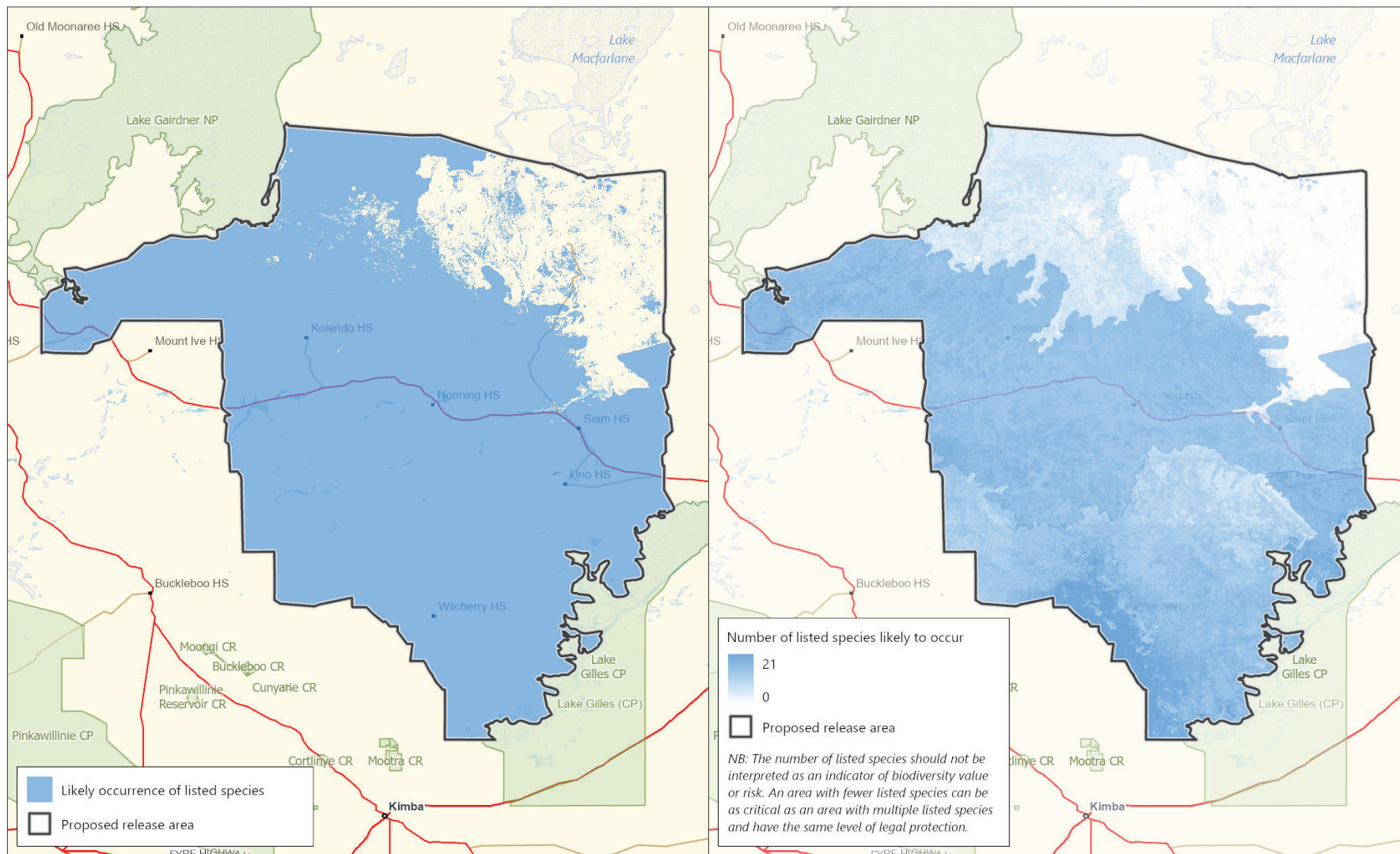
[click here to view full size maps](#)

[click here to view full size maps](#)

Figure 5 Likely occurrence of EPBC Act listed species and number likely to occur in the proposed release area.

Likely occurrence of NPW Act listed species - Gawler Ranges East Proposed Release Area

This map does not constitute a legal interpretation under relevant legislation. All matters in the release area require approvals under relevant legislation, including the NPW Act and the HRE Act.



For more information, please contact DEW at
DEW.Science@sa.gov.au.

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Figure 6 Likely occurrence of NPW Act listed species and number likely to occur in the proposed release area.

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE MAPPING

At the request of the Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Corporation, DEM has worked collaboratively to prepare Aboriginal heritage modelling to highlight predicted sensitivities within the proposed release area (Fig 7).

This map shows cultural sensitivity levels across the study area based on predictive modelling.

This data is for information purposes only and was produced in light of known cultural heritage sites and culturally significant landscapes. On that basis, areas of high

sensitivity shown on the map are predicted, rather than known, to have a greater likelihood of cultural material than areas indicated to be of medium or low sensitivity.

Cultural heritage surveying must be undertaken to determine which parts within any area may be cleared for development.

Due to the nature of predictive modelling, it is quite likely there will be parts of areas denoted as of high sensitivity on the map which prove to be acceptable for development after cultural heritage surveying has been undertaken.

MINERAL AND PETROLEUM ACTIVITY

The HRE Act has specific provisions to facilitate and manage co-existence between renewable energy and mining activities. This includes notice requirements, exempt land provisions, prescribed consultation, and a requirement for renewable development to not 'materially diminish' the existing rights of tenement holders.

A multi-criteria analysis has identified that the southern portion of the proposed release area is highly prospective for a variety of mineral resources, critical minerals and strategic

metals including gold, iron, silver, lead and zinc. This is reflected by high tenement coverage and two advanced mining projects. The northern section is currently under-explored but is generally considered less prospective for mineral discoveries.

Future licensees will be required to consult with all tenement holders in designing their projects to ensure the successful co-existence of both activities.

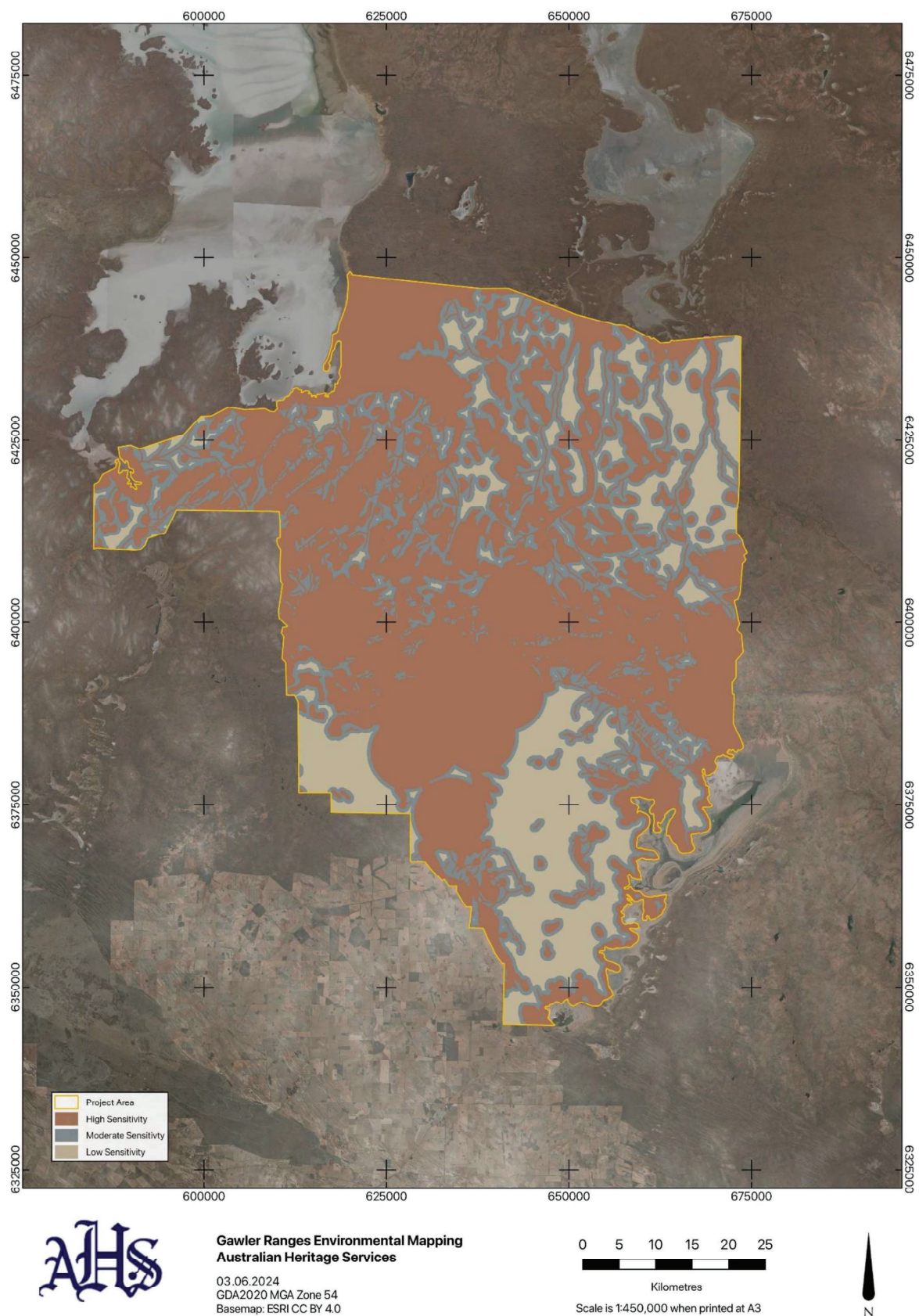


Figure 7 *Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Heritage sensitivity modelling.*

Mining Considerations - Gawler Ranges East Proposed Release Area

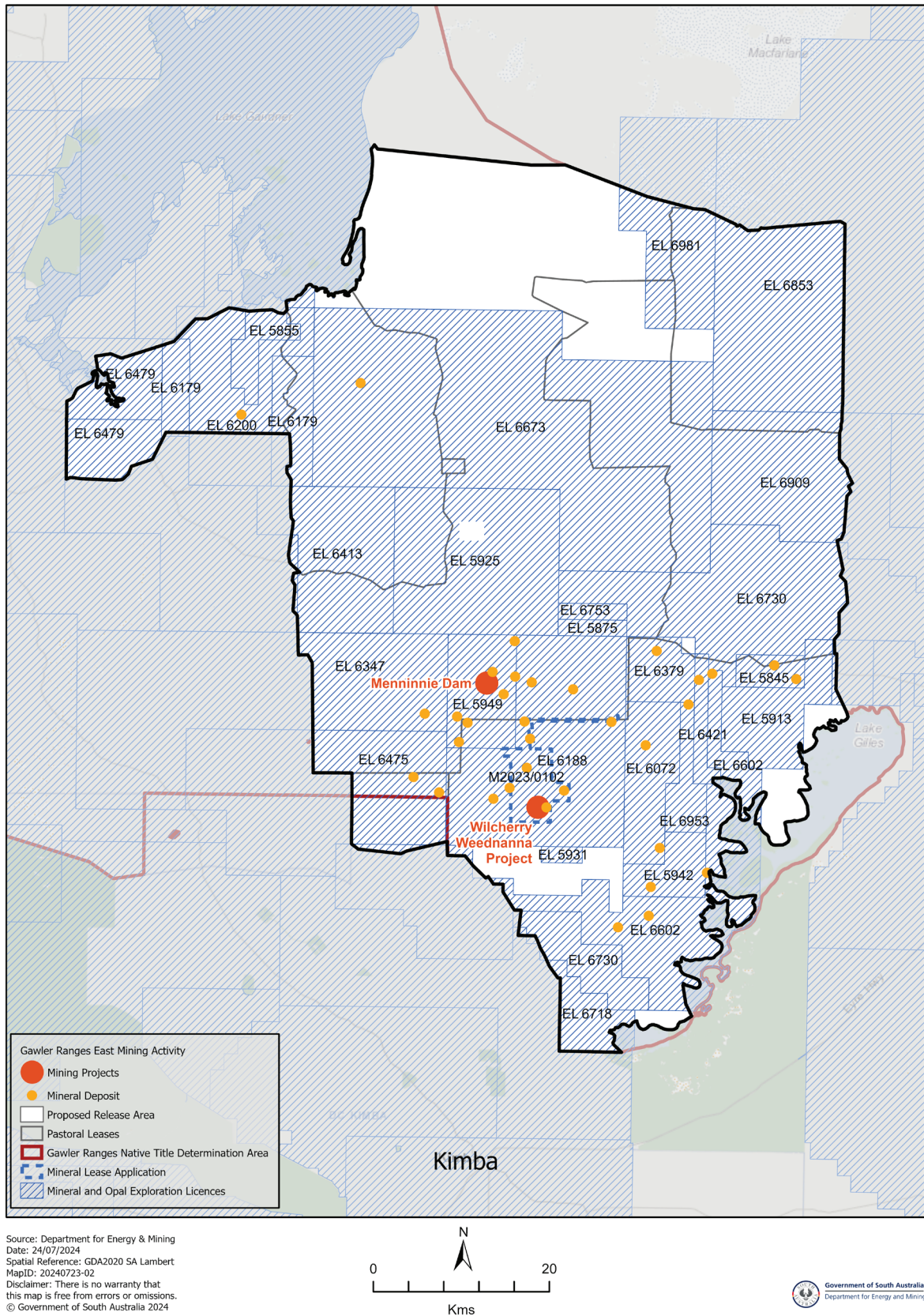


Figure 8 Mining activity and mineral occurrence.

Petroleum/Geothermal Tenements Gawler Ranges East Proposed Release Area

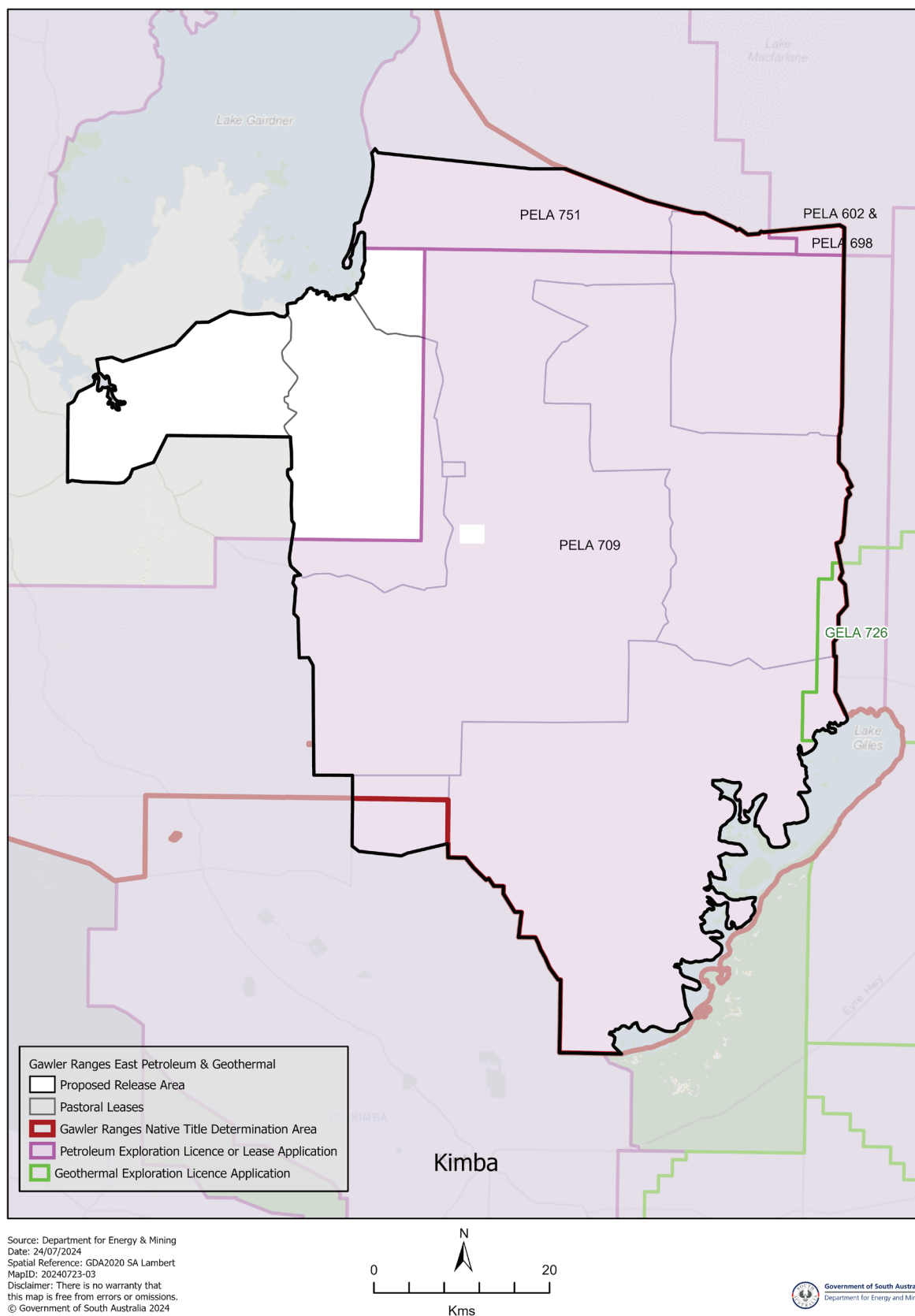


Figure 9 Petroleum and geothermal activity.

Next steps

DECISION ON RELEASE AREA

Following consultation, all submissions will be reviewed and taken into consideration when determining the release area's final boundaries.

When satisfied with the definition of the release area, the Minister for the HRE Act will seek concurrence from the Minister administering the Pastoral Act. If concurrence is granted, the Minister will then declare the release area by notice in the *South Australian Government Gazette*.

COMPETITIVE TENDERS OPEN

Once a release area is declared, a competitive tender process can be initiated through a call for tender, inviting interested parties to compete for the right to apply for a REFL over identified areas of the release area.

Successful tenderers will have the exclusive right to apply for a REFL over the area they are awarded. Before a REFL can be granted, the applicant will be required to reach a Native Title agreement with the relevant Native Title group.

The REFL will enable a proponent to access land to conduct preliminary feasibility and site investigations in consultation with and in accordance with requirements of Native Title holders and pastoral lessees. This feasibility work will inform the project designs and impact assessments needed to apply for HRE Act licences. Under these licences, proponents will be able to progress renewable energy developments and related infrastructure construction.

FUTURE RELEASE AREAS

The government continues to investigate and identify areas across South Australia that may be suitable for future release areas. The government will continue to work with landowners to progressively identify these areas. The intention is to publish guidance on the next priority areas over the coming months.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

As guests on Aboriginal land, the Department for Energy and Mining (DEM) acknowledges everything this department does impacts on Aboriginal country, the sea, the sky, its people, and the spiritual and cultural connections which have existed since the first sunrise. Our responsibility is to share our collective knowledge, recognise a difficult history, respect the relationships made over time, and create a stronger future. We are ready to walk, learn and work together.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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