SECRA
SOUTH EAST CITY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

RE: Biodiversity Act for South Australia

Submission by the South East City Residents Association

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our feedback to the Discussion Paper for a new, long-overdue, Biodiversity Act for South Australia.

SECRA, since its inception in 2005, has supported the retention, repair and enhancement of biodiversity in our streets and in the Adelaide Park Lands. Protecting biodiversity in urban areas is vital as 'there is a growing recognition that cities are key to the future of conservation as the human footprint expands relentlessly around the globe … researchers are increasingly working with city planners, landscape architects and urban wildlife managers to make cities part of the solution to the global biodiversity crisis.'

In response to the climate crisis, and to give people a sense of hope through direct action, SECRA set up Green Pakapakanthi in 2023 to provide increased tree canopy along paths and around playing fields, and to increase much-needed biodiversity (especially for small birds) in Victoria Park (the most used park but with the least protection from the sun). Green Pakapakanthi volunteers (including Rose Park school children) planted 100 trees, and a Miyawaki (dense planting) in the park. Working with the City of Adelaide Council, Green Pakapakanthi volunteers intend to plant 400 trees, and create two Miyawaki plantings, in the park this year.

SECRA makes the following comments on the proposed Act:

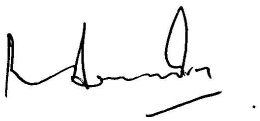
1. The Act needs to take precedence over other Acts and Regulations e.g. the current Planning Code. There should be no exemptions.
2. The Discussion Paper and Survey used the word 'could' in relation to its practices; SECRA suggests that the word should be 'must'.
3. The Act needs to be administered by a 'lean', independent (of State Government), adequately resourced, conservation-qualified body or Board. Much of the destruction of biodiversity has been committed by State Government or with the approval of State Government.
    a. The Board must be able to request information/data/reports etc. from government departments. Not be another level of bureaucracy.
    b. The actions of the Board must be transparent. Regular reporting to the public is essential.
    c. The Board needs to work with the community which can act as the 'eyes and ears' (a Crimestoppers model) in relation to threats to biodiversity, and the 'hands' in repairing and enhancing biodiversity.
    d. The Biodiversity Board needs to work with, and share data and resources with, First Nations people, and existing volunteer organisations that also protect and enhance biodiversity, often through working with private landholders (e.g. Trees for Life, Nature Foundation, the Conservation Council, there are many more).
4. The Act must protect the remnant pre-European vegetation (3%) that remains in the Adelaide metropolitan area and must set ambitious targets for the rapid greening of the city's streets and parks: increasing tree canopy and creating dense plantings of native vegetation on verges and median strips, in reclaimed parking spots, and by removing hard surfaces such as paving and bitumen. So much of the urban landscape in Adelaide is paved and without shade.

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5. To protect and regenerate biodiversity the Act and the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan (GARP) should privilege urban infill development of already degraded urban sites, in order to house a growing population. Greenfield developments continue the destruction of and the possibilities for preserving biodiversity.
6. The Act must have 'teeth': the Board must have the power to dissuade those who would destroy biodiversity, and the will to prosecute and sufficiently punish those who have done so.

Yours sincerely,



R. Doug McEvoy AM

Chair, South East Residents Association

February 11th, 2024