



18 February 2025

Attention:
Draft Biodiversity Bill 2025
Biodiversity Coordination Unit
Department for Environment and Water
GPO BOX 1047
Adelaide SA 5001

Dear Sir/Madam

New South Australia Biodiversity Bill 2025

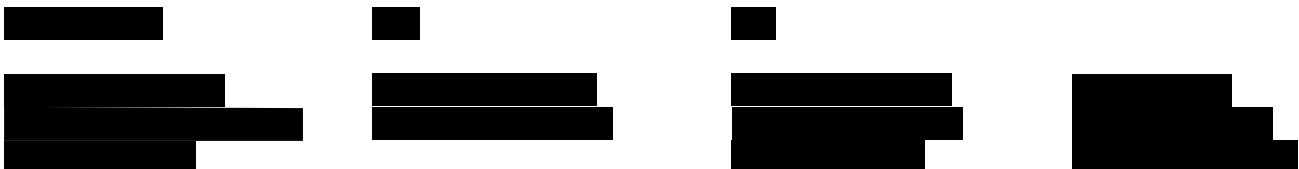
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft *SA Biodiversity Bill 2025* ("the Bill").
This submission represents an administrative response by the City of Playford.

The new Biodiversity Act 2025 is currently being developed to help protect and conserve biodiversity. This legislation includes the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* and wildlife related aspects of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

The City of Playford is a high growth peri-urban council with significant open space and green corridors that support local biodiversity, including:

- 30 locally important flora species and an additional 60 species within roadside marker sites
- 573 hectares of native vegetation in council reserves (native grasslands, open woodland and river systems)

Council work on biodiversity protection and enhancement is guided by our *Biodiversity Directions Report 2021*.



Key Area: Native vegetation clearance – metropolitan area

The *Biodiversity Act Explanatory Guide* advises that there are no changes to the regulated clearance area. However, there is a lack of clarity in the Bill (Schedule 1, page 119 and Section 6, Operation of Act) regarding the area to which the legislation will apply.

The proposed Schedule 1 definition no longer includes the *Planning and Design Code* open space zone (currently provided for in the *Native Vegetation Regulations 2017* maps). This would omit the buffer along the Gawler River and other open space lands.

In addition, the proposed *Section 2 – Operation of Act*, describes the legislation as applying to any public land outside the regulated clearance area. This change is not explained in the *Biodiversity Bill Explanatory Guide* and may have significant implications to Council lands and operations.

To ensure there is a clear understanding of where the legislation applies, maps of the regulated clearance area should be included in the regulations.

Key Area: Biodiversity Funds

The legislation identifies that under delegation, applications to clear native plants may be made to local council and allows for local councils to retain prescribed fees in this circumstance. Council administration is not supportive of the potential shifting of native vegetation clearance regulation responsibility to local councils and is of the view that the use authorised officers in this manner remains voluntary and at the discretion of the local council.

The Bill does not mandate annual reporting on the use of funds, and this should be included as a transparency measure.

Key Area: Taking of native plants and native plant definition

Expanding the definition of "native plant" to include all Australian flora, rather than maintaining the current focus on species indigenous to South Australia, could create confusion and weaken efforts to protect and restore ecosystems using locally adapted species. Many Australian native plants have become serious weeds outside their natural ranges, leading to biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. An exception could be made for species naturally occurring near state borders.

While native plants play a crucial role in ecosystems, some species can become invasive when introduced outside their natural habitat. The Bill should recognise that certain native trees and plants can spread aggressively, becoming environmental weeds that threaten biodiversity. Landholders should not be required to preserve species that contribute to ecosystem degradation. Strengthening protections for local ecosystems should be prioritised over broad protections for all Australian natives, particularly in areas where non-local species may outcompete or displace more fragile native plants.

Council appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the review of the *draft Biodiversity Bill 2025*. We look forward to ongoing engagement and further consultation as this important new legislation evolves.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

[Redacted title]

[Redacted contact information]