

# Managing Our Landscapes

## Conversations for Change

Discussion Paper | July 2018



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# Foreword

As South Australians, we are incredibly blessed with diverse, productive and stunning natural resources.

These natural resources underpin our communities, our economy, our wellbeing and our way of life, and we all have a responsibility to be stewards of our precious natural assets.

The new state government is committed to a significant reform program that will change the way natural resources are managed. A landscape scale and integrated approach underpins the reforms, recognising that people and their livelihoods rely on the health and productivity of our landscapes.

A central focus of the reform program is empowering local communities and land managers to be directly responsible for sustainably managing their region's natural resources - with an emphasis on soil quality, water management and pest plant and animal control.

Another focus for reform will be the forging of strong, enduring and productive partnerships with land managers, volunteer groups, industry experts, Aboriginal nations, other tiers of government and advocacy organisations to deliver practical, on-ground works that address local priorities.

Our state does not come to a halt at the Tollgate, at Gepps Cross or at the bottom of Anzac Highway: distance should not mean disadvantage. The sustainable management of our natural resources is critical for the survival of our regional communities, both in terms of their economic viability and the quality of life enjoyed by those who live in regional South Australia.

A central plank of the reform program is a new piece of legislation – the Landscape South Australia Act.

In my first days as the new Minister for Environment and Water, I issued drafting instructions for the repeal of the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* with the government to introduce a new Landscape South Australia Bill into Parliament in the first quarter of 2019.

There are parts of the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* that have worked well and should be retained and other parts that are over-complicated and have impeded good, local, on-the-ground management that should be removed, amended or simplified.

These reforms will be deeply informed by the people who spend their lives working in the environment, protecting it while also sustaining their livelihoods. This sort of reform can only be achieved through meaningful consultation and the establishment of long-term delivery partnerships.

The State Government is undertaking a thorough statewide engagement process to help shape the future of natural resources management. This will see a series of workshops and conversations occur throughout the state and across industry sectors over the coming months.

I encourage you to get involved in the numerous opportunities you have to contribute to the development of these reforms, as outlined in this discussion paper.

I look forward to working with you as we shape the future of natural resources management for the benefit of all South Australians.



**David Speirs MP**  
Minister for Environment  
and Water

# About natural resources management reform

The South Australian Government has committed to a range of specific reforms to the natural resources management system.

These reforms will put people at the heart of managing our natural resources, recognising that those who work and live on the land are well placed to manage and sustain it.

The Minister for Environment and Water is seeking stakeholder and community views about how these commitments can best be implemented.

This discussion paper will support conversations with stakeholders and the broader community about the government's reforms, including the proposed new Landscape South Australia Bill which is proposed to replace the NRM Act.

**Community input is critical to ensuring the purpose and implementation of these reforms reflect community needs and expectations.**

As a part of this process, it will also be important to consider those elements of the NRM Act that are working well and could be retained, versus those that should be removed, amended or simplified.

The South Australian Government acknowledges Aboriginal people as the State's first peoples and nations, and that Aboriginal peoples' deep knowledge and relationship with Country continues to be critical to sustainably caring for our lands and waters. Practical involvement in managing natural resources is vital for the future of Aboriginal nations and people.



# A summary of our reform commitments

## Landscape Boards

- Create nine Landscape Boards to replace existing NRM Boards.
- The Boards will have seven members with three members elected by the community and four members, including the Chair, appointed by the Minister for Environment and Water.
- The Boards will be responsible for setting strategy and approving programs for the environmentally sustainable management of South Australia's natural resources.
- Landscape Boards will be at arm's length from government and responsible for their own budget.
- Landscape Boards will establish a five-year Landscape Plan for their region, identifying up to five priorities to be achieved by the plan during that time. The plans will be simple and publicly accessible.
- Landscape Boards will be responsible for employing a general manager who will employ and direct staff that will deliver environmental management programs on behalf of the Board.
- Landscape Boards will be required to partner with the private sector, non-government organisations and local and federal government to deliver environmental programs to create jobs and drive investment in local communities.

## Levies

- Cap annual land and water levy rises at a rate set by an independent body or according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- Establish the Grassroots Grants program, a \$2 million statewide annual fund (in addition to existing NRM grants programs), administered at a Board level for volunteer, community and not-for-profit groups to access.
- Levies (land and water) collected in a region will be spent in the region, except for a portion of priority landscape scale or cross-boundary projects, and services to underpin regional outcomes
- Provide a publicly available budget outlining how levies will be spent in the forthcoming financial year and an end-of-financial-year report documenting actual expenditure.
- Continue to collect land levies via council rates.

## Legislation

- The legislative reform will focus on practical programs and on-ground works delivered within existing resources.
- The NRM Act will be repealed and replaced with the Landscape South Australia Act.
- The new Act will identify soil quality, pest plant and animal control and water management as major priorities.

## Green Adelaide

- Green Adelaide will be created to deliver natural resources management functions in metropolitan Adelaide, focusing on enhancing the city's urban ecology and investing in the natural environment to improve overall community wellbeing.
- It will work towards Adelaide being the most ecologically vibrant city in the world.
- Green Adelaide will have an expert Board appointed by the Minister for Environment and Water. It will focus on building a strong connection between Adelaide residents and their natural environment, and work to ensure there is a clear understanding of how and where levies are spent.
- Green Adelaide will focus on seven key priorities: coastal management, urban rivers and wetlands, water sensitive urban design, green streets and flourishing parklands, fauna in the city, controlling pest plants and animals and nature education.
- Green Adelaide will co-administer the \$2 million Grassroots Grants fund to support environmental groups and not for profits deliver on-ground projects.



# Guiding principles for reform

## Decentralised decision making

- ✓ Decentralising responsibility for decision making will empower and reinvigorate regional communities in their management of natural resources.
- ✓ We will build and encourage greater participation in priority setting and on-ground activities and create more opportunities to broaden and deepen partnerships.
- ✓ Support greater flexibility and responsiveness to local issues.

## A simple and accessible system

- ✓ A simple, straightforward system is required that is less encumbered by red tape and complex compliance requirements.
- ✓ We need a transparent system that draws a clear line of sight between funding sources and on-ground action.
- ✓ We will grow participation, build greater trust and confidence, and foster an enduring culture of goodwill.

## Community and land owners at the centre

- ✓ Those who work on, live on and care for the land are well placed to sustain our environment.
- ✓ The reforms will build on strong partnerships with land users, valuing their knowledge and understanding of the landscape.
- ✓ It is the role of government to work alongside land managers, providing support, advice and a helping hand where needed.

## A whole of landscape approach

- ✓ When the efforts of many individuals and organisations are combined across a wide area, the results are more substantial, visible and long-lasting.
- ✓ Large-scale combined efforts require strategic prioritisation and investment and must complement local efforts to maximise effectiveness.
- ✓ A landscape scale restoration approach must also consider interactions between natural systems and people, to improve resilience to change.

## Back to basics

- ✓ The system for managing natural resources needs to renew focus on the issues that matter most to regional communities – soil, water and pest plants and animals.
- ✓ These fundamental issues form the backbone of local level nature stewardship that, in turn, supports and complements landscape scale restoration to achieve vibrant biodiversity, a sustainable economy and resilient communities.



# Why is reform necessary?

Our approach to managing natural resources continues to evolve as circumstances change and we learn more about what works and what doesn't. While the NRM Act brought positive change and benefits, the passage of time, and gradual centralisation mean the current system of natural resources management is not delivering what it should.

## Significant change is therefore essential.

We understand there are a broad range of perspectives and opinions that exist about NRM Boards – both positive and negative. Some of the key issues we are looking to address with our reforms include:

- NRM Boards are seen by some as spending too many funds and resources on planning and administration and not enough on tangible outcomes for the regions.
- Some believe NRM Boards have been brought too close to government agencies, reducing their independence to work as effectively as they perhaps could within their local communities.
- NRM levies have continued to rise but results and outcomes are not always visible to the community.
- Greater transparency and a clear line of sight is needed to demonstrate how levies are spent and the associated outcomes achieved.
- Many provisions of the NRM Act do not work as intended, or they make processes unnecessarily complicated and bureaucratic. This wastes precious resources and makes the job of the NRM Boards and others much harder than it needs to be. We need to cut through this red tape and create a system that is simple and accessible.
- Many effective partnerships have delivered great results over the years. More scope remains, though, to build and strengthen enduring partnerships between the many different organisations and individuals involved in managing natural resources.
- We also need to recognise that Adelaide is very different to other parts of the state. We need a way to better prioritise effort in the city and build a closer connection between Adelaide residents and their natural environment, and between Adelaide and regional South Australia.



# Objectives and benefits of our reforms

**The proposed reforms provide for the ecologically sustainable management of the state's natural resource base to support the state's primary production industries, regional communities, Aboriginal nations and the natural environment.**

Landscapes are the natural systems and resources that make up our surroundings – the soil, water, plants and animals that make up our rivers and plains, forests and hills, coasts and seas.

The new focus on landscape management recognises that these natural systems are connected and we need to look beyond individual natural resources and manage them together across the landscape. Working together in partnership at landscape scale will achieve better long term results.

Landscapes that contain healthy biodiversity underpin sustainable agriculture and make local production and farming more productive and profitable. An investment in natural resource protection and enhancement helps local economies.

Creating a new Landscape South Australia Act is an opportunity to reset our shared vision, revitalise community leadership and strengthen focus on practical programs and on-ground works.

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**The reforms aim to achieve:**

## **Vibrant biodiversity**

Healthy native species and ecosystems that are able to adapt and persist in the face of change.

## **Sustainable economy**

Prosperous businesses now and in the future, able to adapt as the economy and primary industries transform over time.

## **Resilient communities**

Capable local people and groups leading stewardship of their natural environment, contributing to strong social networks that can cope with changing environments.

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## **Community-led landscape management**

**Our reforms will enable greater local action on the fundamental priorities of soil quality, water management and pest plant and animal control.**

This will help land managers and communities manage their local areas and deal with the natural resources management problems they face every day.

In addition to these priorities, additional local and landscape scale activities may be needed in particular areas. These activities, such as revegetation, rewilding and fencing, can also be important contributions to achieving the community's desired outcomes for their landscapes.

The reforms will complement local action with greater capacity to deliver strategic landscape scale restoration projects. When the efforts of many individuals and organisations are combined across a wide area, the results are more substantial, visible and long-lasting. Strong and enduring partnerships will be crucial to the success of landscape scale investments.

Local and landscape scale approaches are intended to complement each other, not conflict. Where local priorities intersect with strategic priorities, this will help to enhance overall benefits.



## Local actions and landscape scale restoration

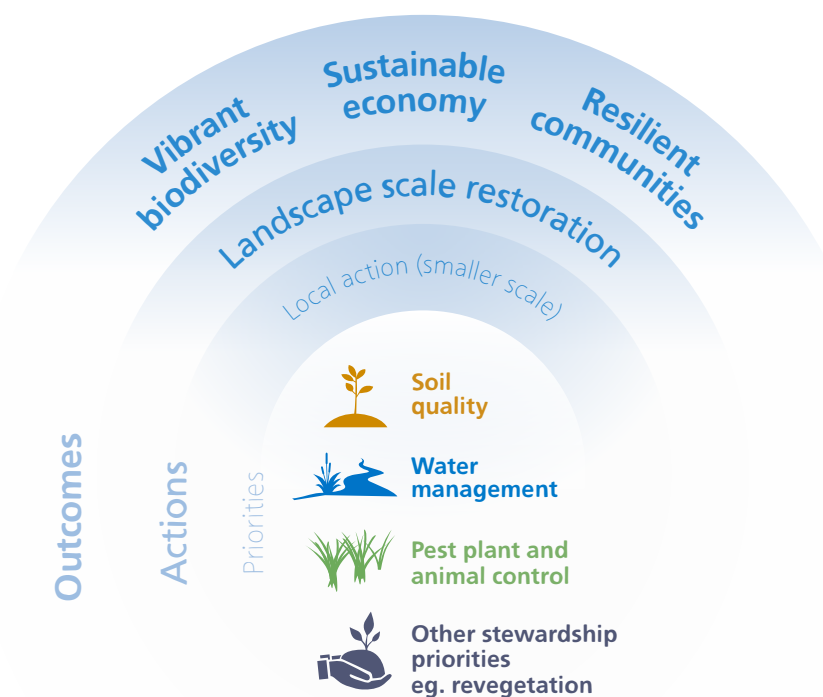
Thinking and operating at a landscape scale achieves the best outcomes from practical, on-ground works. This means recognising that the issues we face in our regions operate at scales bigger than individual properties or patches of bush, and across public and private land.

The social, economic, and environmental aspects of a landscape also affect each other – for example, changes to the economics of a landscape (e.g. commodity prices and production systems) will also affect the social and environmental fabric of the landscape, and vice versa. Recognising these interactions means we can design activities to achieve positive and resilient outcomes across the landscape.

Landscape scale management also recognises that the social, economic and environmental goals for a landscape should be locally relevant to the communities and ecosystems of that landscape. This requires using the best available scientific, traditional and local knowledge, along with a clear understanding of the community's aspirations for their landscape.

This not only means that on-ground works are designed to target the issues most relevant to the local landscape, but also that there is local ownership over addressing these issues, and partnerships with government and other sectors of the community.

Ultimately we want to ensure that landscapes as a whole thrive, and we increasingly recognise the co-benefits – across the environment, the economy and the community – of managing landscapes sustainably.



### Question 1

What is most important to you in managing natural resources?

### Question 2

What do you think is working well about how we manage natural resources?

### Question 3

What do you think should be changed about how we manage natural resources?

### Question 4

How do you think we can best enable landscape scale restoration projects?

## Enabling greater leadership by Aboriginal peoples

Aboriginal people are the first nations and people of South Australia. Their spiritual, social, cultural and economic practices come from their traditional lands and waters. Aboriginal people are increasingly being engaged in natural resources management, bringing their immense experience and knowledge.

It is important that the knowledge and interests of Aboriginal nations be recognised and promoted to drive positive and practical improvements in landscape management and benefits for Aboriginal people.

It is critical for Aboriginal peoples to be represented in governance and planning processes. Strengthening Aboriginal voices will open space for strong and productive partnerships, for integrating Aboriginal knowledge, and for supporting Aboriginal people to take a leading role in managing natural resources.



### Question 5

How do you think we can better recognise and promote Aboriginal peoples' land, water, economic and cultural interests?





# Benefits

**The government anticipates the following key benefits as a result of the proposals put forward within this discussion paper**

- ✓ Our reform proposals aim to create a simple and accessible system for managing natural resources that decentralises decision making, empowering regional communities to take responsibility for managing natural resources at the local level.
- ✓ Local action is complemented by strategic landscape scale restoration projects that are delivered by multiple stakeholders working in strong and enduring partnerships.
- ✓ The new Landscape South Australia Bill is intended to be shorter, less process-oriented and more flexible, to reduce red tape. This will help Landscape Boards and other managers of natural resources to get the job done more easily.
- ✓ There are a range of processes in the NRM Act that could be simpler and more flexible, such as Board appointments, planning, engagement, operations and compliance. Placing specific procedural requirements in regulations or policy, rather than in legislation, will enable far greater flexibility when those processes need to change.
- ✓ Sharper focus on the fundamentals of managing natural resources.
- ✓ Strong Board governance, including clear, dedicated staffing arrangements for Landscape Boards.
- ✓ Simplified agility and responsiveness to adapt to changing circumstances and regional needs.
- ✓ Less money spent on administration, management and documentation, thereby freeing up funds for on-ground activities.
- ✓ More funding opportunities for local community organisations to deliver on-ground works.
- ✓ More focus on facilitating delivery through partnerships.
- ✓ Greater investment in strategic landscape scale projects.
- ✓ Simplified reporting, making deliverables and measurable outcomes clear and easy to understand, compare and track.

# Your involvement in natural resources management reform

It is widely recognised across government, community and stakeholder groups, that natural resources management reform is needed. It is a clear priority for this government.

It is essential that we guide and manage our proposed reforms in ways which will give people and communities the change they are looking for. We want to build greater public confidence in natural resources management, build greater participation and coordination, and, to put it simply, get more done within the boundaries of available resources.

**While our reform commitments are clear, we are very open to ideas on how these should best be achieved in practice.**

This discussion paper is the first significant step towards shaping what the future could look like. It will support conversations with stakeholders and the broader community about the government's reforms, including the proposed new Landscape SA Bill.

The upcoming statewide engagement activity, in which the Minister is heavily involved, is critical to ensuring community and stakeholder feedback is gathered and heard.

This is a unique opportunity to refresh and reset natural resources management within our state.



## How can you engage in the reform?

### Stakeholder workshops and community forums

Three independent facilitators have been appointed to work with the Minister. Their task is to ensure the engagement process effectively canvasses everyone's views and is fair, balanced and equitable.

Between August and October 2018, there will be a series of facilitated stakeholder workshops and regional community forums. People attending will hear about the proposed reforms, be able to ask questions and provide input through facilitated, participatory conversations.

Workshop and forum dates, times and locations can be found at [www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform](http://www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform)

### Written feedback

You can also provide written feedback:

- **Online at**  
[www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform](http://www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform)
- **By email to:** [LandscapeReform@sa.gov.au](mailto:LandscapeReform@sa.gov.au)
- **By post to:** The Independent Facilitator  
Landscape Reform  
GPO Box 1047  
ADELAIDE SA 5001.

Please note that your submission will be made publicly available unless you indicate you wish for it remain confidential.



## What feedback can you provide?

The Reform Proposals section of this discussion paper provides more detail on the proposed reforms and how they might work in practice.

We have also posed a series of questions to encourage you to challenge the way things have been done in the past. We want fresh ideas, a local perspective and community ownership and empowerment.

We want to understand how our reforms will work best in practice, within existing community structures.

You can also provide more general comments about the proposals or other aspects of natural resources management that you feel are important to you and your region.

**The closing date for feedback is 5:00 pm (ACST) Monday 15 October 2018.**

A summary document will be prepared by the independent facilitators and made publicly available outlining the key findings of the engagement.

This discussion paper and other information is available online at [www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform](http://www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform)



## How will your feedback be used?

Your feedback will be used in several ways.

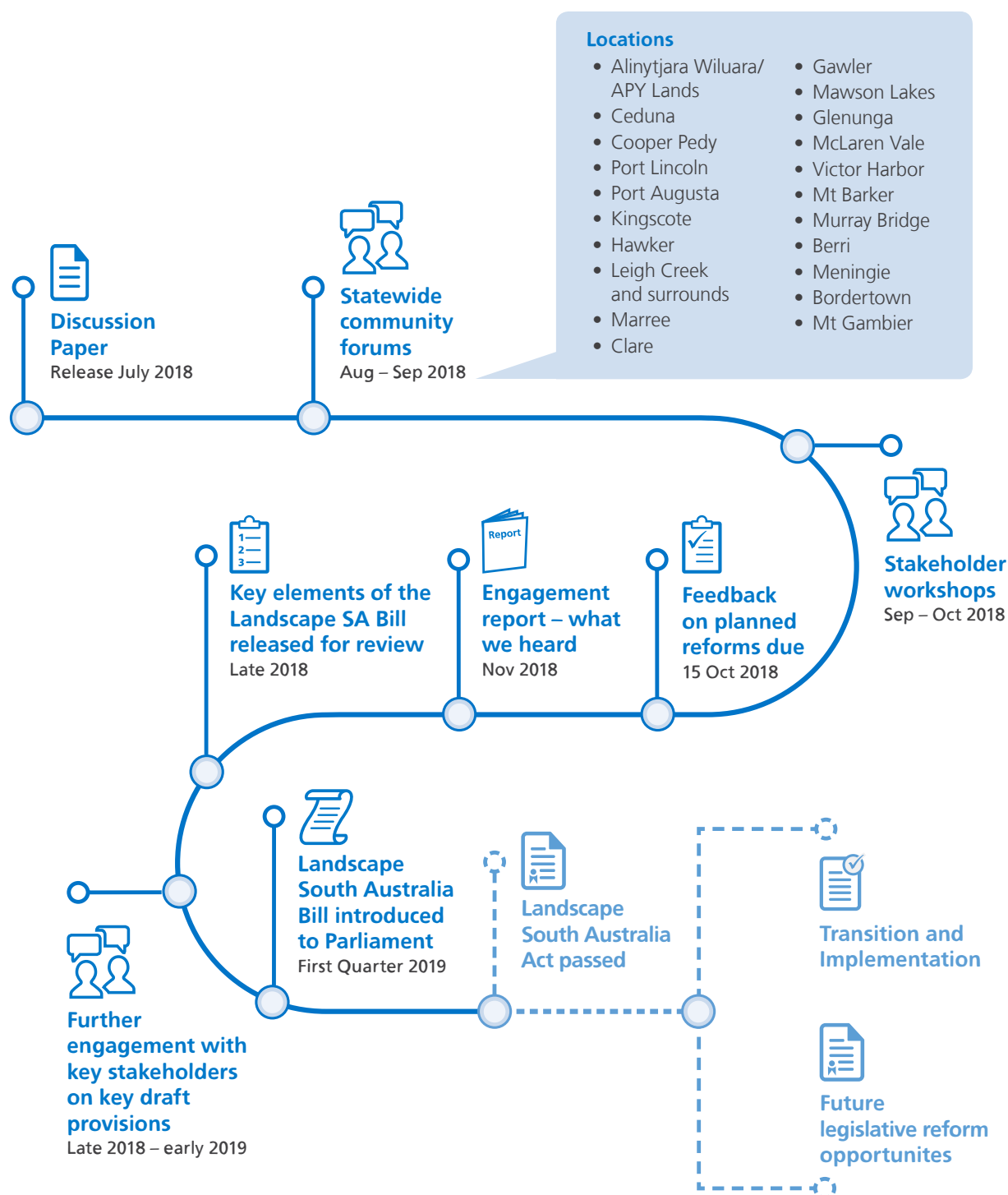
Comments about the South Australian Government's natural resources management reform commitments will help to inform how those commitments are implemented.

Comments about other proposals or ideas in this discussion paper will help to inform the development of the Landscape SA Bill, and/or regulations, policy or programs that follow the introduction of the Bill.

We will share the outcomes of the engagement process and how it influences our reforms. Engagement will continue to be part of the medium and long-term implementation of these reforms to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are able to meet expectations.



# Key stages of the reform process





# How will we transition?

We understand our reforms will require a change in approach and some uncertainty for many people invested in the current natural resources management of the state.

We are looking at a collaborative approach to ensure a smooth transition from the NRM Act to the Landscape South Australia Act.

It is anticipated that current NRM arrangements will remain largely unchanged for the 2018-19 financial year, with their focus being on the delivery of services for the community – essentially conducting “business as usual” without the requirement to exhaustively plan for future years.

We want to ensure the positive momentum around many of the current programs and projects underway is not lost.

The Department for Environment and Water will support the transition process, with feedback to inform this process being sought during the upcoming engagement.

Once the mechanism for reform is in place, we will then implement the right processes to lead the transition, ensuring it occurs in a timely, efficient and effective way.

# Reform proposals

## **Role of the Minister**

The Minister for Environment and Water will remain responsible for overall direction of natural resources management in South Australia. The Minister will be responsible for administering the Act, with powers of delegation. The Department for Environment and Water and other State agencies will continue to support the Minister in developing policy and contributing to statewide strategy, coordination, reporting and other initiatives on managing natural resources as required by the Minister.



## **Question 6**

How can Landscape Boards best facilitate the management of natural resources by their communities?

# Landscape Boards

## **Election commitment**

The new Landscape South Australia Act will create nine Landscape Boards to replace existing NRM Boards, with the intent to place community at the heart of delivery.

Landscape Boards will be responsible for setting strategy and approving programs for the environmentally sustainable management of South Australia's natural resources.

Landscape Boards will be at arm's length from government and responsible for their own budget. They will have a general manager who will be responsible for employing and directing staff.

Landscape Boards will employ staff to undertake environmental management in the region employing them unless agreed otherwise.

Boards will be required to outsource some of their work to the private and non-government sector to create jobs and drive investment further. Local councils will also be encouraged to apply to undertake this work.

## **Establishing Landscape Boards**

**It is proposed that the Landscape Boards would facilitate effective management of natural resources, working in partnership with primary producers, conservation organisations, Aboriginal nations, councils and government agencies.**

- Landscape Boards would have more autonomy than the current NRM Boards. They would be responsible for their own budgets and employ a general manager who would manage staff. Landscape Boards would have the power to set and manage their own levies, with any increases reviewed by an independent regulator or according to the CPI.
- Increased autonomy brings with it a need for improved transparency and reporting. It is proposed that the Landscape SA Bill would establish a regulator to oversee a cap on levy increases and Landscape Boards would need to provide publicly available plans and budgets. An end of financial year report would document actual expenditure as well as the measurable outcomes achieved.
- The Landscape Boards would remain statutory entities, and would continue to meet the high standards of governance and accountability required of statutory entities. They would remain subject to the direction of the Minister, so the Minister can fulfil his or her accountability to Parliament and the community. They would continue to provide service and advice to the Minister on matters related to their functions. They would also continue to work in partnership with a broad range of government agencies to maximise effectiveness and achieve common goals.
- It is anticipated that Landscape Boards would continue to partner to facilitate funded delivery of natural resources management services on behalf of the Australian Government, such as through the National Landcare Program.

## Landscape Board boundaries

### The regions covered by the nine new Landscape Boards will be:

- Alinytjara Wilurara
- SA Arid Lands
- Eyre Peninsula
- Hills and Fleurieu (new)
- Kangaroo Island
- Northern and Yorke
- Plains and Valleys (new)
- SA Murray Darling Basin
- South East (proposed to be renamed as the Limestone Coast for consistency with other regional bodies in this area).

Green Adelaide will be created to deliver natural resources management functions in metropolitan Adelaide.

The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR) NRM Board will be abolished and the areas it serves will be covered by Green Adelaide and the two new Landscape Boards established to serve the Hills and Fleurieu region and the Plains and Valleys region north of Adelaide.

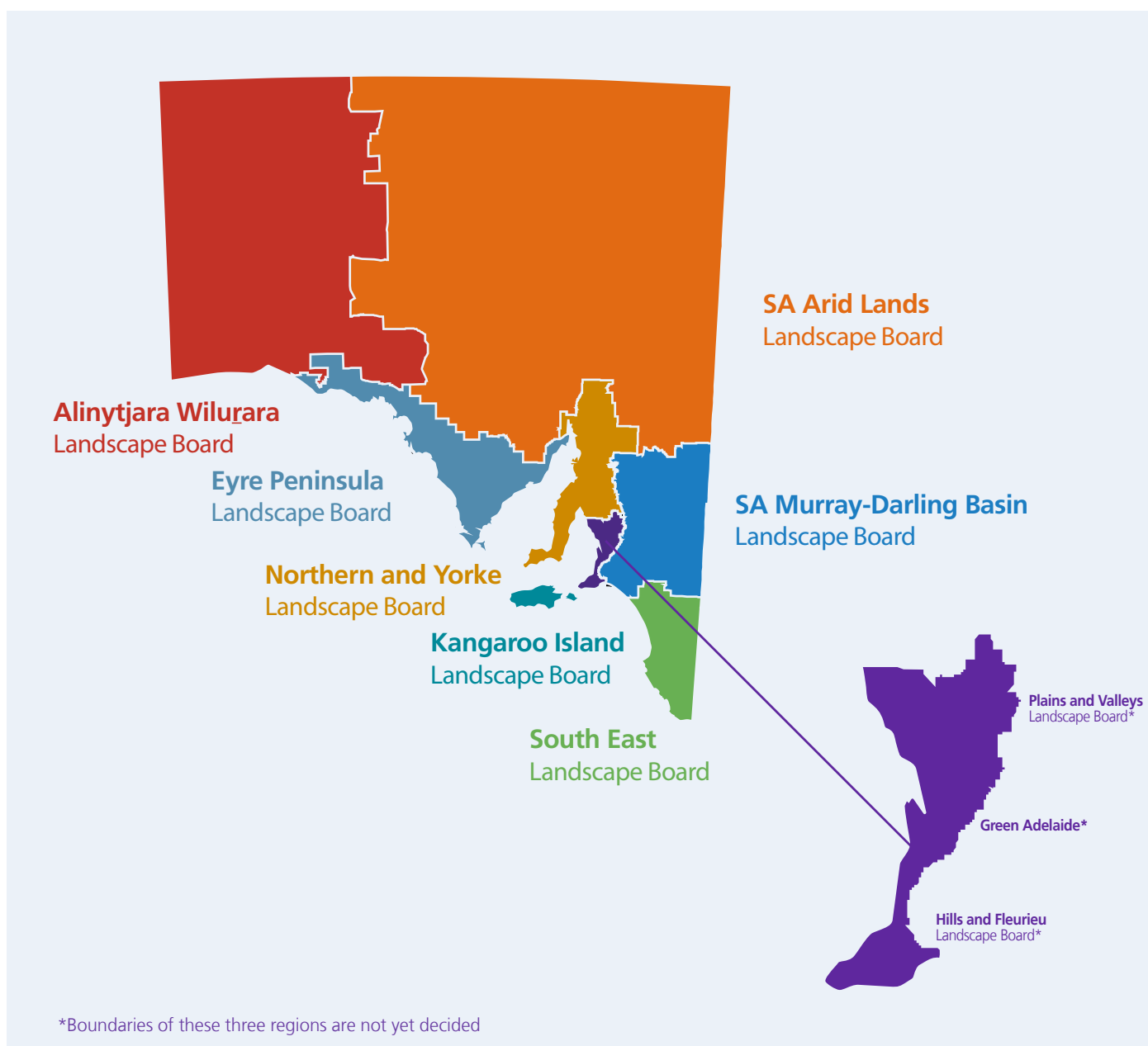
Existing boundaries are proposed to be largely retained. However there could be some changes to boundaries depending on the outcomes of the engagement process.

The boundaries for the new Adelaide regions are not yet drawn. Factors to consider in defining their boundaries include:

- Financial viability – to ensure sufficient funding to fulfil their functions

- Logical administrative boundaries – to simplify levy administration, relationships and delivery
- The Country of Aboriginal nations
- Community connections and identity
- Land use – patterns and features to take into account areas of commonality and consistency
- Water catchments
- Marine ecosystems
- State Government regional boundaries

As part of defining these boundaries, it may be relevant to consider adjusting the boundaries of other regions adjacent to the new Adelaide regions.





### Question 7

What do you think is the best approach for electing the three community members to the Landscape Board in each region?

## Membership of Landscape Boards

### ***Election commitment:***

The nine Landscape Boards will have seven members with three members elected by the community and the other four members, including the Chair, appointed by the Minister for Environment and Water.

### ***Minister appointed members***

Collectively, the members of each Landscape Board would need to have the relevant skills to facilitate management of the region's natural resources. To be effective, Landscape Board members will need to have local knowledge and strong connections with the local community, and appropriately reflect the diversity in the community.

The appointment process would be streamlined and simple, requiring minimal approval "gates". Specifying these processes in regulations rather than in the Act would improve flexibility to adjust those that aren't working as intended.

### ***Community elected members***

Electing Board members will give communities a greater stake in their Landscape Board. A number of options could be considered:

- The Minister could review nominees to ensure they meet specified requirements, such as demonstrating relevant skills or experience.
- Members could be elected from the whole region, or a subregion.
- Voting could be voluntary, with all NRM land levy payers eligible to vote in elections. This would reinforce the link between those paying the levy and the Boards responsible for administering the levy. Alternatively, and to be consistent with other electoral processes, all adult residents in the region could vote.
- The method of conducting elections would be specified in regulations, not the Landscape SA Bill, to enable flexibility to adopt new methods and technology as they become available.





## Question 8

How could Green Adelaide help to make Adelaide a more ecologically vibrant city?

## Green Adelaide

### *Election commitment:*

Green Adelaide will be created to deliver natural resources management functions in metropolitan Adelaide, focusing on enhancing the city's urban ecology and investing in the natural environment to improve overall community wellbeing.

It will work towards Adelaide being the most ecologically vibrant city in the world.

Green Adelaide will have an expert Board appointed by the Minister for Environment and Water. It will focus on building a strong connection between Adelaide residents and their natural environment.

Green Adelaide will have the following seven priorities:

1. Coastal management
2. Urban rivers and wetlands
3. Water sensitive design
4. Green streets and flourishing parklands
5. Fauna in the city
6. Controlling pest plants and animals
7. Nature education

**We often think of cities as places filled with people and buildings, but the best cities in the world are those which have thriving natural environments in their midst.**

The Green Adelaide initiative recognises that urban communities connect with natural systems. The 1.3 million people who live in metropolitan Adelaide should have the opportunity to be environmental stewards - whether in backyards, streets, suburbs, at work places, or in places of recreation. Adelaide residents also impact on, and benefit from, the natural resources of the state and should contribute to the sustainable management of those resources.

- Working with partners, Green Adelaide would invest in community development that fosters long-term positive action for environmental stewardship. It could also have a strategic and influencing role.
- Green Adelaide will support Adelaide residents to live more sustainably. Environmental programs are proposed to build resilience and social well-being; promote environmental awareness and education, including the role of sustainable primary production; and contribute to an economically viable and environmentally sound future.
- The engagement process will shape the scope and functions of the Green Adelaide Board, and its governance and financial arrangements.
- Green Adelaide would manage a separate region, and raise levies in a similar way to Landscape Boards.
- To leverage its urban environmental focus and expertise, it could also support urban initiatives in regional urban centres, in partnership with Landscape Boards and other organisations.
- To complement the main engagement process, some further focused engagement will help to guide development of Green Adelaide.

A separate discussion paper on Green Adelaide is being developed.



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### Question 9

How can regional planning be streamlined?

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### Question 10

How can regional plans be more accessible to the community, while becoming more consistent in format and terminology?

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### Question 11

How do we best measure and report outcomes from managing natural resources?

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# Landscape Plans and a Green Adelaide Plan

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## ***Election commitment:***

Landscape Boards will establish a five-year Landscape Plan for their region, identifying up to five priorities to be achieved by the plan during that time. The plans will be simple, short, focused on tangible actions and publicly accessible.

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Currently, each regional NRM Plan is unique, and there are few requirements for consistency, making them difficult to compare and reducing the ability of the Minister and regulators to provide effective oversight.

NRM plans have also suffered from limited buy-in from other organisations to deliver on shared outcomes.

## **A five-year Landscape Plan would be prepared for each region:**

- These plans would identify up to five priorities, with measurable outcomes to be achieved during the life of the plan. Priorities would focus on the basics of enabling management of natural resources, including soil quality, water management and pest plant and animal control, complemented with landscape scale restoration efforts.
- To help create jobs and drive investment, some of the on-ground delivery for each region would be outsourced to the private and non-government sectors and local councils.
- Simpler, fit for purpose approaches to stakeholder and community engagement would be encouraged, to ensure effective community involvement in planning and delivery.
- Streamlined procedures and consistent plan elements would be spelt out in regulations, to enable increased flexibility and adaptability as new engagement and planning approaches emerge and to improve the ability of the Minister, regulators and the community to review and evaluate them.
- Substantial scientific, local and Aboriginal cultural knowledge about the current state of resources in the region is vital to ensuring their effective development and implementation but need not be detailed in the plans.
- While Green Adelaide will have different priorities and stakeholders, a similar streamlined planning model is proposed.

## **Reporting and evaluation**

Effective reporting allows managers of natural resources to track how the condition of those resources change over time. Reporting also helps Landscape Boards, stakeholders and the community evaluate outcomes, understand investments made and guide and prioritise future actions.

**It will be important to understand community and stakeholder preferences around reporting and evaluation and how the processes needed to deliver that information can remain effective, streamlined, and highly contemporary.**

# Improving the levy system

## **Election commitment:**

Cap annual land and water levy rises at a rate set by an independent body or according to the CPI. Levies (land and water) collected in a region will be spent in the region, except for a portion of priority landscape scale or cross-boundary projects, and services to underpin regional outcomes. Provide a publicly available budget outlining how levies will be spent in the forthcoming financial year and an end-of-financial-year report documenting actual expenditure. Continue to collect land based levies via council rates.

Two types of NRM levies are currently collected in South Australia:

- Land levies collected from rate payers both inside and outside of Local Government areas
- Water levies, collected from people who hold a water management authorisation.

Under the NRM Act, these levies are intended to share the cost of implementing a Regional NRM Plan across the region. They are not quarantined specifically for land based or water based activities respectively. The NRM Act allows NRM levies to be raised through a variety of mechanisms. Land levies may be based on capital value, fixed rate or land area. Water levies may be based on a fixed rate, water allocations or water usage, the share of the resource, area of land, the effect that taking or using water may have or for a defined special purpose. In determining the most appropriate mechanism, NRM Boards must undertake a social impact assessment to minimise the impact on levy payers.

It is essential that the way levies are raised and used is transparent, accountable and fair. As public funds, levies should primarily deliver public benefit. In relation to water levies there are a range of other price setting mechanisms such as National Water Initiative price setting principles and those of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission that should also be considered in the setting of the levy.

A number of changes to the levy system are proposed to:

- Help to reduce cost of living pressures for South Australians
- Improve fairness of levies across and within regions
- Make levy expenditure transparent to the community
- Improve effectiveness in delivering sustainable landscapes.

Proposed changes could include:

- I. Capping annual land and/or water levy increases at a rate set by an independent regulator with regular reviews, or could be set according to the CPI.
- II. Providing a more consistent basis for land and water levies both within and across regions, while retaining some flexibility for regional differences.
- III. Ensuring that all levies collected in a region are spent in that region – except for a percentage of all levies collected each year from some or all Landscape Boards and Green Adelaide that would contribute to a Grassroots Grants program and a Landscape Priorities Fund.

Each Board will have a publicly available budget outlining how the levies they set are to be spent in the forthcoming financial year. An end of financial year report will document actual expenditure.

Land based levies will continue to be collected via the most cost effective method – by local government via council rates (and in out of council areas by the Minister). Improvements that assist councils to collect land based levies will be considered.

Levy funds also enable access to Australian government funding for significant natural resource management programs such as National Landcare Program Phase Two.



## **Question 12**

How important is it to have more consistency in the way land and water levies are raised across the state?

## **Question 13**

How can we best fund high priority landscape scale projects?



### Question 14

How important is it to coordinate efforts to manage our natural resources across regions? How could this best be achieved?

# Cross-regional and statewide coordination

Local and regional partnerships are the engine of landscape management in South Australia. However, landscapes and the pressures affecting them don't stop at administrative boundaries.

Many issues require cross-regional and statewide coordination. For example, many pests and weeds such as wild dogs and buffel grass occur across two or more regions and threaten other regions, requiring a coordinated approach. Likewise, threatened species and ecological communities often occur across regions and coordinated efforts to sustain them are needed. Coordination of effort could also help communities and farming systems to adapt and be resilient to a changing climate.

There are a range of ways to achieve some level of cross-regional coordination to achieve more effective delivery. These include:

- Informal agreements between Landscape Boards and other stakeholders and groups.
- Establishment of a cross-sector advisory body including representatives from peak bodies, Aboriginal nations, Landscape Boards and government agencies. Any such advisory group would need to operate in a streamlined, fit for purpose way to avoid creating additional bureaucracy.
- There may also be value in some level of statewide planning and prioritisation to support coordinated regional effort, complemented by an appropriate evaluation and reporting framework to facilitate consistent approaches to evaluation and reporting in each region.
- Establishment of a statewide Landscape Priorities Fund to which some or all Landscape Boards and Green Adelaide would contribute a portion of levy funds raised. While the policy direction for the new Act is for levy funding to be spent in the region in which it is collected, there are times when statewide priorities should complement spending in a region.
- It is proposed that such a fund would be invested in accordance with priorities set out in a statewide strategy and could be used only with the approval of the Minister and all Landscape Boards involved. It is proposed that all funds would be invested in landscape management, through regional Landscape Boards, supporting the principle of investing levy funds in regions, and minimising additional administration costs.

# Grassroots Grants program to support local projects

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## ***Election commitment:***

Establish the Grassroots Grants program, a \$2 million a year statewide annual fund (in addition to existing grants programs), administered at a Landscape Board level for volunteer, community and not-for-profit groups to access

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All Landscape Boards and Green Adelaide will co-administer the program, which will be funded through a percentage of all land and water levies raised in each region.

Grassroots Grants would aim to support local level action enabling stewardship of our natural environment. Volunteers, community and not-for-profit groups play a major role in managing natural resources across South Australia. Their contribution of time, energy, expertise, equipment and resources is extremely valuable.

Grassroots Grants could operate in a range of different ways, such as small grants to support the operation of groups, or grants for local projects.



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## **Question 15**

How could a Grassroots Grants program best work?

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## Question 16

What are the highest priority ways we could improve pest plant and animal control?

# Clear, simple priorities

### ***Election commitment:***

Legislative reforms will focus on practical programs and on-ground works delivered within existing resources. The new Landscape SA Act will identify the fundamental, interrelated issues of soil quality, pest plant and animal control and water management as major priorities.

**There will be a clear focus on grassroots environmental projects targeting the most relevant issues in the local landscape.**

**Soil quality, pest plant and animal control and water management do not operate in isolation. Management of these issues, and stewardship of the natural environment more generally, must be considered together to achieve landscape scale restoration.**

Local ownership of the issues and partnerships with government and other sectors of the community will be vital to the success of local level stewardship, that in turn supports and complements landscape scale restoration to achieve vibrant biodiversity, a sustainable economy and resilient communities.

Many of the existing NRM Act provisions dealing with pest plant and animal control, water management and soil quality are likely to be kept in the new Landscape South Australia Bill. Your feedback will shape opportunities to enhance and simplify those provisions, and make them more flexible by incorporating procedural details into regulations and policy.





## Pest plant and animal control

Pest plants and animals cost South Australian agriculture millions of dollars each year. They also impact our way of life and are one of the leading threats to biodiversity.

**As many pest plants and animals are mobile, they cannot be effectively controlled by regions in isolation.**

The Landscape SA Bill and its associated regulations and policy will need to consider:

- A strategic, prioritised approach to on-ground action is the only way to reduce the impacts of the most important pest plants and animals.
- Priorities need to consider the risks posed by pests and the feasibility of controlling them.
- Partnerships between Landscape Boards, government, community and industry are needed to detect and respond to new incursions and for landscape scale management of established pests.
- Landscape Boards to work with local landholders to increase education and awareness.
- Legislation is important to help eliminate or minimise the impact of pest plants and animals. Enforcement of declared pest plants and animal control needs to be consistent. Penalties should encourage compliance and be proportional to the biosecurity impacts or risks posed by pest plants and animals.
- Compliance would be strengthened if authorised officers could prescribe specific control activities (for example specifically requiring landholders to bait to control wild dogs) and have the ability to directly undertake control activities and recover costs where there is high risk impact.
- It is proposed to keep many of the current provisions for pest plants and animal control with improvements to be informed through the engagement process.





## Water management

Effective water management involves the water resources themselves as well as the broader landscapes, or catchments.

**Water resource management engages a range of stakeholders who may or may not be actively engaged in the Landscape Boards, and involves a broad suite of legislative and policy arrangements.**

The current water provisions of the NRM Act provide for:

- The prescribing of water resources, where necessary for proper management
- Preparation of statutory water allocation plans for prescribed resources and community consultation on draft plans by the relevant NRM Board, prior to Ministerial approval
- Licensing of water access entitlements under a water allocation plan and associated water levy requirements
- Permits for other water affecting activities, including where water is regulated under a regional NRM plan.

Since that time the Water Industry Act 2012 has been introduced, which provides for:

- Water security planning, including demand and supply management
- A licensing regime for the water industry

- Regulation of prices, customer service standards and technical standards for water and sewerage infrastructure and installations and plumbing
- Performance monitoring of the water industry

A statutory review of the Water Industry Act is required in 2018 and the Productivity Commission has recently recommended that a new phase of national water reform be commenced.

The potential for reform across the areas identified by the Productivity Commission has been highlighted in feedback received from the community. However, given the complexity and scale of statewide water reform, it will need to be implemented in stages - with a first phase of incremental reform reflected in the draft Landscape SA Bill.

Initial benefits to be introduced via the Landscape SA Bill could include the streamlining of water allocation planning, transparency of decision making and greater protection for security interests in water licences.



## Soil quality

**The sustainable management of our soil resources is vital to food production systems, agricultural industries and food security.**

Our ancient soils have sustained Aboriginal peoples, culture and economies for thousands of generations and they also underpin a healthy environment, including biodiversity and water resources.

Legislation helps to ensure that soil resources are managed sustainably and are protected from degradation that could limit their potential for production or negatively impact the environment.

The collaborative efforts of farmers, government, advisers and researchers and their sharing of ideas, innovations and knowledge has led to the adoption of improved farming practices and should continue to be supported and encouraged.

Much of our agricultural production system is very dependent on seasonal rainfall and growing conditions. Adaptation of farming systems to be resilient against weather variability and climatic changes will be a significant driver in the future.

The impacts of a changing climate on soil degradation need to be considered. Flexibility of management practices could help to manage unforeseen consequences of climate change or emergency events.



## Other stewardship priorities

The priorities of managing soil, water and pest plants and animals are fundamental to landscape scale restoration.

In addition to these priorities, other local and landscape scale activities may be needed in particular areas.

These activities, such as revegetation, rewilding and fencing can also be important contributions to achieving the community's desired outcomes for their landscapes.

The government's reforms aim to recognise that land managers and local communities are leading stewards of their natural environment. Our landscapes, made up of natural features such as our coastline, trees and wildlife are valued by many people and contribute to their unique sense of place in our diverse state. As part of a landscape-scale approach, we can assist people to undertake broader efforts to restore their natural environments.

Many people are keen protectors and managers of the bush in their local area and on their properties. The priorities of managing soil, water, pest plants and animals meaningfully contribute to the stewardship of nature. Combining these with other actions such as sustainable agricultural practices, revegetation, and protecting and connecting vital habitats for priority native species, helps to achieve the community's desired outcomes for their landscapes.

Sharing information and citizen science enables land managers and owners to be effective stewards of their natural environment, and to see the benefits of their actions.

Partnerships between land managers, community groups, Landscape Boards, industry, Aboriginal nations, local and state governments can collectively help to revitalise and restore the quality of our natural environments in a wide range of ways.

Effective stewardship of our natural environments is vital to achieving vibrant biodiversity, sustainable economy and resilient communities.



### Question 17

Are there any minor amendments that could be made in this Bill to current water management processes?

### Question 18

What more substantial water reform do you believe should be looked at as part of subsequent reform processes?

### Question 19

What should be included in the new legislation to enable more effective management of our soils, pest plants and animals?

### Question 20

What should be included in the new legislation to enable better stewardship of our landscapes?



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### Question 21

How do you think the new legislation can best enable effective compliance arrangements?

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## Compliance

Effective compliance is crucial to sustaining vibrant biodiversity, productive farms, food security and relationships between neighbours.

Compliance priorities and investments should be risk-based, strategic and targeted to the issues of greatest risk or concern. Priorities must take into account scientific as well as local and cultural knowledge. Processes should ensure compliance breaches are resolved in a timely, consistent and cost-effective manner. Penalties should encourage compliance and be proportional to the risks posed by breaches. The community should also have faith in, and consistent expectations of, the compliance system – that it will protect landscapes from willful or negligent non-compliance by individuals and entities.

Further consideration is required of the relationship between regional Landscape Boards, government agencies and the Crown Solicitor's Office in relation to compliance.



# Future opportunities

Effective and sustainable landscape management requires much more than a new piece of legislation. A wide range of other laws intersect with landscape management, and the effectiveness of these interactions will significantly affect the success of our efforts. Some of this legislation includes:

- The *Aquaculture Act 2001*
- The *Coast Protection Act 1972*
- The *Fisheries Management Act 2007*
- The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*
- The *Native Vegetation Act 1991*
- The *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*
- The *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*
- The *Water Industry Act 2012*

This process focuses on the Landscape South Australia reforms. However as part of the government's future agenda, there will be opportunities to explore improved interactions between these laws. Further engagement will be required on any further reforms in coming years.





[www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform](http://www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform)



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