Monarto Parks

Draft Management Plan 2025

Ferries-McDonald Conservation Park
Kinchina Conservation Park
Monarto Conservation Park
Monarto Woodlands Conservation Park



SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Government of South Australia
Department for Environment and Water



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country. The department works in partnership with the First Peoples of South Australia and supports their Nations to take a leading role in caring for their Country.



Your views are important

The Monarto Parks Draft Management Plan outlines the objectives and strategies that will set the strategic direction for the management of the parks identified in this plan.

It is released for public comment to provide members of the community an opportunity to express their views on the future management of the parks.

Feedback received will be considered before the development of a final plan. Once developed, the final plan will be submitted to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for adoption under Section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

I encourage all interested people to assist in shaping the long-term management of these parks by making a submission on this draft plan. Guidance for the preparation of a submission can be found on page 20.

M Williams

Mike Williams
Director of National Parks and Wildlife

Developing this draft plan

This draft management plan incorporates Ferries-McDonald Conservation Park, Kinchina Conservation Park, Monarto Conservation Park and Monarto Woodlands Conservation Park. The parks in this plan are in proximity, have similar ecological and geographic features and are subject to the same range of issues. Establishing one management plan supports a consistent approach to biodiversity conservation and public visitation across these parks.

This draft plan has been developed by the Department for Environment and Water with input from key stakeholders, park managers and technical experts. The diverse range of park values, visitor experiences, relationships with local communities, and the unique identity of each park has been explored and taken into account during development of this plan. The strategic management, objectives and strategies outlined in this plan are designed to enable adaptive management of the parks.

Once complete, this plan will be the first adopted management plan for each of the parks.

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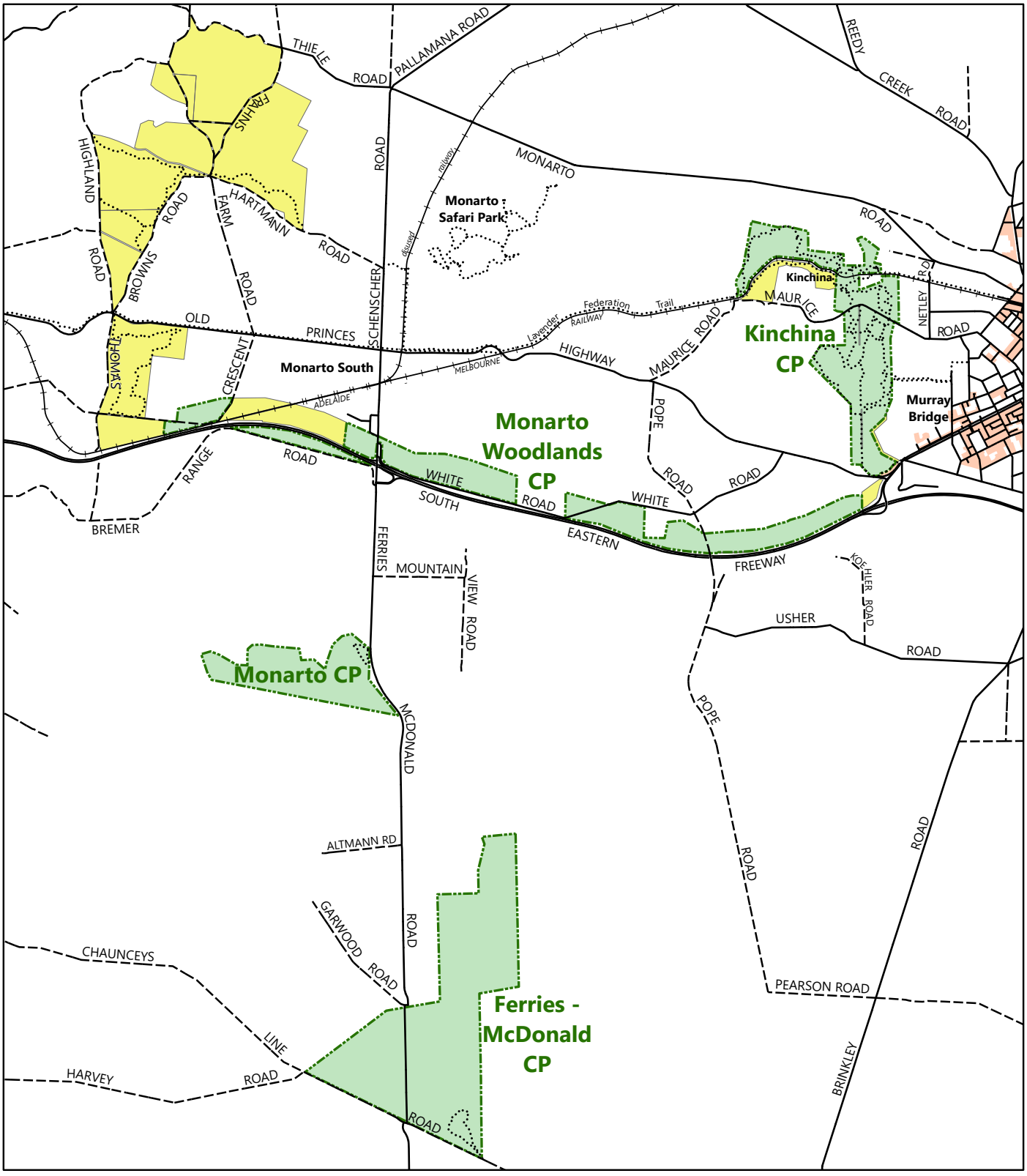
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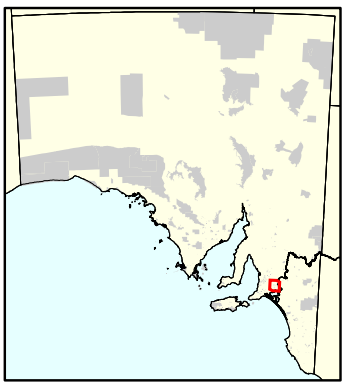


Figure 2

Crown Land

0km 1 2

LEGEND

- Sealed road
- Unsealed road
- Recreation Trail
- Railway
- Monarto Parks
- Crown Land
- Built Up Area

Directions for management

The Monarto parks (refer to Figure 1) are situated approximately 60 km east of Adelaide, between the Mount Lofty Ranges and the Murray River. The parks are in an area of ecological transition, between the grassy woodlands of the Mount Lofty Ranges and the semi-arid mallee of the Murraylands region. Sandy ridges are present across the parks and in the surrounding landscape, as this area was once part of the ocean bed. Broadacre cropping and agricultural land dominate the landscape, with roadside vegetation and some isolated areas of remnant vegetation. These parks contain many areas of outstanding natural beauty and are an important component of Country for the Ngarrindjeri people, the traditional owners of the lower Murray River, Lower Lakes and Coorong and the Peramangk people, the traditional owners of areas in the Adelaide Hills and mid Murraylands region.

Ferries-McDonald, Kinchina, Monarto and Monarto Woodlands conservation parks are proclaimed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (NPW Act). The objectives of the NPW Act ensures that parks are managed primarily for conservation, while supporting public use, enjoyment and education about the parks' purpose and significance.

The parks in this plan have been proclaimed primarily to conserve remnant mallee and grassy woodland vegetation which has been largely cleared in the area. They are home to a unique assemblage of plants and animals including the Monarto mintbush (*Prostanthera eurybioides*), resin wattle (*Acacia rhetinocarpa*) and Menzel's wattle (*Acacia menzelii*) which are listed as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), along with the EPBC listed malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*). A large number of state-threatened plants and animals are protected in these parks, along with several reptile species including the sand goanna (*Varanus gouldii*), one of the Murraylands largest surviving native predators. These parks provide habitat for a number of declining woodland bird species including the EPBC listed diamond firetail (*Stagonopleura guttata*) and hooded robin (*Melanodryas cucullata cucullata*). Opportunities for recreation including birdwatching and bushwalking are available in all parks, and walking a dog on a lead, horse riding and cycling are permitted in designated areas within Kinchina and Monarto Woodlands conservation parks.

Strategic management of these parks will focus on maintaining and enhancing ecosystem health and protecting threatened species through habitat restoration and by focusing on the management of threats including total grazing pressure, inappropriate fire regimes, weeds, pest animals, unsustainable visitor activity and the impacts of climate change. There are several land parcels in the vicinity of these parks with similar and important conservation values (Figure 2). Where feasible, additional parcels will be proclaimed as additions to the parks and managed as per the directions for management outlined in this plan.

The parks are managed primarily for conservation with permitted recreational opportunities differing between parks due to individual park values. Conserving important ecosystems will be balanced with providing appropriate recreational opportunities for local communities and visitors to the region. Table 1 on page 17 provides clarification for what is permitted in each park. Visitor facilities are compatible with low impact uses such as picnic areas, walking and cycling trails, and ancillary features such as trail heads and trail signage. Existing management tracks and trails provide access in some of these parks and will be managed for operational requirements. Tracks primarily for fire management access are managed in accordance with the relevant fire management plan, which is currently in development. There are no other visitor facilities in these parks and new basic facilities may be developed in the future if the level of demand warrants the investment. Any future development, tourism and recreation opportunities must ensure impacts to conservation values are limited.

The community is very active in some of these parks and has had an important presence for several decades, supporting biodiversity conservation and sustainable recreation. Volunteers and conservation groups have made a significant impact on protecting park conservation values, particularly through pest plant removal and management, advocacy of biodiversity protection, and threatened species monitoring. Maintaining and building relationships with Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk peoples, volunteers, researchers, local and state government agencies, non-government agencies and adjacent landholders will support their continued involvement in park management opportunities and help to achieve effective outcomes.

The strategic management, objectives and strategies outlined in this plan are designed to enable adaptive management of the parks. The specific actions required to manage these parks in accordance with the plan will be developed and monitored at a park operations level and in accordance with relevant threatened species recovery plans and fire management plans. This approach provides the flexibility necessary to address future management challenges and opportunities.

Monarto Parks

The protected areas covered by this plan are (refer to Figure 1):

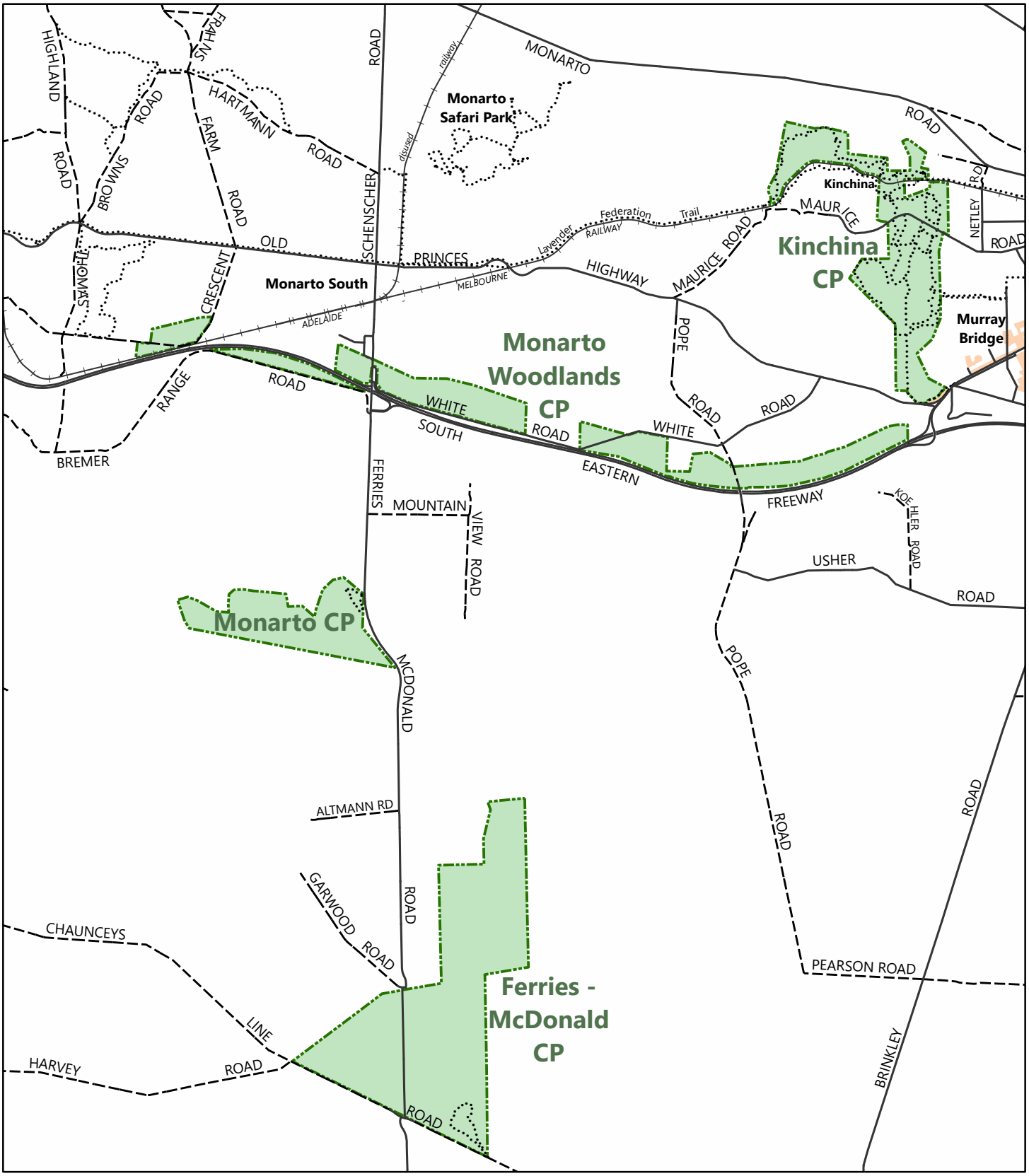
Ferries-McDonald Conservation Park (842 ha)

Kinchina Conservation Park (414 ha)

Monarto Conservation Park (240 ha)

Monarto Woodlands Conservation Park (425 ha)





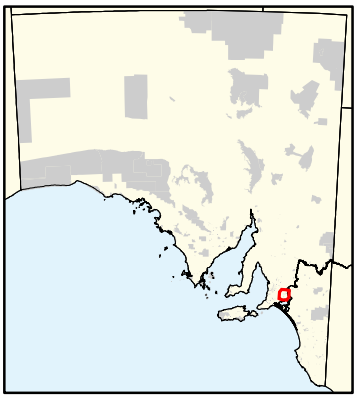


Figure 1

Monarto Parks

LEGEND

- Sealed road
- Unsealed road
- Recreation Trail
- Railway
- Monarto Parks
- Built Up Area

Significance and Purpose

The parks in this plan are part of the traditional lands of the Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk peoples for whom the land, water, plants and animals are central to their spirituality and identity. The Ngarrindjeri Nation and Peramangk People maintain a strong connection to the area bound by heritage, birth rites, and dreaming and creation stories. Sites and features across the Murraylands, lower Murray River, Lower Lakes and Coorong landscape have cultural importance and are connected to stories that have been passed down over generations.

Significant revegetation has occurred and is well established in some of the parks, which combined with existing remnant vegetation provides important habitat for wildlife. Across all parks, these woodlands are recognised as critical habitat for a number of declining woodland bird species in the eastern Mount Lofty region, including 3 species listed under the EPBC Act.

The parks are significant for containing remnant and reconstructed mixed woodland vegetation which provide an important refuge for wildlife in a predominantly agricultural landscape. The parks are highly valued in the community and by visitors in the area for their conservation values and recreational opportunities immersed in natural settings. The parks can be split into 2 distinct clusters based on their values and management requirements.

Southern cluster

The southern cluster includes Ferries-McDonald and Monarto conservation parks which were proclaimed as protected areas in 1938 and 1983 respectively, to protect important habitat for wildlife. These parks contain large patches of remnant vegetation with a diverse local native plant and animal community. Fewer recreational activities are permitted here to provide a higher level of protection for conservation values.

Ferries-McDonald Conservation Park

Ferris-McDonald Conservation Park was previously known as Chauncey's Line Scrub, and was renamed after Robert McDonald, the donor of much of the land, and James Ferries who funded a land addition to the park in 1953. The land was first set aside as a sanctuary for birds and animals in 1938 and was the second park protected under the South Australian National Park and Wildlife Reserves Commission in 1962. The park has a high plant diversity with more than 260 species recorded and protects a relatively large area of remnant mallee scrub dominated by ridge-fruited mallee (*Eucalyptus incrassata*) and narrow-leaf red mallee (*Eucalyptus leptophylla*) with broombush (*Melaleuca uncinata*) understory.

These vegetation associations are not well represented in the protected reserve system and have been largely cleared in the region for agricultural purposes. Protection of habitat for malleefowl was the original driver for proclamation, and the park continues to provide a refuge for more than 120 native bird species, including the nationally threatened malleefowl, hooded robin and diamond firetail along with another 9 threatened bird species listed under the NPW Act. Reptiles are also well represented in the parks, with 10 native species observed. The largest remnant population of the nationally vulnerable resin wattle is protected in the park, along with 7 plant species listed as rare under the NPW Act.

A car park provides access to the 2km Malleefowl Walk trail. Dogs, bikes and horses are not permitted in the park.



Monarto Conservation Park

Monarto Conservation Park is located 2km north of Ferries-McDonald Conservation Park and stands as a living testament to the resilience of the Australian flora and fauna. Much of the semi-arid area was previously cleared for broadacre farming but through natural regrowth and active restoration works undertaken by volunteer groups, the vegetation in the park has since regenerated, with more than 240 native plant species recorded. It is home to a wide diversity of native orchids, fungi, and more than 140 native bird species including the nationally threatened malleefowl, hooded robin and diamond firetail along with another 11 state threatened bird species including the restless flycatcher (*Myiagra inquieta*) and black falcon (*Falco subniger*). 13 native reptile species have been recorded in the park, including the sand goanna.

The sandy plains support dry heathland and remnant mallee woodlands dominated by southern cypress pine (*Callitris gracilis*) and ridge-fruited mallee. The nationally threatened resin wattle occurs in the park, along with the state-rare mallee bitter-pea (*Daviesia devito*), pink gum (*Eucalyptus fasciculosa*), sticky daisy-bush (*Olearia passerinoides ssp. glutescens*) and rasp daisy-bush (*Olearia picridifolia*).

A car park provides access to the 1km Monarto Loop Walk, the only trail in the park. Dogs, bikes and horses are not permitted in Monarto Conservation Park.

Northern cluster

The northern cluster includes Kinchina and Monarto Woodlands conservation parks which were proclaimed in 2016. Kinchina Conservation Park is predominantly remnant vegetation and established revegetation comprising endemic species. Monarto Woodlands Conservation Park is reconstructed habitat consisting of local native plant species and species that have been introduced from elsewhere in Australia, with some smaller areas of remnant vegetation. They are strongly valued for their recreational opportunities, with a history of people cycling, horse-riding and dog-walking in the parks.

Kinchina Conservation Park

Kinchina Conservation Park was proclaimed primarily to protect remnant grassy woodlands providing critical habitat for several declining woodland bird species in the eastern Mount Lofty Ranges region, including the nationally threatened hooded robin and diamond firetail, along with more than 100 other native bird species. The park's vegetation community is made up of natural woodlands and reconstructed woodlands and is the only area where the nationally threatened Menzel's wattle is formally protected, with over 4000 plants recorded. The nationally endangered Monarto mintbush is also found in the park, along with the state listed dagger-leaf wattle (*Acacia rhigiophylla*) and showy copper-wire daisy (*Podolepis jaceoides*).

The park's proximity to the Murray Bridge area makes it a popular spot for recreation and the community have a strong connection to the park. The Rocky Gully creek meanders through the park to the north, with granite outcrops forming features which can be enjoyed from the Lavender Federation Trail. An extensive shared use trail network supports bike riding and bushwalking opportunities. Horse riding is permitted on designated tracks, and dogs are permitted in the park on a lead.

The park is proclaimed jointly under section 43 of the NPW Act which enables appropriate resource and exploration and development under the *Mining Act 1971* and the *Petroleum and Geothermal (Energy Resources) Act 2023*.



Monarto Woodlands Conservation Park

Monarto Woodlands Conservation Park consists predominantly of plantings from the 1970s which formed part of the abandoned Monarto satellite city concept. The plantings comprise a mix of local native and Australian native species, along with areas of good quality remnant vegetation containing two vulnerable South Australian vegetation communities; mallee box (*Eucalyptus porosa*) grassy woodland on calcrete plains and drooping sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) grassy low woodland on clay loams of low hills. Ecological restoration and biodiversity protection programs run in partnership between the National Parks and Wildlife Service Riverland and Murraylands Region and conservation groups include surrounding public and private land parcels to improve management outcomes. Any land parcels added to this park will be subject to the strategic management, objectives and strategies outlined in this plan.

A popular spot for birdwatching, the park and the surrounding landscape provides important habitat for native bird populations including over 40 species recognised as declining woodland birds. The nationally threatened hooded robin and diamond firetail occur in the park, along with the rare state-listed white-winged chough and restless flycatcher.

Dogs on a lead, bike riding and horse riding is permitted in the park in designated areas.

The park is proclaimed jointly under section 43 of the NPW Act which enables appropriate resource and exploration and development under the *Mining Act 1971* and the *Petroleum and Geothermal (Energy Resources) Act 2023*.

What are we looking after?

The Monarto Parks protect:

- Patches of remnant mixed mallee vegetation within a fragmented landscape including ecological communities of concern in South Australia; grassy woodlands on rolling hills of the Mount Lofty Ranges, native pine (Callitris gracilis) grassy woodland and mallee box (Eucalyptus porosa) grassy woodland on calcrete plains.
- 19 animal species that are listed as threatened under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972. This includes 3 species that are also listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
- 13 plant species that are listed as threatened under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972. This includes 3 species that are also listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
- A network of habitat and refuges for native species to move throughout the landscape, including extensive areas of woodlands and structurally diverse vegetation which provide high quality habitat for declining woodland bird species.
- Scenic landscapes with a diversity of wildlife, and opportunities for people to connect with nature and enjoy nature-based activities including bushwalking, cycling, bird watching, and horseback riding.
- Landscape features and sites that are of cultural and spiritual significance to the Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk peoples and important for their culture.
- Woodlands and remnant mallee vegetation in relatively accessible terrain providing opportunities for research organisations, schools and volunteers to study ecological systems and native wildlife.

Challenges and opportunities

Key challenges and opportunities in the protection and management of the Monarto parks are:

- Maintaining and expanding healthy ecosystems within a modified landscape to ensure that they continue to provide habitat for native species.
- Managing the impacts of pest plant and animals and total grazing pressure to protect threatened species and ecosystem health.
- Developing a better understanding of threatened species populations and ensuring priority actions for their protection are implemented.
- Working with adjacent landholders to support activities that complement objectives for biodiversity and conservation within the parks.
- Continuing to improve understanding of fire ecology and threats following fires (both bushfire and prescribed fire), to better enable fire regimes to be managed for ecological outcomes.
- Managing risk of bushfires to ensure community safety and ecological health.
- Understanding the consequences of climate vulnerability and the strategies required to support ecosystem resilience to decreasing rainfall, increased temperatures, and increased risk of extreme fires.
- Restoring and revegetating cleared areas and maintaining remnant vegetation to enhance vegetation connectivity across the landscape and increase woodland bird population viability.
- Providing diverse, ecologically sustainable opportunities for recreation, including events and school education programs, while ensuring there is clarity about permitted activities within the parks and where they can be undertaken.
- Working with industry and development initiatives to minimise biodiversity impacts and promote investment into conservation efforts.
- Providing scope for commercial ventures to develop new nature-based tourism experiences, consistent with natural characteristics and ecological values of the parks.
- Connecting the growing Rural City of Murray Bridge population with nature while managing the impacts to biodiversity associated with urban development and increased infrastructure demands.



Theme 1: Conserving natural values and restoring native ecosystems

The Monarto parks protect some of the largest remaining areas of mixed mallee and woodland vegetation in the eastern Mount Lofty Ranges. In a region where much of the landscape has been cleared for agricultural purposes, these parks provide a vital refuge for native wildlife and an opportunity to increase available habitat. Management of threats including total grazing pressure, inappropriate fire regimes, weeds, pest animals, unsustainable visitor activity and the impacts of climate change are priorities.

The parks contain ecological communities that are considered under threat in South Australia; grassy woodlands on rolling hills of the Mount Lofty Ranges, native pine (*Callitris gracilis*) grassy woodland and mallee box (*Eucalyptus porosa*) grassy woodland on calcrete plains. The Monarto area is one of only two areas in Australia where the nationally endangered Monarto mintbush occurs, with a significant population occurring in Kinchina Conservation Park. Maintaining habitat that supports this population is considered critical to the species survival. Menzel's wattle and resin wattle are also protected within the parks in relatively robust numbers compared to fragmented populations outside of the reserve system.

The semi-arid vegetation of Ferries McDonald and Monarto conservation parks provide habitat for nationally vulnerable malleefowl, and all parks contain crucial mallee habitat for a suite of other threatened woodland bird species including the hooded robin and diamond firetail. Many small native bird species are in decline and rely on healthy woodland vegetation for their feeding and nesting habitat, with these requirements differing between species. Maintaining the health of these habitats is a priority for management of parks in the region, recognising that some key land parcels surrounding these parks contribute significantly to biodiversity and the protection of conservation values in the area.

Opportunities to expand the parks through the acquisition of neighbouring land parcels may be considered, taking into account natural values, conservation potential and access. Surrounding areas known as Frahns Farm and Browns Road, while not currently proclaimed under the protected area system, are being managed for conservation purposes in line with park management direction. These land parcels have high conservation values, form important habitat links with the Monarto parks and are greatly valued

by the community. The addition of these blocks to the parks would increase the protection of mallee box grassy woodlands and drooping sheoak low woodlands in the Murraylands region, while also protecting areas of revegetated and reconstructed woodlands. Populations of the nationally threatened Menzel's wattle and Monarto mintbush have been recorded in these areas, and the woodlands support a number of threatened and declining woodland bird species.

Recovery plans and conservation advice statements for species listed under the EPBC Act will be used to inform actions where necessary to stop their decline and support their recovery. Monitoring populations of threatened species will enable appropriate control measures to be implemented for their conservation. Further surveys of threatened species will enable a better understanding of their distribution and will support more effective management.

Pest plants threaten habitat integrity by competing with native plants and impeding their growth and can alter vegetation structures. Historic clearance and disturbance of land surrounding the reserves has led to the spread of pest plants including galenia (*Galenia pubescens*), bridal creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) and African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) which have been targeted for control in biodiversity conservation programs. With residential development predicted to increase in the Murray Bridge area, the risk of garden plants escaping from neighbouring properties is an ongoing risk to biodiversity. Control will be implemented to protect areas of high conservation value and where pest plants threaten the survival of threatened flora populations. Control methods will be applied in a manner which minimises impacts to the native species they are intended to benefit.

Introduced pests including rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), stray domestic pets and deer species are present across the Murraylands and are known to occur in the parks. Even in low numbers introduced species can have significant impacts on biodiversity and will require management to limit their effects on biodiversity such as predation of native fauna, grazing and trampling of native vegetation and damaging water systems. Control measures for pests that are a significant contributor to the decline of native species and where programs are likely to be effective in supporting the recovery of threatened species will be a priority. The impact of deer in the region is an emerging issue and one that will be addressed in partnership at a landscape-scale. Prioritising pest plant and animal management in the parks will be consistent with relevant Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board regional strategies.

Feral honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) that are present in these parks often occupy tree hollows and rock crevices that would otherwise provide habitat for nesting birds, small mammals and reptiles. Given the ongoing issue with feral beehives, and the risks to conservation outcomes such as pollination competition with native species and the pollination of weeds, no new apiary licences will be permitted.

Total grazing pressure in the reserves including by western grey kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus*), euro (*Macropus robustus*), eastern grey (*Macropus giganteus*) populations and introduced herbivores is having a negative impact on habitat quality and food availability for important and threatened species. When left unmanaged, grazing herbivores compete for food and habitat with other native fauna, and can alter vegetation structure, which causes soil erosion and reduced habitat quality for threatened and declining mallee bird species. The decline in vegetation diversity from grazing is a threat to a range of wildlife including bats, birds and reptiles. Grazing pressure from rabbits, sheep and macropod species is an identified threat to Monarto mintbush populations and reducing this pressure is a priority for conservation projects in the parks.

Evidence of total grazing pressure will be used where required to determine impacts to habitat quality by native and introduced herbivores. While managing the impacts of herbivores will primarily focus on the control of introduced herbivores, where evidence indicates that western grey kangaroos, eastern grey kangaroos and euros are a large contributing factor to total grazing pressure resulting in unsustainable impacts to the conservation values of the parks, strategic management will be implemented. While non-lethal methods will be considered in the first instance, where they are considered ineffective or not feasible, culling will be implemented as it remains the only practicable method of management. Kangaroo control may include commercial harvest options. Any culling will follow strict procedures for the humane destruction of animals.

Fire has been part of the Australian landscape for thousands of years. As an ecological process fire has shaped the flora and fauna and continues to contribute to a healthy ecosystem. Mallee vegetation



is particularly fire-prone, and the type and frequency of fire is important for seedling recruitment and other vegetation health indicators. Landscape modification, active fire suppression, and climate change have resulted in changes in fire regimes across the landscape. The subsequent impacts in these parks can be severe for at-risk native species, due to the fragmented nature of their remaining habitat, and for species that require long-unburnt habitats. For example, suitable habitat for malleefowl is already limited within the management area. A reduction of habitat quality and availability from inappropriate fire regimes may prevent these species from persisting, potentially causing localised extinctions.

A regional fire management plan will be developed to capture these parks to guide management activities aimed at reducing bushfire risk and managing conservation values. Fire management activities, including prescribed burning is implemented across strategic areas of the parks to reduce the risk, intensity and spread of bushfires, and make suppression more achievable and safer. Prescribed burning is also used as an ecological tool to maintain and improve the health of habitats, with pest plant control and grazing pressure management included into integrated management programs.

Extensive revegetation from the 1970's in Monarto Woodlands Conservation Park, and across the surrounding landscape is well established. While comprising a mixture of native and non-endemic plant species, this woodland habitat supports a high diversity of native bird species and has been shown to increase woodland bird population viability.

Encouraging natural regeneration, supported by strategic revegetation and habitat reconstruction, will increase habitat for threatened flora and fauna. Areas recovering from previous land-use activities, particularly partially cleared areas adjoining remnant vegetation and areas between stands of vegetation, are suited to the restoration of habitat. Restoration efforts may include the removal and replacement of non-endemic native plantings where there is a net ecological benefit. Outcomes to improve biodiversity and increase available habitat for wildlife, particularly woodland bird populations will be a priority. Integrated management programs will incorporate pest plant control and managing grazing pressure impacts where required.

Climate change projections for the region indicate decreasing rainfall, increasing temperatures and more frequent heatwaves, reduced flows down the Murray River and more heightened fire danger days. It is likely to exacerbate threatening processes such as impacts from pest plants and animals, changes in water flows and more frequent and higher intensity bushfires. Climate change could cause changes to vegetation communities' distribution across the Riverland and Murraylands region, and result in changes to the type of habitat available for native fauna. Understanding the impacts of a changing climate and how to support ecosystems to be resilient, will be crucial in successful long-term park management. Research and monitoring will be vital in developing an understanding and implementing subsequent programs to mitigate the impacts.

Working in collaboration with Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk peoples, volunteer and community organisations, research organisations, non-government organisations, local government and special interest groups will be important for successful conservation activities, maintaining sustainable recreational use and supporting community participation in park management. Management programs will focus on activities that achieve conservation outcomes across the landscape. Volunteers have made a considerable contribution to habitat restoration, along with survey and monitoring of flora and fauna, and they continue to demonstrate community stewardship of the parks. Support for volunteers and the conservation outcomes that they achieve will continue.

Objective and strategies

Manage ecosystem health by using and increasing knowledge of species distribution and ecology to guide biodiversity protection programs and effective threat management.

- Monitor populations of threatened species and support further surveys to better understand the health and extent of populations, and to inform operational requirements for their protection. Use relevant threatened species recovery plans to guide management activities.
- Encourage research that improves understanding of biodiversity within and adjacent to the parks and underpins the refinement of management strategies for the development of ecosystem resilience.
- Rehabilitate cleared areas with assistance from restoration partners through revegetation and other habitat reconstruction works and encouraging natural regeneration to increase the area of available habitat, support plant diversity, improve ecological function and increase resilience of native ecosystems. Partner with neighbours and conservation groups to create corridors across public and private land where possible.
- Control pest animals to limit their impact on biodiversity and where their control can support the recovery of threatened species. Work in partnership with volunteers, conservation groups, neighbouring land managers and the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board on landscape-scale control programs for effective outcomes.
- Incorporate the parks into a fire management plan to guide activities to minimise the likelihood and impact of bushfires and to sustain and enhance ecological values.
- Implement pest plant control programs to improve habitat and reduce impacts in areas of high conservation value where impacts are significant. Focus on new and emerging weeds that are likely to spread and impact native habitats, weeds that are impacting threatened species, and weeds that are having a significant impact on habitat structure and function.
- Support existing partnerships and encourage collaboration with the Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk peoples, conservation groups, volunteers, local council, Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, neighbouring landholders and other special interest groups to achieve ecological outcomes and foster community stewardship of the parks.
- Implement western grey kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus*) euro (*Macropus robustus*) and eastern grey (*Macropus giganteus*) management programs where total grazing pressure indicates adverse impacts to ecological values. Consider commercial management options in consultation with the kangaroo industry.
- Support partnerships with new industry and stakeholders to encourage investment in conservation efforts. Work with partners to mitigate development and industry impacts on wildlife.
- Seek opportunities to expand the parks through the acquisition of adjoining land parcels.



Theme 2: Connecting community and parks

The Monarto parks are a valued community asset and are well-loved for their recreational opportunities, quiet places to appreciate nature, and bird-filled woodlands. The mixed mallee and dry heathland vegetation provides a unique opportunity for wildlife research due to their unique composition, diversity of wildlife and proximity to Murray Bridge and Adelaide. Encouraging public use and enjoyment of the reserves is a priority for park management in the region and provides an opportunity to promote the importance of biodiversity and how people can take a proactive role in conservation.

A diversity of visitors enjoy birdwatching, bushwalking, horse riding and cycling in Kinchina and Monarto Woodlands conservation parks, where dogs on a lead are also permitted. Due to the higher conservation values of Monarto and Ferris-McDonald conservation parks, horses, dogs and bikes are not permitted. Park signage, community education and information will clarify which activities are permitted in which parks to provide an enjoyable visitor experience, and to minimise impacts to conservation values. Table 1 on page 18 provides further clarity on activities and specific conditions where applicable. The Murray Bridge region's population is expected to increase significantly in the coming years, which is likely to lead to an increase in park visitation and new residential and industrial development in the area. Strategies to manage visitor use and park accessibility will change to meet the increased demand on park facilities and minimise impacts on conservation values.

The Monarto parks are used and cared for by many community organisations. Volunteer groups, schools, universities, conservation groups and recreational clubs play a role in protecting the Monarto parks through promoting park values, educating visitors, encouraging responsible park use and participating in conservation activities. Kinchina and Monarto Woodlands conservation parks are of particular value to special interest groups holding running, cycling, orienteering and horse-riding events. Events that involve walking, trail-running or other low-impact activities may be considered in Ferris-McDonald and Monarto conservation parks. Events that align with park values and where impacts to conservation values are minimised will be supported on a case-by-case basis through consultation with regional staff and in accordance with the Department's permit system.

The Lavender Federation Trail runs through Kinchina Conservation Park and adjacent to Monarto Woodlands, connecting people to several other shared use trails, and providing a link through to the Murray Bridge township. Formal walking trails in all parks support low-impact recreation, with most classed as easy or moderate walks. New trails may be considered in the future to expand recreational opportunities, or to redirect people for ecological reasons. Car parking is provided in most parks.

Facilities for basic camping may be considered within Monarto Woodlands and Kinchina conservation parks in the future as an opportunity for visitors to enjoy the natural beauty of the park and to provide access for outdoor education. Any future development of trails or other visitor facilities including campsites would be subject to detailed planning and assessment of the environmental and visitor risks, impacts to cultural sites and restoration programs, and site suitability with regard to topography and access requirements.

The mixed mallee and heathland habitat protected within these parks provide an important refuge for a diversity of wildlife and are a particularly valuable biodiversity asset in a heavily modified landscape. Providing sustainable recreational access to the parks is a key consideration for current and future park use. Areas where horse riding and cycling are currently permitted in Kinchina and Monarto Woodlands conservation parks were designated based on historical recreational use prior to proclamation under the NPW Act in 2016. The level of visitor use and any impacts from recreational activities on the parks will continue to be monitored. Should environmental impacts, safety concerns, or conflicts between recreational activities arise, it may be necessary to modify access arrangements within the parks. Unsustainable or illegal activities in parks, such as unauthorised trail construction, vehicle access and rubbish dumping can cause adverse impacts to conservation values including soil erosion, degraded habitat, increased weed invasion, damage to park facilities and can create risks for other park users. Visitor access may be reviewed and altered, including trail modification or closure, if impacts to conservation values become unsustainable or if the risk to users is unmanageable.

The Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk peoples have a relationship with Country spanning tens of thousands of years, crossing the lands of the lower Murray River, Lower Lakes and Coorong and mid-Murraylands. The features across the landscape, waters and sky are linked and profoundly important to their cultural and spiritual connection to their traditional lands. No large-scale cultural heritage surveys have been undertaken in these parks, however it is highly likely that they contain Aboriginal archaeological sites, objects or burials. Ensuring sites are protected from impacts associated with public visitation, conservation programs or development will be achieved through consultation with Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk people when required.

All Aboriginal sites, objects and remains are protected from damage, disturbance or interference by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988,* regardless of whether they are known in the Register of Aboriginal Sites and Objects.

Table 1. Summary of activities permitted in the Monarto Parks

	Activity			
Conservation Park	**Bushwalking**	**Walking a dog on a lead***	**Horse Riding***	**Cycling***
Kinchina	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monarto Woodlands	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monarto	✓	✗	✗	✗
Ferries-McDonald	✓	✗	✗	✗

*In designated areas

Objective and strategies

Support low-impact opportunities and provide inclusive access for recreation, experiences in nature and community engagement where risks to ecological values can be minimised and cultural sites and values are protected.

- Maintain existing infrastructure including car parks, signage and tracks and shared use trails, to support low-impact activities. Support opportunities to partner with volunteer organisations to maintain a sustainable trail network.
- Monitor areas in the parks that are frequently used by the public. Take appropriate action where impacts on ecological values are unsustainable.
- Undertake a trail rationalisation program including further community consultation regarding visitor access and refine trail options for horse riding and cycling.
- Investigate opportunities to provide more inclusive access, including upgrading suitable trails.
- Provide park users with clear information about what activities are permitted in each park, and support community events which provide sustainable recreational opportunities.
- Implement management strategies to prevent unauthorised activities and mitigate impacts to conservation values and visitor safety. This may include installation of new infrastructure or upgrades to existing infrastructure such as fences and gates, along with community education campaigns.
- Monitor community sentiment and visitation to the parks to assess the demand for further facilities. Consider upgrades to car parking facilities and day visitor areas, including facilities such as shelters and toilets, if the level of demand shows a need and where ecological impacts can be managed sustainably.
- Investigate the provision of facilities to support basic camping in Monarto Woodlands and Kinchina conservation parks, including shelters and toilets.
- Work with Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk to support their access and connection to Country, and to ensure cultural sites are protected from impacts associated with activities that occur in the parks.
- Support and encourage partnerships between schools, universities, community groups, local government, for the use of parks for education, and to undertake research and monitoring.

Invitation to contribute

The Monarto Parks Draft Management Plan has been released for public consultation to facilitate community input into the management of this park.

You are invited to contribute by making a written submission. Please consider the points below when drafting your submission to help ensure that it is effective:

- Make your submission concise and clear.
- Reference any specific comments to a page or section within the draft plan.
- Identify aspects of the draft plan that you support, or do not support. Explain your reasons for disagreeing with the content of the draft plan and suggest alternatives.
- Highlight any information that may be inaccurate and provide a reference to assist with further editing.

Please note that your submission will become part of the public record and will be available to anyone who requests a copy unless you specifically request otherwise.

After all submissions received have been carefully considered, a final park management plan will be prepared and forwarded to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for consideration together with a detailed analysis of submissions received.

You can submit your comments via post, email or online using the details provided.

Submissions close at 5pm 1 November 2025

Written submissions:
National Parks and Protected Area Program
Department for Environment and Water
GPO Box 1047 ADELAIDE SA 5001

E-mail submissions:
DEWProtectedAreaManagement@sa.gov.au
Please use email subject heading:
Monarto Parks Plan

Online submissions: YourSAy.sa.gov.au



References

Bonifacio, R. and Pisanu, P. (2013) A Framework for the Identification, Description and Assessment of Threatened Ecological Communities in South Australia. South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Adelaide.

Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, 2021-2026 Regional Landscape Plan, cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/landscape/docs/mr/final_2021-2026_board_landscape_plan_web_ready.pdf

Paton, P., Allan, J., Rogers, D. and Northeast, P. (2010). Bird use of the Monarto plantations: insights from a study of home ranges. Pp 14-15. *The State of Australia's Birds 2009*. Birds Australia, Carlton.

Rural City of Murray Bridge – Economic Development Strategy 2020-2032, Economic-Development-Plan-Approved-14-April-2020-website.pdf (murraybridge.sa.gov.au)



For further information please contact:

Department for Environment and Water.
Phone Information Line (08) 8204 1910, or see SA White Pages for your local Department for Environment and Water office.

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