Managing Our Landscapes
Conversations for Change

Summary of the Discussion Paper | July 2018
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.
## 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.
Objectives 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.

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.

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.

- Improved 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.
Enabling greater leadership by Aboriginal peoples

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.

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, 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.

We must recognise that issues we face in our regions operate at scales bigger than individual properties or patches of bush, and across public and private land.

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

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 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.

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A summary of our reforms

**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 budgets.
- 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 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.

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 set by an independent body or according to the Consumer Price Index.
- Increased autonomy brings with it a need for improved transparency and reporting.
- The Landscape Boards would remain statutory entities, and would continue to meet the high standards of governance and accountability required of statutory entities.
- 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.

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

Existing boundaries are proposed to be largely retained but could be amended in some areas depending on the results of the engagement process. The boundaries for the new Adelaide regions are not yet drawn. Factors to consider in establishing these boundaries include financial viability, current administrative boundaries, the Country of Aboriginal nations and community connections and identity.

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, including Aboriginal peoples, and appropriately reflect the diversity in the community.
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, 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 to deliver on-ground projects.

Some further focused engagement will help to guide development of Green Adelaide.

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.

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.

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.
- There may also be value in some level of statewide planning and prioritisation to support coordinated regional effort.
- 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.

Grassroots Grants program to support local projects

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.

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.

Compliance

Effective compliance is crucial to sustaining vibrant biodiversity, productive farms, food security and relationships between neighbours. More flexible compliance options will help to achieve this.
Your involvement and feedback

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.

While our reform commitments are clear, we are very open to ideas on how to achieve this in practice.

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

Stakeholder workshops and community forums

Between August and October 2018, there will be a series of facilitated stakeholder workshops and regional community forums. Workshop and forum dates, times and locations can be found at www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform

Written feedback

You can also provide written feedback:

- By email to: 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.

The closing date for feedback is 5:00pm (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.

The discussion paper and other information is available online at www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform