

Managing our Landscapes Conversations for Change

Frequently Asked Questions



The new State Government is committed to a significant reform program that will change the way natural resources are managed. It will be a simpler, transparent and more accessible system that will put local communities at the heart of sustaining, conserving and revitalising our state's natural resources.

These reforms aim to reinvigorate community leadership and build stronger partnerships with land managers, harnessing their local knowledge and understanding of the landscape to generate better outcomes where they are most needed.

The government plans to introduce the Landscape South Australia Bill into Parliament within the first quarter of 2019, replacing the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (NRM Act).

A comprehensive engagement process will gather stakeholder and community opinions, feedback and ideas critical to shaping the detail of these reforms.

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For further information and to download a copy of the Discussion Paper visit www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform

1. Why is reform necessary?

While the NRM Act brought positive change and benefits in 2004, the passage of time, and gradual centralisation has meant the current system is not delivering what it should.

There are parts of the NRM Act 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.

Significant change is therefore essential.

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

2. What changes are being proposed?

A key part of the reform is to replace the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* with a new Landscape South Australia Act.

The purpose of the proposed Landscape South Australia Act will be to provide a simple and accessible framework for the ecologically sustainable management of the state's natural resources to support primary production, regional communities, and the natural environment.

The new act is intended to be shorter, less process-oriented and more flexible, to reduce red tape. Procedural requirements will be placed in regulations or policy, rather than in legislation.

A Discussion Paper, which can be found at www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform, highlights the key reform commitments, including creation of nine new Landscape Boards and a Green Adelaide Board, to replace the NRM Boards, capping of levies and the creation of a \$2 million Grassroots Grants Program.

3. What are some of the expected benefits from these changes?

The 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. Some of the expected benefits include:

- Local action is complemented by strategic landscape-scale restoration projects that are delivered by multiple stakeholders working in strong and enduring partnerships.
- Simplifying and introducing greater flexibility to a range of processes, such as Board appointments, planning, engagement, operations and compliance.
- Sharper focus on the fundamentals of managing natural resources: soil quality, water management and pest plant and animal control.
- 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.
- Improved reporting, making deliverables and measurable outcomes clear and easy to understand, compare and track.

4. Why call the new legislation - Landscape SA?

Landscapes are the natural systems and resources that make up our surroundings – the soils, water, plants and animals that make up our rivers and plains, forests and hills, coasts and seas. The sustainable management of our landscapes underpins our lifestyles and livelihoods.

5. What principles will help to guide the reform?

The reform will be guided by the following key principles:

- Decentralised decision making – putting the focus on local issues and priorities that matter to regional communities.
- A simple and accessible system – creating a transparent, flexible and responsive system that will allow people to get the job done more easily.
- Community and landowners at the centre – recognising that people who live and work on the land are best placed to build enduring partnerships and make decisions about caring for our natural resources.
- Back to basics – undertaking grassroots environmental projects that tackle soil quality, water management and pest plant and animal control.
- A whole of landscape approach – taking an integrated approach that complements grassroots programs with strategic projects to achieve restoration of entire landscapes.

6. What will be the key priorities of the new legislation?

The new legislation will be simplified – identifying soil quality, pest plant and animal control and water management as major priorities, while maintaining a commitment to broader environmental programs such as revegetation.

7. How can I provide feedback?

We want to see local communities and people central to managing the natural resources of their region. Community and stakeholder opinions, feedback and ideas are therefore critical to shaping our reforms and ensuring they work as well as they can.

There are a number of ways in which you can be an active part of the reform process.

- Attending an independently facilitated community forum or stakeholder workshop during August and September. Information on forum dates, times, locations and how to register can be found at:
www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform
- Emailing your comments to:
LandscapeReform@sa.gov.au
- Posting your submission to:
The Independent Facilitator
Landscape Reform
GPO Box 1047
ADELAIDE SA 5001.

The Discussion Paper poses 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 a deeper understanding of how our reforms could work best in practice, within existing community structures.

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

All feedback will help to shape the development of the Landscape South Australia Bill to ensure it meets needs.

A final report, including copies of all submissions, will be prepared by the Independent facilitator and provided to the

Minister for Environment and Water to help inform his decision-making on the draft Landscape SA Bill. The report will be publically available online via YourSAy.

8. Will there be any changes to the NRM levy?

Levies will continue to be collected by councils, but there will be a cap on annual land and water levy increases, either set by an independent body or according to the Consumer Price Index.

Levies (land and water) collected in a region will be spent in the region, except for a portion allocated to priority landscape scale or cross-boundary projects, and services to underpin regional outcomes.

Levies have been a much-debated issue in the state, and we are looking at options to ensure the way levies are raised and used are more transparent, accountable and fair.

These changes won't take place until the legislation becomes operational.

9. When will the new legislation come into operation?

The government aims to introduce the Landscape SA Bill into Parliament in the first quarter of 2019. The date that the legislation will become operational is unknown and will depend on the parliamentary process.

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.

Once the new Act is passed, we are looking at a collaborative approach with key staff, stakeholders, and the community to inform the implementation process, which is likely to take place in stages over a 12 month period.

Current NRM arrangements will remain largely unchanged for the 2018-19 financial year and NRM Boards will continue to focus on delivery of services for the community.

10. What are landscape scale restoration projects?

Landscape scale restoration projects are those that operate at a larger scale than individual properties or small areas of land. Instead, they require cross-regional or even statewide coordination. Many pests and weeds occur over two or more regions and require a coordinated approach.

South Australians are already undertaking a number of landscape scale restoration projects, such as the Wild Eyre and Naturally Yorke projects. The projects involve many partner organisations, land managers and volunteers working together to achieve a range of shared goals. They occur over many years and help to achieve visible long lasting change.

Our reforms aim to support more investment in landscape scale restoration projects, such as through potentially creating a Landscape Priorities Fund.

11. Will marine areas be covered in the new Act?

Yes, it is proposed that the Landscape South Australia Bill will apply to the same areas as the current NRM Act. For instance, regional NRM plans currently apply to the marine environment out to three nautical miles. It is proposed that regional Landscape Plans would also cover this area.

12. How will the Landscape Board boundaries be decided?

Existing boundaries are proposed to be largely retained, although there may be some small changes to boundaries informed by 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
- Water catchments and marine ecosystems.

13. How will the Landscape Boards be different to the current NRM Boards?

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 at arm's length from government.

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.

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.

14. How will the Landscape Boards benefit the local economy of a region?

The new Landscape Boards will employ a general manager and staff to undertake environmental management only 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.

It is anticipated Landscape Boards would continue to facilitate funded delivery of natural resources management services on behalf of the Australian Government, such as through the National Landcare Program.

The new Landscape Boards and local regions will also benefit from decentralised decision-making and a back to basics approach, with less money spent on administration, management and documentation, thereby freeing up funds for on-ground activities.

15. How will the membership of Landscape Boards be decided?

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.

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.

A number of options will be considered during the engagement process to inform how community members would be elected.

16. Will biodiversity conservation be included in the new Act?

Yes. Supporting vibrant biodiversity is a key goal of the reforms. The new legislation will focus on the fundamentals of natural resources management, soil quality, water management, and pest plant and animal control. Biodiversity conservation will be supported by all three of these fundamental priorities. In addition,

activities that assist biodiversity conservation will also continue to be enabled, such as revegetation.

17. Why is there such a strong focus on soil quality, water management and pest plant and animal control?

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

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

These activities, such as revegetation, sustainable agricultural practices, rewilding, protecting habitats of native priority species and fencing can also be important contributions to achieving the community's desired outcomes for their landscapes.

Combining the priorities of managing, soil, water, pest plant and animals with these other practices will collectively help to revitalise and restore the quality of our natural environments.

18. What will the reforms mean for volunteers, project partners and participants?

Volunteers, project partners and participants play a major role in managing natural resources across South Australia. Their contribution of time, energy, expertise, equipment and resources is extremely valuable and underpins the sustainable management of our natural resources.

Volunteers are the backbone of much of South Australia's environmental management – supporting us to scour beaches for litter, educate and create behavioural change, track the progress of endangered animals and look after our heritage assets – amongst many other vital activities.

The proposed Landscape South Australia Act will see the establishment of 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.

Until the new Act is passed, NRM Boards will continue to focus on delivery of services for the community. Current NRM arrangements will remain largely unchanged for the 2018-19 financial year.

19. What will the reform mean for employees currently working with NRM Boards?

Employees working with the NRM Boards are important stakeholders in this process – with expert local knowledge in delivering vital natural resources outcomes to the South Australian community.

Their feedback will help to shape the development of the Landscape South Australia Bill to ensure it meets the needs of community and industry as well as regulatory and South Australian Government requirements.

In terms of their day to day role, very little will change until the proposed legislation is passed through parliament. We will keep employees informed on the status of the new Act and how the transition to it will be implemented.

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.

Once the new Act is passed, we are looking at a collaborative approach with key staff, stakeholders, Aboriginal Nations and the community to inform the implementation process, which is likely to take place in stages over a 12 month period.

Until then, NRM Boards will continue to focus on delivery of services for the community.

20. What about reforms in other areas?

Our new government's focus is the Landscape South Australia reforms. However there is more that can be done and as part of the government's future agenda, there will be opportunities to explore improved interactions between a range of legislation. Further engagement will be required on any further reforms in coming years. 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*

In addition, 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.

Further information about other legislative reform will become available as it is considered.

21. Where can I go for more information?

Visit: www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/landscape-reform

Email: LandscapeReform@sa.gov.au

Phone: 8124 4772 for general inquiries (submissions cannot be made over the phone). This line is available during business hours of 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.