

Hills and Fleurieu Regional Landscape Plan 2026-31

Consultation report

April 2026

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Introduction

About this report

This report presents feedback received on the **Draft Hills and Fleurieu Regional Landscape Plan** during the formal six-week public consultation period held from 25 February – 6 March 2026.

A summary of key themes and issues raised during the consultation are presented on page 5. This is followed by specific feedback on plan content as it relates to the five regional priorities proposed in the plan - Community, Climate, Land, Water and Nature.

Not all feedback has resulted in changes to the plan. In some cases, comments were noted but not adopted where the current drafting was considered appropriate, where matters fell outside the scope of the plan, or where suggestions conflicted with statutory or policy settings.

Background

Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board (the Board) has a statutory requirement to review and develop a Regional Landscape Plan every five years. The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* defines the scope and the requirements of Regional Landscape Plans and requires that the Board consult on the plan and report on matters raised when finalising the plan.

About the Hills and Fleurieu Regional Landscape Plan

The Hills and Fleurieu Regional Landscape Plan 2026-31 sets out the vision and five strategic priorities for the stewardship and restoration of landscapes in the Hills and Fleurieu landscape region. It is a shared, region-wide plan, developed by the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board on behalf of the organisations and land managers who have a role in landscape management.

How we engaged with stakeholders

The key stages of plan development and stakeholder engagement are shown below.

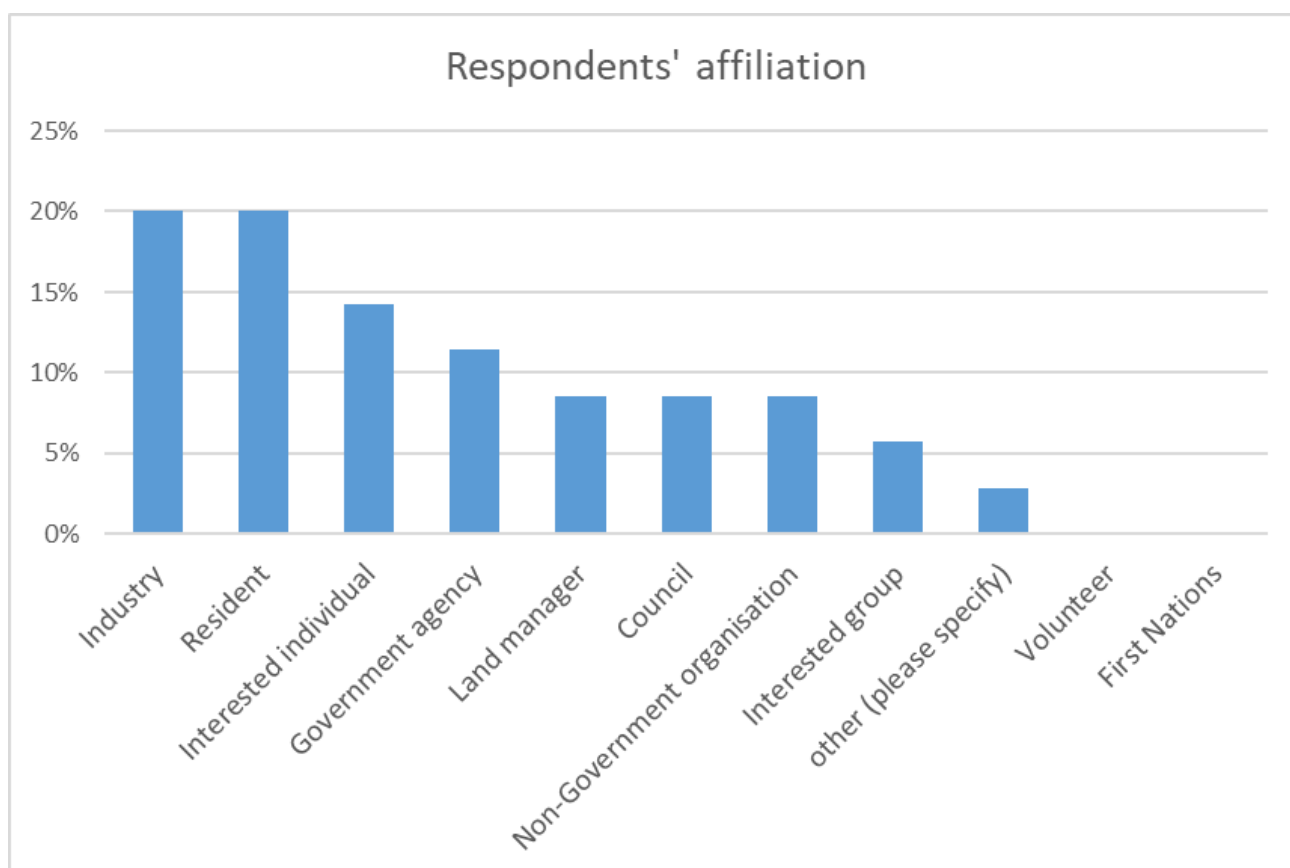
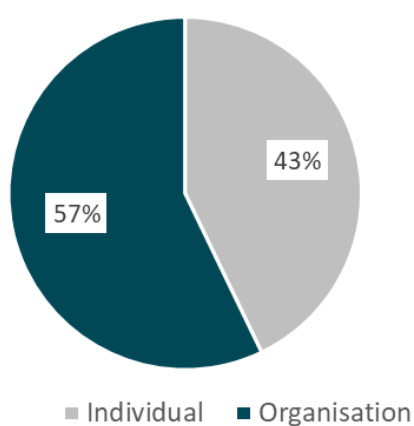


Public consultation on the Hills and Fleurieu Regional Landscape Plan ran from 25 January to 6 March 2026. The consultation was promoted through the SA Government platform 'YourSAy', print media across the region, the Board's website, social media platforms and distribution lists.

Who we heard from

There were **35 submissions** received during the draft plan consultation period from Local Government, State agencies, Industry groups, Environment organisations (eNGOs), Community organisations, Landholders, Residents and other Interested individuals.

There were 19 survey responses and 16 written responses received through the hf.landscape board inbox. There were a total of 15 responses from individuals, and 19 responses from organisations (noting one organisation provided both a survey and written response).



What we heard and our response

Feedback summary

Strong support for the Plan direction

- There was **strong support for the plan's strategic direction** – and the **five regional priorities of Community, Climate, Land, Water and Nature**, which continued from the previous Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Plan 2021-2026.

Priority issues raised

- Issues/ topics that stakeholders considered to be the highest priorities for the region or noted as warranting greater emphasis in the plan were: **drought resilience, water security, food security**, and **climate impacts on biodiversity**. **Urban growth** - with respect to management of environmental impacts – was also raised by multiple respondents as a key issue for the region.

Governance and roles

- There was recognition that this is a **shared plan across organisations**, not just a Board plan, with some uncertainty or caution from partners about what that means in practice. This represents a shift from previous plans and was generally supported, but also introduces greater complexity around roles, expectations and delivery.
- There was general support for clearer roles, but also **sensitivity around accountability and capacity**.
- Additional delivery partners and minor changes to roles (lead vs. support) were suggested (by delivery partners) for a number of actions. **Concerns** were also raised by some regarding support roles where these extend beyond agencies' **legislated responsibilities** (and/or capacity with current resources).
 - Desire for clearer definition of **lead vs support roles**.
 - Concern about being assigned roles beyond mandate or resourcing.
 - Need for clearer articulation of **shared accountability vs ownership**.

Resourcing and delivery

- There was recognition of the **importance of partnerships** and that **collaborative action** is essential to achieving the regional goals of the plan, particularly in light of resourcing challenges.
- **Funding the plan:** While the plan's ambition was generally supported, several stakeholders questioned whether the breadth of actions could be fully delivered within current resource settings. Multiple respondents expressed support for the actions required and want to see them funded and implemented. Some respondents wanted better visibility of which parts of the plan are funded, and to what extent.

"It is essential that the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board has the resources it needs to deliver against the priorities identified in the plan, and that the ambitions of the plan can be realised through adequate funding"

Targets and monitoring

- **Goals and targets:** There was general **support** for the **inclusion of goals and targets** in the plan.
 - There were concerns raised over the industry-specific net zero target under climate, and a recommendation that this target be broadened to align to national frameworks.
 - There was a recommendation to broaden the Nature target for native vegetation cover to all apply to all bioregions (IBRA subregions).
- Stakeholders supported the identification of **measures to track the condition of our landscapes** and recommended the inclusion of specific monitoring actions under each priority area.

Tension points

Consultation feedback highlighted several inherent tensions within the Plan, reflecting the complexity of managing landscapes across environmental, economic and governance contexts.

1. The **climate target** and actions relating to **emissions reduction** under the Land Objective **'Future-proofing agriculture'** were the main areas of contention. Stakeholders raised concerns over the inclusion of an industry-specific net zero target, rather than an economy-wide target, as this does not align with current industry frameworks. Stakeholders are also concerned about the **potential impacts** of a net zero target (and associated land use change for sequestration) on **water** and **food security**.
2. **Restoring ecosystems at scale while maintaining productive landscapes** - some stakeholders suggest we need more protected areas, stronger vegetation targets and restoration at scale, with others voicing concerns about perceived trade-offs noted above (regarding land taken out of production, carbon/revegetation pressures and water interception impacts).
3. Ambitious **regional coordination role** of the plan vs **unclear authority and resourcing** - stakeholders value the coordination and direction provided by the plan, but several seek clarity on how collaborative actions will be achieved. Some organisations expressed concerns about how roles align to statutory mandates and would like the plan to note that formal agency arrangements may be subject to change.

Feedback specific to each of the priority areas of the plan is presented in the following sections.

Priority – Community

There was strong agreement (and endorsement) that collaborative action is essential to achieve regional goals of the plan. There was also acknowledgement of funding challenges associated with delivering the plan, and the importance of partnerships. The plan relies heavily on community and landholders.

- There was **support** for the value the plan places on First Nations-led programs, integration of traditional knowledge, cultural burning practices, and active engagement of First Nations people and businesses. The importance of engaging and involving First Nations groups in planning was noted.
- Stakeholders supported the Board taking a leadership role in engaging First Nations in landscape management and restoration activities. It should also be noted that engagement with First Nations has been variable across the region and more detailed input was received

from Ngarrindjeri. Kurna and Peramangk engagement has been historically limited and ongoing work is progressing to strengthen relationships and support self-determined engagement during implementation.

Recommendations for Community included:

- increasing **support for community-driven projects** – stakeholders support the plan’s stewardship approach
- increasing capacity in **volunteer coordination** to support nature stewardship across landholders (example programs including WaterWatch/ Our Patch). Stakeholders note that more investment is needed in community groups and volunteers’ capacity building and infrastructure - not only grants for on-ground works, but dedicated staff for coordination.
- increasing **outreach to schools**
- adding the **ways residents can connect with programs** under each priority area, beyond those identified in the Community section.
- ensuring **education, partnerships, and incentives** are prioritised in the first instance over compliance and enforcement actions (as also noted under Land priority)
- inclusion of a target for the Community priority
- greater emphasis on broad **community awareness and education** to achieve greater stewardship action.

“The current level of funding allocated to such a large region may be insufficient to fully address community needs and expectations”

Other **points raised** in relation to the community priority (particularly by community respondents):

- recognition of the varied skills and motivations among landholders, and the suggestion to focus efforts on new land managers
- a desire for better communications with stakeholders, especially commercial farmers, and access to regional stewardship officers

Our response

We recognise the importance of building community understanding of landscape issues, involving community in landscape planning, supporting community-led initiatives and networks.

Changes include:

- Addition of a **new Strategy** (P1.2 – *Build community understanding and shared ownership of landscape issues*)
- Addition of **new actions**: (P1.2.1 – *Support peer to peer learning networks*; P1.2.2 – *Support community involvement in landscape management planning*; P1.6.2 – *Support the uptake of Heritage Agreements by private landholders*)
- Recognition of schools playing an important support role in *inspiring and supporting young people to care for land, water and nature*.

Priority – Climate

There were mixed and sometimes conflicting views received on the climate priority and associated success measures in the plan.

There was recognition of the scale of impacts of climate change and its influence on, and interaction with other environmental pressures (such as drought, fire, flood, the marine algal bloom, pests and weeds, and biodiversity loss).

A number of stakeholders expressed **support** for:

- Strengthening **climate change action**, including net-zero ambitions and circular economy initiatives
- **Nature-based solutions** for climate resilience
- Enhancing **preparedness for extreme events**, especially bushfire preparedness

“The development of the draft Plan is a timely opportunity to shape a climate resilient future through advocating for improved land use planning.”

Concerns raised by some stakeholders related to:

- the inclusion of sector-specific **net-zero targets** for agriculture; There was opposition to a net-zero target for agriculture from industry stakeholders, due to the potential impact on primary production and food security in the region. It was noted that the target does not align with the Commonwealth Agriculture and Land Sector Plan (one of six sector plans released by the Australian Government in September 2025) and the position held by the National Farmers’ Federation.
- regulatory language and the importance of minimising **regulatory burden** for primary producers
- the practical implementation of climate and biodiversity considerations in planning approvals. The meaning of “**mandate climate and biodiversity considerations**” was questioned and should be reviewed.

Stakeholder **recommendations** for Climate included:

- reframing targets and success measures under the climate priority to reducing emissions intensity rather than absolute net-zero targets for agriculture, and instead aligning to whole-of-economy **net-zero frameworks**
- supporting realistic, collaborative, and voluntary pathways for primary producers in the transition to a **lower carbon future**
- caution against the introduction of new regulatory layers or additional regulatory burden, particularly for primary producers, and the suggestion that any **strengthening of climate and biodiversity considerations** in development planning needs to be risk-based and proportionate to risks
- strengthening considerations of likely **climate impacts on biodiversity**, with suggestions to be more specific about predicted climate impacts on biodiversity and to highlight additional threats like H5 bird flu
- Suggestion that the plan should outline likely **long-term biodiversity impacts** resulting from climate projections (e.g. extinction risk, change in distribution)
- including a focus on bushfire preparedness, especially on private land (fuel loads, woody weeds).

These differing perspectives highlight the need to balance climate ambition with maintaining productive and resilient primary industries.

Our response

We recognise the importance of aligning this plan's aspirations with those of industry and with the Australian Government's Agriculture and Land Sector Plan, which does not impose sector-specific targets. We also recognise the importance of primary production as a foundation of economic resilience and food security for the region.

In partnership with industry groups and peak bodies, the Board is developing a '*Regional Pathway Towards Net Zero for the Hills and Fleurieu Agriculture and Land Sector*'. Supporting the voluntary uptake of low emissions intensity practices is noted as an action under the (related) Land priority L2 – 'Future proof our primary production'.

Specific strategies and actions in the plan (in particular those under objective C1 – *Transition to net zero emissions*, and L2 – *Future proof our primary production*, have been revised to focus on reducing *emissions* intensity, and the accelerated uptake of low emissions practices.

Changes include:

- Revision of the regional target under the Climate priority to "*Net zero land and marine-based emissions in the Hills and Fleurieu landscape region by 2050, in alignment with Australia's net zero target*"
- Additional measure of success: "*Primary producers have adopted low emissions-intensity farming practices*"
- Addition of **new strategy** under C1 – 1.2 – *Transition government operations to net zero* - to differentiate the leadership role of organisations in transitioning operations to net zero, and the role of organisations in supporting land managers transition to a low carbon future
- Addition of related **new action** C1.2.1 – *Maintain Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board operations at net zero emissions*.

Priority – Land

Stakeholders strongly **support** the Land priority's focus on:

- soil health and erosion mitigation (L1)
- future proofing agriculture/ primary production, protecting high-value productive landscapes (L2), and actions to improve resilience and climate adaptation, in close partnership with industry
- pest animal and weed control, including the emphasis on feral deer, goats and roadside weeds (L3, L4) and
- reducing landscape damage from impact-causing native species (L5)

There is clear endorsement for continuing investment in these areas and for collaborative delivery with industry, councils, land managers and community groups.

“There is strong alignment with the priorities of [the plan] and the agricultural industry in relation to the need for stronger land use planning around urban development encroachment and its impact on primary production land and the resources contained within.”

Concerns raised by some stakeholders related to:

- the risk to future national (and state) **food security** if high-value production land were to be converted to other land uses (i.e. driven by carbon or nature markets, or land use planning policies)
- the need for (and challenge of) **cross-tenure coordination of pest control** if it is to be effective
- there was good support for the plan’s focus on deer and goats, but stakeholders noted that **rabbits, foxes and feral cats remain major threats** and should not be deprioritised. Requests include statewide approaches to cat management and broad-scale fox control, especially where threatened species are present
- **management of over-abundant native species, particularly kangaroos**. Some stakeholders highlighted the need to manage overabundant native species (kangaroos, corellas), while others raised their objections to lethal kangaroo control until the Parliamentary Inquiry on kangaroo management has concluded.

These concerns highlight the importance of balancing land use change with long-term food security and economic resilience.

Recommendations for the Land priority included:

- ensuring land manager **education, incentives, and partnerships** are prioritised in the first instance over compliance enforcement
- a desire for the protection of high-value production land for future **food security**
- requests to broaden the scope of Objective L2 to “**primary industries**” instead of “agriculture”, to include forestry, aquaculture and fishing
- better recognition in the Land priority that native vegetation plays an important role in **combatting land degradation**. Also, that land supports nature, and nature supports healthy communities.

“When land is managed with ecological integrity in mind, it becomes more than just a resource – it becomes living infrastructure that sustains biodiversity, strengthens resilience, and supports healthy communities.”

Other requests or opportunities noted by stakeholders in relation to the Land priority included:

- a suggestion to include regional **weed target(s)** to measure progress
- improved sharing and coordination of **weed mapping** and other data, especially for high-risk species
- a coordinated approach to **roadside weeds**, with clear communication to landholders of responsibilities of landholder, councils, Landscape Boards and State Government
- increased **funding for declared weed control**, especially on roadsides and private land
- clarifying objectives L3 and L4 to note **negative impacts of weeds and pests**.

Our response

Changes have been made to strategies and actions under the Land priority to reinforce the interconnectedness of Land and Nature outcomes, and the importance looking after natural assets for long term sustainability of production. Supporting landholders to manage land and soil health, plan and prepare for climate change and extreme events, and manage impacts of weeds, pests and overabundant native animals remain as key objectives of the Land priority.

Changes include:

- Broadening of Objective L2 from agriculture specific focus to *'Future-proof our **primary production**'*
- Broadening action L2.2.2 to *'Investigate and monitor the region's **land and marine-based emissions profile**'* (changed from agriculture profile)
- Revision of Action L2.2.3 to *'Develop and implement a **Regional Pathway Towards Net Zero for the Hills and Fleurieu Agriculture and Land Sector**'*
- Broadening of Action L2.2.4 to include *marine lessees*
- Clarification of Action L2.2.4 – *Support the accelerated uptake of low emissions practices **in the agriculture and land sector***
- Addition of new action L2.4.2 – *Connect land managers with markets and other funding opportunities*
- Clarifying wording of Objectives L3,4,5 to refer to a reduction in the **adverse** impacts of weeds (L3), pest animals (L4), and impact-causing native species (L5)
- Action L4.3.1 – **Raise awareness and** advise land managers of their pest animal control responsibilities
- Requested changes to lead vs. support roles for agencies against several actions.

Priority – Water

There was strong **support** for:

- the Water priority's Objectives, with particularly mention of fair and inclusive access to water (W1), water security and water use efficiency (W3) and water quality (W4).
 - Stakeholders made note that water use by agricultural industries in the region is already highly efficient

Stakeholders raised **concerns** about:

- **water security**, particularly for primary producers. There was a strong sentiment that this needs greater urgency and prominence in planning and communications. Some feel the South Australian Government is not engaging adequately on long-term water security.
- **illegal dams** and perceived inequity in compliance enforcement, which undermines trust in the water allocation system;
 - unlawful water capture undermines trust in the water allocation system
 - expectation that compliance and enforcement be visible, fair and consistent
 - the perception that legitimate water users should not be disadvantaged by inaction on illegal use
 - there were calls for illegal dams to be prioritised for removal or regulation, as they represent significant unaccounted water use. Stakeholders noted that release of

- water from illegal dams throughout the region was not included as a specific action in the plan, even though featured as a case study
 - o a desire for more active monitoring and enforcement by Landscape Boards
- the practicality of achieving **low flow releases** from farm dams
- water flows and water quality in the **Lakes and Coorong**, and the need to elevate this as an issue.

Stakeholder **recommendations** for Water included:

- making specific reference to the **McLaren Vale Water Security Strategy**, whose implementation is critical to W3 – *Strengthen water security and water use efficiency*.

Other points raised through the consultation included:

- the need for clear(er) **communication and transparency in water planning and policy** decisions
- requests for more explicit **messaging on timelines and intended outcomes of Water Allocation Plan** reviews/amendments
- the importance of healthy soils for water use efficiency and improving waterway condition.

Our response

Water management is noted as a critical issue for the Hills and Fleurieu landscape region and will become more challenging under a drying climate. We understand the high level of stakeholder interest in Water Allocation Plan amendments and the importance of stakeholder engagement in this process.

Compliance activities in relation to illegal dam construction and enhancement were not explicitly actioned in this plan (though featured as a case study), and this has since been addressed.

Education and awareness raising is always undertaken in the first instance, and compliance action used as a last resort. Raising awareness of Water Affecting Activities has been added as an action.

Changes include:

- New Action W1.2.3 – *Raise awareness of Water Allocation Plan rules including Water Affecting Activities*
- New Action W2.1.4 – *Deliver compliance activities regarding illegal dam construction or expansion*
- New Action W3.1.2 – *Build land manager awareness and understanding of on-farm water resource management*
- New action W4.1.2 – *Promote on-farm practices that minimise sediment, nutrient and chemical runoff*
- New action W4.1.7 – *Monitor water quality to identify priority areas for action*

Priority – Nature

- There was strong **support** for the plan’s objectives relating to nature, in protecting and improving the extent and condition of native ecosystems and trajectory of threatened species. Some stakeholders highlighted that achieving biodiversity and restoration targets may require clearer discussion of land use trade-offs, planning controls and long-term protection mechanisms.

“Protecting what is left is not enough to prevent further extinctions of native species or sustain agriculture in the future.”

Stakeholders also expressed **support** for:

- the intent of the Nature priority target ‘Native vegetation is restored to at least 30% within priority bioregions’, but suggest the target is applicable to all bioregions.
- new actions in the plan (introduced since the last regional landscape plan) relating to establishment of a shellfish reef, the ReBird the Ranges initiative and developing a native seed supply strategy.

Recommendations included:

- revising the **nature target** to at least 30% native vegetation cover in *all* bioregions
- inclusion of the **Native Vegetation Council** (NVC) as a supporting organisation for a number of actions under Nature Strategies 1.2 and 2.1.
- greater emphasis on the likely **long-term changes to ecosystems and species distribution** as a result of climate change
- inclusion of an action explicitly relating to uptake of **Heritage Agreements** by private landholders (suggested for inclusion under Community priority)
- connecting landholders to the Native Vegetation Council’s (NVC) website to determine if additional funding opportunities are available
- including NVC as a supporting organisation in the management and protection of **native vegetation on roadsides**
- prioritising restoration of the coast and marine environment as its own priority area.

Achieving these outcomes requires careful consideration of land use trade-offs and long-term protection mechanisms.

Our response

In relation to restoration within bioregions, the Hills and Fleurieu landscape region intersects three Interim Bio-Regional Assessment (IBRA) *Bioregions*, three IBRA *Sub-regions*, and 25 IBRA *Associations*. The latter have been used to prioritise activities as these are a finer scale classification than *Bioregions* or *Subregions*, and are wholly contained within the Hills and Fleurieu landscape region, while sub-regions cross landscape region boundaries and extend well beyond Hills and Fleurieu.

The board has identified seven priority IBRA *Associations* for restoration in order to reach 30% native vegetation cover. These are Goolwa, Hahndorf, Inman Valley, Kerby Hill, Mt Rapid, Mt Wilson and Sandergrove. It is important to note that some Associations already exceed 30% native vegetation

cover, while others are unlikely to meet a 30% target due to existing land use constraints. Hence the regional target is applicable to priority bioregions, and not all.

As noted under Land, there is now greater emphasis on the co-dependency of healthy land and nature, including the benefits to biodiversity of good land management, and the benefits nature can have on production.

Changes include:

- Revision of Action N1.1.2 – *Build land managers' and community knowledge of biodiversity values in their area, **including the co-benefits for production***
- New Action N1.3.2 – *Support the uptake of Heritage Agreements by private landholders*
- Revision of Action N2.1.2 to identify priority habitats - *Implement the ReBird the Ranges Action Plan including coordination of large-scale revegetation **of grassy woodland, grassland and heathland***
- Revision of Action N2.4.1 – *Support land managers to **manage native vegetation** and undertake restoration and threat mitigation activities*

(Other) Recommendations included:

- working towards consistency in **progress indicators**, both between planning cycles and across regions
- ensuring **appropriate measures/baselines** are established where needed to adequately track progress.

Conclusion

Overall, consultation demonstrated strong support for the direction of the draft Landscape Plan and its five priority areas. Feedback also highlighted the complexity of delivering a shared regional plan across multiple sectors, with several key tensions emerging around climate, production, biodiversity and delivery responsibilities. These tensions reflect the broader context of the region and reinforce the importance of strong partnerships, clear roles and active leadership in implementation. The Plan provides a framework to navigate these tensions through collaboration, informed decision-making and shared responsibility.

Appendix 1 – Organisations that provided input to the draft plan

The following organisations provided input to the draft plan (through participation in the 2021-26 plan review, Landscape Conversations and/or associated survey, or targeted pre-consultation draft engagement for named delivery partners).

- Adelaide Hills Council
- Adelaide Hills Wine Region
- Agricultural Bureau of SA
- Alexandrina Council
- Biodiversity Victor Harbor
- Central and Hills Regen Ag Network
- City of Onkaparinga
- City of Victor Harbor
- Country Fire Service
- Department for Environment and Water
- District Council of Yankalilla
- Environment Protection Authority
- Firesticks Alliance
- Fleurieu Farming Systems
- ForestrySA
- Fruit Producers SA
- Future Farmers SA
- Green Adelaide
- Landcare Association of SA
- Langhorne Creek Grape and Wine
- Limestone Coast Landscape Board
- Longwood Agricultural Bureau
- McLaren Vale Grape Wine and Tourism Association
- Measdowns Agricultural Bureau
- Mount Barker District Council
- Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board
- Nature Glenelg Trust
- New Springs Landcare Group
- Northern and Yorke Landscape Board
- OzFish Unlimited
- Parawa Agricultural Bureau
- Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA)
- Primary Producers SA
- Regional Development Australia
- SA Drought Hub
- SA Water
- Southern and Hills LGA
- Steamranger Heritage Railway
- Trees for Life
- University of Adelaide

Appendix 2 – Organisations that provided feedback during formal consultation

- Adelaide Hills Kangaroo Rescue
- Adelaide Hills Wine Region
- BirdLife Australia
- City of Onkaparinga
- City of Victor Harbor
- Coast Protection Board
- Community Alliance SA
- Conservation Council of SA
- Fruit Producers SA
- Green Adelaide
- Hills Environment Centre
- Langhorne Creek Grape and Wine
- Livestock SA
- Native Vegetation Council
- Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA)
- Primary Producers SA
- University of Adelaide

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