

Managing South Australia's Landscapes

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1. What is new in the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* in comparison to the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*?

The new Act was created after extensive consultation with industry, stakeholders and communities across our state to enable the establishment of new landscape boards with greater autonomy for how natural resources are managed in their regions.

Nine new regional landscape boards will operate at arm's length from government to deliver simple, effective and clear priorities to empower local communities to be responsible for sustainably managing their regions' natural resources.

The nine regional landscape boards will administer the new Act, including a new metropolitan board Green Adelaide.

These legislative changes aim to deliver a stronger, back-to-basics system with an emphasis on effective water management, pest plant and animal control, soil and land management.

Key elements of the Act include:

- All land and water levies will be capped by the Consumer Price Index (CPI)
- From 2022, communities and landholders will be empowered to elect three of the seven new members of the regional landscape boards
- Support for regional communities and traditional owners to be actively involved

in landscape management programs and initiatives

- A Grassroots Grants program in each region, including Green Adelaide, to support volunteers and not-for-profit organisations to undertake local projects
- Levy money collected in Adelaide being spent on a new Landscape Priorities Fund to invest in large landscape scale projects in regions.

2. What are the benefits of the changes?

The key benefits that are expected to flow to regional communities as a result of the new Act, include:

- **Nine regional landscape boards** – with greater autonomy and flexibility to respond to local issues, including managing their own budgets and staff.
- **Green Adelaide** – a new and innovative organisation charged with transforming Adelaide into a world-leading, sustainable, green and climate resilient city.
- **Simpler regional plans** – with five priorities that are easy to understand.
- **Greater community representation** – with three out of seven boards members to be elected from 2022 (except for the specialist board Green Adelaide and the Alinytjara Wilurara board, which is already represented by select regional leaders).
- **State Landscape Strategy** – to improve coordination between regional and state priorities.
- **Landscape Priorities Fund** – with levies collected in Adelaide being spent in regions to support larger statewide management issues, such as bushfire recovery, drought and agricultural resilience.
- **Stronger focus on climate resilience and biodiversity** – to support the development of resilient landscapes and sustainable primary production.

- **Grassroots Grants program** – with greater opportunities for volunteers and local community organisations.
- **Less red tape and simplified compliance** – to enable boards to get the job done more easily.
- **Land and water levies capped** – to ease financial pressures on landowners.
- **Stronger partnerships with landholders and Aboriginal communities** – to ensure that the knowledge of our regional communities and First Nations is respected, recognised and used in the management of our landscapes.

3. What does the *Landscape SA Act 2019* mean for NRM boards?

The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* will replace the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* as the key framework for managing the state's land, water, pest plants and animals, and biodiversity across the state.

From the 1 July 2020, the nine new regional landscape boards will replace the existing NRM boards. The new boards will be responsible for administering the Landscape SA Act.

Presiding Members were appointed in February 2020 to lead each of the new boards by the Minister for Environment and Water. At the same time, current NRM board member appointments ceased. In addition to this role, Presiding Members will oversee existing NRM boards as single member boards and continue to administer the NRM Act.

This arrangement ensures certainty and a smooth transition for communities and land users across the regions, with current NRM services continuing to be delivered as normal until the new Act is fully operational.

4. Will there be any changes in how the public will be able to access advice, support or programs?

The new landscape boards will continue to deliver services to and partner with regional communities, and the Landscape SA Act 2019 will be fully operational by 1 July 2020.

Communities will be kept up-to-date on any changes by the new regional landscape boards. To stay informed, sign up to receive updates via the website

www.landscape.sa.gov.au

5. How will the boards operate at 'arm's length' from government?

As part of the changes, landscape boards will be able to approve their own budgets as part of their business plan each year, unless the budget includes a change to levy arrangements or the business plan is inconsistent with the board's regional landscape plan.

Boards will have greater autonomy over staffing arrangements and a General Manager will be appointed to employ staff and manage day-to-day operations.

6. Why are board elections being postponed until 2022 and not commencing with the establishment of the new landscape boards?

Under the new Act, the first elections will be held in 2022. This will align with the next local government elections to help achieve efficiencies in running the elections.

Until then board members will continue to be appointed by the Minister for Environment and Water.

From 2022, in regions where elections are to be held, communities and landholders will be able to take part in an election process to elect three of the seven new members of the regional landscape boards. The Minister will appoint four of the seven new members.

Green Adelaide will be governed by a board of up to eight highly skilled experts, who will be appointed by the Minister for Environment and Water.

7. What does the Landscape SA Act 2019 mean for Aboriginal communities?

Supporting the interests of Aboriginal people is included in the objects of the Act for the first time and will underpin decisions made by the Minister and regional landscape boards.

The significance of landscapes to Aboriginal people is expressly recognised as a principle in the Act, with each landscape board being required to work collaboratively with the Aboriginal communities in their region.

Aboriginal knowledge is expressly recognised in the Act as an important contribution in helping to achieve sustainable landscape management.

The Landscape Priorities Fund and the Grassroots Grants program, as well as the overall focus of the reform to deliver outcomes through partnerships, will together provide funding opportunities for Aboriginal people and groups to drive positive and practical improvements to landscape management.

8. What amendments were made during the passage of the Landscape South Australia Bill?

A number of amendments were agreed to during the passage of the Bill.

Most of these reinstate existing or similar provisions that applied under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004. Land levies will continue to be collected by local councils, but strengthened arrangements will ensure councils are appropriately compensated and not left out of pocket.

Some key changes made during the passage of the Landscape SA Act 2019 include:

- **Board elections to be deferred until 2022** – to be held in conjunction with local government elections.
- **A stronger emphasis on biodiversity** – in determining whether someone has breached the general statutory duty.
- **A stronger emphasis on climate change** – including the need to consider climate information, mitigation and adaptation strategies as part of decision-making and planning processes.
- **Consultation with peak bodies** – required on certain decisions as currently provided for in the NRM Act, including the State Landscape Strategy and the proposed appointment of board members.
- **Green Adelaide’s seven priorities** – now includes ecosystem health and biodiversity sensitive urban design.
- **Native vegetation and wildlife protection legislation objectives** – to be considered and linked to board plans and policies.
- **Express requirements for boards to facilitate biodiversity conservation** – and to work in collaboration with local councils.
- **Board members required to have the skills, knowledge and experience as currently prescribed in the NRM Act** – including at least one member of each board to be a representative of a local council.
- **Board meeting procedures** – set out in the Act rather than regulations.
- **The Act must be reviewed after three years** – by an independent person to assess its effectiveness.

9. What is the role of a landscape board?

Landscape boards will be responsible for facilitating the management of landscapes in

partnership with key partners and stakeholders.

They will implement the Act and support all sectors of the community, and all levels of government, by providing strategic leadership for their region’s landscape management priorities with a focus on land, water, pests and biodiversity.

Landscape boards are statutory bodies and instruments of the Crown, accountable to, and subject to the direction of, the Minister for Environment and Water.

10. When will landscape boards and regions be established?

New regional boundaries for landscape boards and Green Adelaide have been determined and the new landscape management regions have been established by notice in the SA Government Gazette on 9 January 2020. You can view the new regional boundaries via the website www.landscape.sa.gov.au.

The landscape boards have now been established, and Presiding Members have been appointed.

11. When will landscape board members be appointed?

Presiding Member appointments for each of the landscape boards were announced in February 2020. At the same time, current NRM board member appointments ceased.

In addition to their role as the new landscape board Presiding Member, they have also been appointed as the sole member constituting the relevant NRM board until the NRM Act is officially turned off and the Landscape SA Act is fully operational.

Current members of the Alinytjara Wilurara (AW) NRM Board, all of whom are respected leaders from across the AW region, remain as members of the AW NRM Board, and have also been appointed as members of the AW Landscape Board from 11 February 2020.

With the exception of the AW Landscape Board and Green Adelaide, a process has begun to appoint the remaining board members with all appointments expected to be finalised by April 2020. For more information visit www.landscape.sa.gov.au.

Green Adelaide board member appointments are expected to be announced in early 2020.

12. What do the changes mean for the Alinytjara Wilurara region?

In recognition of their leadership role, standing in the community and track record in partnering, the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board membership is unchanged and has already been appointed.

13. Who are the Presiding Members of the Landscape Boards?

The following appointments have been made:

- Alinytjara Wilurara, Parry Aguis
- Eyre Peninsula, Mark Whitfield
- Hills & Fleurieu, David Greenhough
- Kangaroo Island, Andrew Heinrich
- Limestone Coast, Dr Kerry DeGaris
- Murraylands and Riverland, Di Davidson
- Northern & Yorke, Caroline Schaefer
- SA Arid Lands, Ross Sawers

14. What is the role of the Presiding Member?

The Presiding Member is the chair of the board and will play a crucial role in leading the new board, aimed at delivering a stronger, back-to-basics system with an emphasis on effective water management, pest plant and animal control, soil and land management and biodiversity.

15. What sort of skills are required to be considered to be a board member?

Landscape board members will be experienced and respected community leaders, often with

established networks with relevant stakeholders and partners.

Collectively, an effective board will need a broad range of skills, experience and knowledge in areas relating to the effective operation of organisations, and the practical issues of community-based landscape management.

Board members will be appointed for their skills, knowledge and experience, as opposed to organisations or communities that they may otherwise represent.

Candidates will ideally live locally in the region. Candidates who live elsewhere and have a deep understanding of the region's landscape management may also be considered.

Membership on the board will aim to reflect the region's diversity in culture, gender, experience, skills and age. All people with relevant skills, knowledge and experience are encouraged to apply, including Aboriginal people, young people, and people from diverse cultural backgrounds. For more information visit www.landscape.sa.gov.au.

16. How do I apply to become a landscape board member?

Download and complete an expression of interest application form, and submit a current CV and three referees via www.landscape.sa.gov.au.

Alternatively, you can pick up, or request, a hard copy application from your local regional office, or from the Landscape Services support team – contact details are available at www.landscape.sa.gov.au.

Submit your application online via landscapeservices@sa.gov.au.

Alternatively, you can post your application to The Governance Officer, Landscape Services, at the Department for Environment and Water, GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001

17. When do board member applications close?

Applications close on Friday 6 March 2020.