

Onkaparinga River Reserve

Onkaparinga River National Park and Onkaparinga River Recreation Park
Management Plan Amendment 2017



Minister's Foreword

South Australia has wonderful parklands and open spaces including a network of 29 parks that surround Adelaide. These areas are essential for the conservation of South Australia's unique natural environment. They are also valuable community assets, providing places for nature-based tourism, recreation, exercise, learning, relaxation and recuperation.

In 2015, the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources invited people to participate in a series of community engagement events – focusing on Adelaide's national parks. During these events, South Australians identified an opportunity to increase the use, appreciation and enjoyment of Onkaparinga River National Park and Onkaparinga River Recreation Park by enabling people to enjoy a broader range of activities including cycling, horse-riding, dog walking and camping.

Park management plans may be revised and amended as our knowledge of the park grows, and to reflect the community's aspirations. In 2016, Government commenced a process to seek the community's views about these ideas by releasing a draft amendment to the Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 for public consultation. This draft amendment proposed to alter the management plan so that camping, cycling, horse riding and dog walking could be authorised by Government in these parks.

After careful consideration of submissions received on the draft amendments, Government concluded that the proposed amendments to the Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 would further the objectives of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* by providing for greater use, appreciation and enjoyment of Onkaparinga River National Park and Onkaparinga River Recreation Park.

I thank all those that made a submission.

I am pleased to formally adopt the Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan Amendment 2017 under section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.



The Hon Ian Hunter MLC
Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation

Establishing the Mount Lofty Ranges as an international mountain biking destination

Mountain biking is a wonderful way to exercise and enjoy parks. South Australia is set to capitalise on a worldwide boom in the popularity of this activity by establishing the Mount Lofty Ranges as an international mountain biking destination. Enabling cycling on designated trails within Onkaparinga River National Park will contribute to the South Australian Government's vision of "a sustainable trails network to engage people in the parks of the Mount Lofty Ranges". Realising this vision requires an amendment to the Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004.

A range of views about cycling in Onkaparinga River National Park were expressed in submissions received on the draft amendment. All submissions have been reviewed and considered. The two main concerns in regards to the use of bikes in parks relate to potential damage to the environment through erosion and spread of weeds, and risk of collision with walkers. In many situations these concerns can be managed through smart and sustainable track design.

Since the development of the park management plan in 2004, several pilot projects were undertaken in parks across the Mount Lofty Ranges to test alternative approaches to the management of cycling in parks. These projects showed that the spread of weeds

and soil borne pathogens could be prevented by developing a carefully planned and constructed network of trails and promoting responsible behaviour. As part of the implementation process, illegal tracks with unsustainable or unsafe alignments will be closed and rehabilitated. Experience has shown that cyclists will usually remain on trails that provide them with the experience they seek.

Collisions between walkers and cyclists can be prevented through trail design that encompasses safe lines of sight and signage. The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources has also commenced a program called 'I Share My Trail' which promotes guidelines for safe trail use such as keeping to the left of the trail whilst walking and providing adequate warning when approaching other park users.

The Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 has now been amended to allow cycling on designated tracks and trails (see amendments 1, 2 & 3 below).

Providing a safer and more enjoyable alignment for horse riding on the Tom Roberts Trail

The Tom Roberts Horse Trail extends past Onkaparinga River National Park through the Mount Lofty Ranges. Horse riding in parks is not permitted unless specifically authorised. In addition, the Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 prohibits horse riding in the Onkaparinga River National Park, and to date, all of the trail has been located outside the park.

An opportunity has been identified to provide a safer and more enjoyable riding experience by incorporating a portion of the Tom Roberts Trail within Onkaparinga River National Park. To enable this, a draft amendment to the Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 was released for public consultation in 2016.

The draft amendment proposed to enable horse riding on designated trails within the Onkaparinga River National Park. Submissions received on the draft amendment generally expressed support for allowing horse riding in this section of the park. All submissions have been reviewed and considered.

Incorporating a small section of the Tom Roberts Trail into the park will provide a safer and more enjoyable experience for horse riders and is not likely to present a risk to park values. The Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 has now been amended (see amendments 1,2 & 3 below).

Creating bush camping areas in national parks close to Adelaide

There is an opportunity to enable more people to experience bush camping in parks close to Adelaide. There are areas that are suitable for camping within Onkaparinga River National Park, however the Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 did not provide scope for camping areas to be designated.

To address this, a draft amendment to the Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 was released for public consultation in 2016. The draft amendment proposed to enable areas for camping within the Onkaparinga River National Park. Most submissions expressed support for this proposal, however several submissions raised concerns that camping would cause

environmental impacts, increase the risk of bushfire and create waste management issues. All submissions have been reviewed and considered.

The risk of bush fire and damage to vegetation can be managed through the education of campers. In addition camping will only be allowed within carefully designed camp sites that will be managed through a booking system.

The Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 has now been amended (see amendments 2, 4 & 5 below).

Encouraging more people to walk in parks

One of the most accessible and popular forms of exercise is walking. For many people, walking with their dog is part of a daily exercise routine which has significant physical and mental health benefits.

The Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 prohibited the walking of dogs in Onkaparinga River National Park. To encourage more people to use the park for walking, a draft amendment to the Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 was released for public consultation in 2016. The draft amendment proposed to enable Government to authorise the walking dogs on a lead on designated trails within the Onkaparinga River National Park.

Some people expressed support for this proposal. Others expressed concerns about the environmental impact of allowing dogs to be walked in this park. These impacts can be maintained at an acceptable level, provided that visitors keep their dogs on a lead and stay on designated trails. Some areas of particularly high environmental value may not be suitable for this activity.

After the consideration of all submissions received, it has been concluded that allowing the walking of dogs on a lead on designated trails, and promoting responsible behaviour by people walking dogs, will be the most effective way to meet the needs of people while also protecting park values from the impact of dogs. Before any trails are designated as appropriate for dog walking, a risk assessment process will be undertaken to assess their suitability.

The Onkaparinga River Reserve Management Plan 2004 has now been amended (see amendment 1 below).

Amendment 1: Section 4.1 Zoning (Page 13)

The following text is omitted from Section 4.1 Zoning (page 13)

Conservation Zone

This zone is managed to conserve and enhance biological and cultural values and to ensure ongoing stable environmental conditions. Public use of this zone is limited to those activities that do not impact significantly on the natural and cultural environment. Walking trails and direction and interpretive signs are permitted. Works undertaken for the provision and maintenance of a fire access track system and to improve or achieve conservation goals are permitted.

The use of the area by visitors with dogs, horses, private motor vehicles or cycles (including mountain bikes) is prohibited. Special permits for exceptional circumstances may be granted by the District Ranger.

The following text replaces the omitted text above

Conservation Zone

This zone is managed to conserve and enhance biological and cultural values and to ensure ongoing stable environmental conditions. Public use of this zone is limited to those activities that do not impact significantly on the natural and cultural environment. Trails and direction and interpretive signs are permitted. Works undertaken for the provision and maintenance of a fire access track system and to improve or achieve conservation goals are permitted.

Within this zone public motor vehicle access is confined to carparks. Where appropriate, dog walking, cycling and horse riding may be authorised on designated trails.

Amendment 2: Section 4.6.1 Visitor Use, Table of recreational activities (page 32)

The Following text is omitted from Section 4.6.1 Visitor Use, table – appropriateness of recreational activities (Page 32)

Recreation Activity	Status	Comments
Mountain-bike riding	Not Appropriate	Due to soil erosion and safety issues.
Horse riding	Not Appropriate	Potential for soil disturbance, compromised public safety, weed and nutrient
Camping and campfires	Not Appropriate	Due to incidence of bushfire.
Canoeing	Appropriate in estuary only	

The Following text replaces the omitted text above

Recreation Activity	Status	Comments
Mountain-bike riding	Appropriate on designated tracks and trails	Soil erosion and safety issues will be addressed through safe and sustainable trail design.
Horse riding	Appropriate on designated tracks and trails	Soil erosion and safety issues will be addressed through safe and sustainable trail design.
Camping and campfires	Appropriate in designated camping areas	Fire restrictions will apply.
Canoeing	Appropriate in Onkaparinga River Recreation Park	

Amendment 3: Section 4.6.2 Vehicle Access (page 33)

The following text is omitted from Section 4.6.2 Vehicle Access (page 33)

4.6.2 Vehicle Access

The approach currently utilised for the management of vehicle access on tracks within the reserve is to fence the perimeter and install locked gates. Vehicle parking is provided around the boundary of the reserve giving visitors the opportunity to walk within the reserve. In this context, and under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 the definition of vehicles includes; cars, four-wheel drives, boats, horses, motorbikes and cycles (including mountain bikes). Exceptions and alternative arrangements are provided for on a reserve-by-reserve basis.

Public vehicles are excluded from reserve tracks for several reasons, including; dangerous, highly variable track conditions, fragile soils, steep terrain, to reduce the spread of weeds and soil pathogens, to limit noise intrusion, to improve public safety on steep trails (particularly walkers threatened by speeding motor bikes and mountain bikes), to limit the risk, frequency and possible consequences of fires and to maximise visitors' experience of natural conditions.

There is widespread support for continuing to restrict all vehicles (as defined above) to the boundary of the reserve. However, it is possible to identify a section of the reserve that may provide recreation opportunities for visitors utilising a regional trails network. Such a route would need to avoid steep terrain and any potential user-conflict situations.

Cycles are currently only permitted on a marked trail within the recreation park and canoes are permitted within the estuary. Aircraft are managed through permits and conditions attached to leases. A vehicle access track system is maintained to facilitate reserve management and emergency access. Walking trails start and are signposted from the car parks.

The following text replaces the omitted text above

4.6.2 Vehicle Access

Roads and tracks outside the perimeter of the parks provide for public access. Additional tracks within the parks provide access for management purposes and will generally not be available for public motor vehicle access. Many of these management tracks are not safe or suitable for public motor vehicle access. Their ongoing use could cause erosion, the spread of weeds or the spread of soil borne pathogens. The use of management tracks by public motor vehicles may be considered under special circumstances, and where this is compatible with park values.

Horse riding and cycling will be allowed on designated tracks and trails. Canoeing is permitted within the Onkaparinga River Recreation Park.

Amendment 4: Section 4.6.4 Day Visit Areas (page 37)

The following text is omitted from Section 4.6.4 Day Visit Areas (page 37)

Actions

- Continue to prohibit camping within the reserve

The following text replaces the omitted text above

Actions

- Allow camping within designated camping areas

Amendment 5: Section 5, summary of management actions (page 49)

The following text is omitted from Section 5, Summary of Management Actions table (page 49)

Action Statement	Duration	Priority	Page
Continue to prohibit camping within the reserve	Ongoing	High	37

For further information please contact

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources phone information line (08) 8204 1910, or see SA White Pages for your local Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resource office.



Government of South Australia
Department of Environment,
Water and Natural Resources



**National
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