

Managing Our Landscapes Conversations for Change

What we heard | July - October 2018

26 October 2018



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Foreword



Foreword

The State Government is committed to a significant reform program that will change the way natural resources are managed. A central part of this reform will be the establishment of the new Landscape South Australia Act, replacing the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*.

This reform is to be informed by the people who spend their lives working in the environment, protecting it whilst also sustaining their livelihoods. This reform can only be achieved through meaningful engagement and the establishment of long-term delivery partnerships.

Between July and October 2018, my team undertook robust and vast engagement with over 1,000 people across South Australia to gather input to help shape the future of natural resource management.

We designed and independently facilitated over 60 highly participatory face-to-face meetings around the state, engaging with over 800 people in conversations about the natural resource management system in South Australia.

We received 194 written submissions from interested individuals and organisations. We listened to 64 interested stakeholders via online commentary on YourSAy.

During the engagement process we met with so many people who shared with us so many diverse opinions, needs, ideas and priorities.

From the pastoralist in Marree who wants to see more local decision making and less red tape, to the Aboriginal woman in Scotdesco who would like to see more co-management with Aboriginal communities. From the passionate volunteers in Glenunga who spend many hours of their spare time undertaking revegetation projects, to the farmers in Victor Harbor who want to see more practical on-ground support. From the eco-tourism operator on Kangaroo Island to the irrigators in the Riverland. From the former and existing NRM board members, to the young people dreaming of the opportunities ahead.

Each region is unique, each community has different needs, and every story we heard was full of passion for good natural resource management. I sincerely hope that what we've heard will help to shape the future of natural resource management in South Australia.

In the interest of transparency, input received through the formal engagement process, whether via written submission, online commentary or meeting face-to-face, can be found in the appendices of this report.



Becky Hirst

Independent Facilitator and Engagement Specialist

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Between July and October 2018, an engagement process occurred across South Australia to gather input to help shape the future of natural resource management. The engagement process was titled *Managing Our Landscapes – Conversations for Change*.

This report shares what land managers, volunteer groups, industry experts, Aboriginal nations, other tiers of government, advocacy organisations and other interested stakeholders said, as part of this robust and vast engagement process.

Starting with the strengths of the current natural resources management system, the report begins by acknowledging what participants said was working well. The staff on the front line of service and program delivery were noted as being a major asset, along with the hundreds of volunteers who passionately support the system through their on-ground activities. NRM Education was something many people highlighted as working really well, along with other existing programs and services. Many examples of existing arrangements of working together were provided, and many noted the progress that has been made in genuinely engaging with Aboriginal nations.

The report goes on to provide an overview of the top twenty priorities for natural resource management reform that were noted again and again throughout the engagement process.

The top twenty priorities are listed in order of most commonly discussed topics and start with funding, planning and accountability, community engagement, partnerships and collaboration, and the desire for greater local decision making. Pest plants and animals, compliance and less red tape were of great importance to people with many differing perspectives being provided and many people feeling frustrated at what is felt to be unnecessary bureaucracy.

Water management was raised time and time again, and many people raised vibrant biodiversity as a priority calling for a higher value being placed on stewardship activities. Transparency, board structures, more employment opportunities and evidence-based decision making were priorities too, and many people raised the importance of protection and preservation in the natural resource management system. Education, decision making by Traditional Owners, climate change and links with other legislation, most notably the Planning Act were all important. Finally, soil quality was raised as a priority area by many people we met.

Our conversations around the state centred around the guiding principles of the reform and a number of the key proposals included in the Minister's vision.

Many people supported a *whole of landscape approach*, though many requested more definitions around its specific meanings. Many people supported the concept of *decentralised decision making* and a more *simple and accessible system*, though many had questions regarding governance and how compliance will be monitored within such structures. Robust discussion occurred regarding the tension between the *back to basics* and *whole of landscape approach*, with many people raising concerns that achieving a vibrant biodiversity requires more than just soil quality, water management and pest plant and animal control.

Feedback received regarding the key proposals of board membership and community elections, board accountabilities, boundaries, Green Adelaide, levies, a statewide Landscape Priorities Fund and Grassroots Grants Program can be found later in the report.

In summary, there were a number of concerns regarding the community elections for board members, including the cost, effectiveness and risks of such a process. There were many conversations about representation on the boards, and many people noted the need for the boards to include Aboriginal people, women and young people. Succession planning was highlighted as a priority, with the opportunity to support aspiring young environmental leaders as part of this.

There was support for good planning by Landscape SA boards, but many people asked how the existing NRM plans will be incorporated in to the new plans, as many noted the effort that has gone in to developing these in partnership with the community. Some people had specific feedback regarding potential boundary changes, but a large number of people suggested decisions regarding boundaries should be based on social and ecological systems and not the financial benefits.

The role of NRM Groups were noted as being of great benefit in connecting landowners and boards in regional communities, and many commented on the potential to have them as a more formal part of the governance structure.

Green Adelaide was mostly discussed in areas close to metropolitan Adelaide and in general there was optimism with people finding the concept exciting, particularly with reference to it being a world leader in linking urban life to land management. Many people questioned why Green Adelaide will have an expert board with no community representation.

The collection, calculation and distribution of levies was discussed many times, with the majority of people seeming to want levies capped. Some participants were concerned that this would put too much pressure on an already over-stretched and limited environment budget.

Whilst many acknowledged local councils being the collector of levies as a process that works well, representatives from local government noted their desire to have state government collect the levy. Transparency was noted as being critical in communicating the way levies are calculated and distributed, with many people confused by the current system.

There was general support for the statewide Landscape Priorities Fund and Grassroots Grants program, with most commentary occurring around how these funds will be administered and how priorities will be identified. It was suggested that levies collected in metropolitan Adelaide be used to create these funds, rather than taking money from levies collected in the regions.

Towards the end of this report there are twelve key recommendations, based on what the facilitation team heard during this engagement process.

These include recommendations regarding exploring alternative options to community elections to form Landscape Board membership; establishing a Statewide Landscape Board for overarching coordination; and the need to consider appropriate mechanisms to provide the support required for regional communities to make good decisions that are based on scientific evidence.

The recommendations place a large emphasis on putting community at the centre of decision making, including requiring at least one Aboriginal person with a cultural connection to the region being on each Landscape Board, and the reestablishment of the Statewide Aboriginal NRM Advisory group; building on, maintaining and more formally acknowledging local groups as a conduit for supporting local decision making processes in the regions; and considering the membership structure of the Green Adelaide board to incorporate both experts and representatives from peak bodies or volunteer groups. The Minister must also consider succession planning and the importance of involving young people in decision making.

There is a specific recommendation regarding the need to place higher value and emphasis on stewardship priorities beyond soil quality, water management and pest plants and animals to achieve vibrant biodiversity; plus, a recommendation that the new Act must incorporate and address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Following much discussion regarding compliance, there is a recommendation regarding the need to create a visible and streamlined process for compliance that includes education with landowners but also commits to subsequent enforcement.

The need to consider social and ecological systems when considering boundaries of regions is also recommended.

The final section of the report includes all input received as part of *Managing Our Landscapes – Conversations for Change*, including reports from all face-to-face meetings, written submissions received, and commentary made on the YourSAy page.

1 | The Engagement Process



1.1 Why engage?

Creation of the new Landscape legislation provides a once in a generation opportunity to reform natural resources management legislation for South Australia. The government is committed to working with stakeholders and the broader community to ensure the new legislation is fit for purpose and reflects community needs.

A focus of the Landscape SA reform is the forging of strong, enduring and productive partnerships to deliver practical, on-ground works that address local priorities.

Recognising the intimate and expert knowledge of the landscape that people across South Australia have, the engagement process aimed to -

- Utilise best practice engagement methods to ensure that a wide range of views from the community, Aboriginal nations and stakeholders were heard, documented and considered during development of the Landscape South Australia Bill;
- Foster broad-ranging ownership and support for the new legislation;
- Ensure the community and stakeholders were well-informed; and
- Build and improve relationships between DEW and the Minister with key stakeholders, and positively influence the perception of Department for Environment and Water and the Minister in the community.

1.2 Independent Facilitation

The facilitation team was made up of three highly experienced and independent engagement facilitators with almost 60 years combined experience working with South Australian communities – Becky Hirst (Becky Hirst Consulting), Steve Dangerfield (communicate et al) and Jon Bok (Indigenous Engagement Australia). The role of the facilitation team was to help the Minister hear the broad range of views, and to help participants express those views. It was important that this was undertaken ‘at arm’s length’ from government to enable fearless and frank dialogue and deliberation to occur.

“The new Landscape South Australia Bill is an opportunity for a review of the current process and keep the good and improve the parts not working as well as they could. I really support the process the Minister has undertaken with independent consultants talking to people all round the state. It’s a good start.” Neil, via YourSAy

The facilitation team designed a face-to-face format, based on the content of the Discussion Paper, which guided participants through a process to seek input on the key elements of the reform. This format was designed to be adaptable for use at meetings of just a few people, to meetings of almost 100 people. It provided a format to shape conversations with those people who have decades worth of experience in natural resource management, through to those who may have less intricate knowledge of the system.

1.3 Methodology

A discussion paper formed the basis for the engagement activity, setting the scene and providing an overview of some key proposals within the reform. A summary of the discussion paper was also available, and a Frequently Asked Questions document provided further detail of the mechanics of the reform process. Using the principles and proposals outlined in the discussion paper as conversation starter, the facilitation team designed and facilitated 60 face-to-face conversations around the state.

1.3.1 Early Engagement

Conversations included early engagement meetings with key peak bodies such as the Primary Producers SA, Conservation Council SA, and Local Government Association of SA. Information was provided to and input sought from the NRM Partners, Presiding Members, and the South Australian Regional Organisation of Councils. These early conversations helped to seek input on both the reform but also the proposed engagement process.

During the early engagement phase, the following meetings were held with:

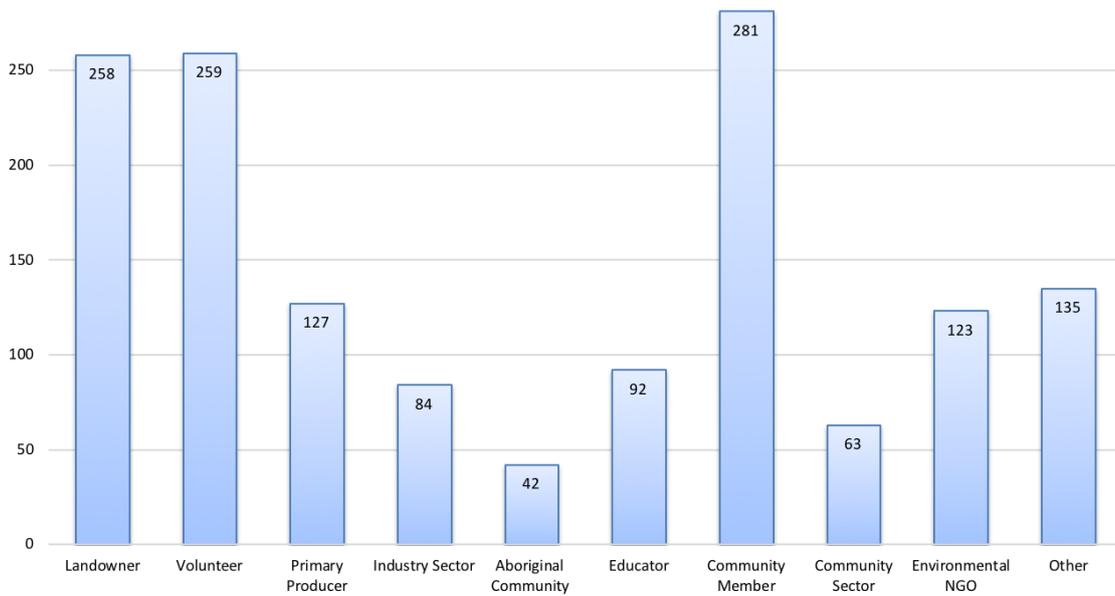
- Statewide Native Title Group Forum – 28 June
- NRM Partners – 5 July
- Presiding Members – 5 July
- Primary Producers NRM Committee – 11 July
- SA Regional Organisation of Councils – 18 July
- Conservation Council Member Groups – 2 August

1.3.2 Statewide Community Forums

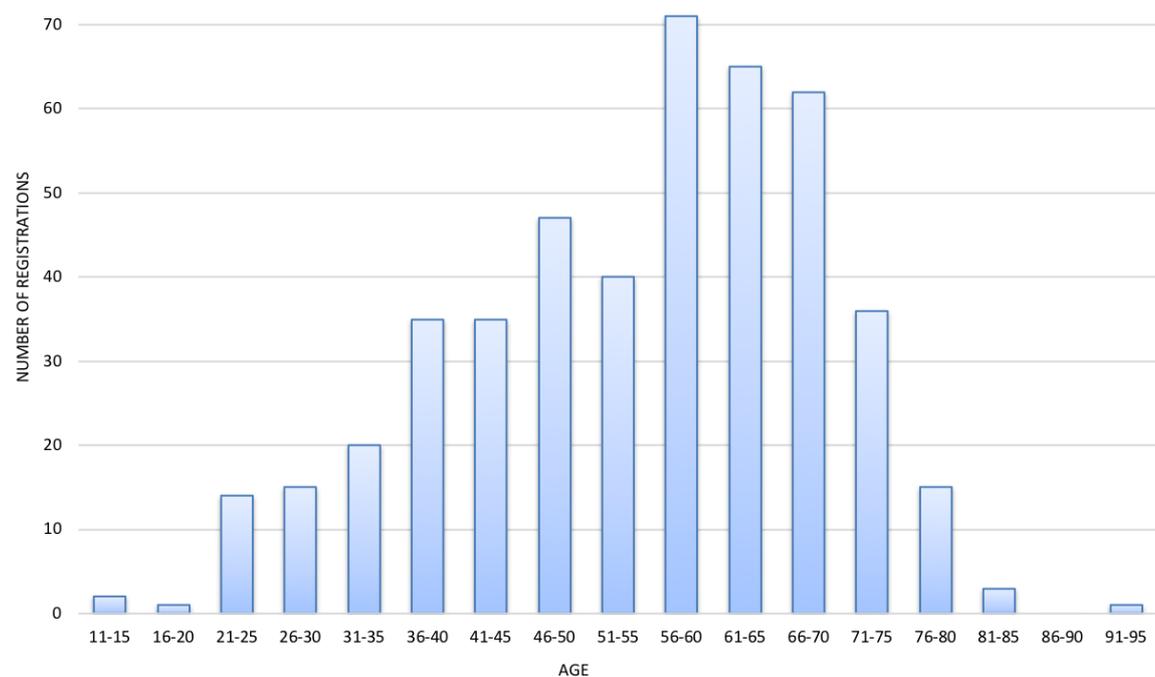
25 community forums took place involving over 800 people in a highly participatory dialogue process about their priorities for natural resource management. These community forums were held across the state, including metro, regional and outback locations and attended by a good mix of land managers, volunteer groups, industry experts, Aboriginal nations, primary producers, other tiers of government and advocacy organisations. The forums were held at the following locations:

- Port Lincoln – 7 August
- Ceduna – 8 August
- Port Augusta – 10 August
- Victor Harbor – 13 August
- McLaren Vale – 14 August
- Murray Bridge – 16 August
- Kingscote – 21 August
- Clare – 22 August
- Glenunga – 23 August
- Mawson Lakes – 27 August
- Gawler – 28 August
- Coober Pedy – 29 August
- Mount Barker (1) – 29 August
- Mount Barker (2) – 30 August
- Berri – 3 September
- Yunta – 4 September
- Leigh Creek – 5 September
- Nepabunna – 5 September
- Marree – 6 September
- Grange – 6 September
- Scotdesco – 12 September
- Mount Gambier – 17 September
- Bordertown – 19 September
- Meningie – 20 September
- Marion – 4 October

Participants who wanted to attend the community forums across the state were asked to register to attend via Eventbrite. During this registration process some demographic information was collected to help provide an overview of who attended the sessions. It should be noted that not everyone who attended had registered, and not everyone who registered attended. The following does however provide a summary of information that provides some insight in to who showed an interest in attending. The following chart shows the answers people who registered to attend the statewide community forums provided when they were asked which of the following **interest groups** they belonged to.



The following chart shows the answers people who registered to attend the statewide community forums provided when they were asked which **age group** they were in.



For the statewide community forum sessions where people registered to attend, the following data shows the breakdown of interest group, gender and age of people attending each session.

Port Lincoln		Ceduna		Port Augusta		Victor Harbor	
Registered	30	Registered	13	Registered	18	Registered	60
Male	15	Male	4	Male	5	Male	30
Female	9	Female	6	Female	5	Female	19
Other/blank	6	Other/blank	3	Other/blank	8	Other/blank	11
Landowner	10	Landowner	1	Landowner	6	Landowner	33
Volunteer	8	Volunteer	3	Volunteer	3	Volunteer	19
Primary Producer	5	Primary Producer	0	Primary Producer	3	Primary Producer	21
Industry Sector	4	Industry Sector	4	Industry Sector	1	Industry Sector	6
Aboriginal Community	0	Aboriginal Community	6	Aboriginal Community	0	Aboriginal Community	5
Educator	0	Educator	0	Educator	0	Educator	10
Community Member	7	Community Member	5	Community Member	1	Community Member	24
Community Sector	3	Community Sector	0	Community Sector	0	Community Sector	2
Environmental NGO	1	Environmental NGO	0	Environmental NGO	3	Environmental NGO	5
Other	8	Other	4	Other	5	Other	8
No. of ages provided	21	No. of ages provided	7	No. of ages provided	7	No. of ages provided	42
Average age	59.6	Average age	52.8	Average age	46.7	Average age	59.1
McLaren Vale		Murray Bridge		Kingscote		Clare	
Registered	61	Registered	34	Registered	39	Registered	32
Male	29	Male	18	Male	14	Male	9
Female	23	Female	10	Female	9	Female	10
Other/blank	9	Other/blank	6	Other/blank	16	Other/blank	13
Landowner	14	Landowner	6	Landowner	21	Landowner	10
Volunteer	23	Volunteer	5	Volunteer	9	Volunteer	10
Primary Producer	8	Primary Producer	6	Primary Producer	10	Primary Producer	4
Industry Sector	4	Industry Sector	2	Industry Sector	4	Industry Sector	1
Aboriginal Community	7	Aboriginal Community	1	Aboriginal Community	0	Aboriginal Community	0
Educator	10	Educator	3	Educator	5	Educator	1
Community Member	24	Community Member	3	Community Member	14	Community Member	12
Community Sector	8	Community Sector	4	Community Sector	1	Community Sector	4
Environmental NGO	9	Environmental NGO	9	Environmental NGO	3	Environmental NGO	1
Other	8	Other	8	Other	5	Other	3
No. of ages provided	43	No. of ages provided	19	No. of ages provided	14	No. of ages provided	15
Average age	55.5	Average age	47.6	Average age	57.7	Average age	56.3
Glenunga		Mawson Lakes		Gawler		Coober Pedy	
Registered	74	Registered	68	Registered	69	Registered	12
Male	30	Male	29	Male	26	Male	3
Female	30	Female	27	Female	32	Female	2
Other/blank	14	Other/blank	12	Other/blank	11	Other/blank	7
Landowner	14	Landowner	6	Landowner	24	Landowner	4
Volunteer	25	Volunteer	19	Volunteer	36	Volunteer	2
Primary Producer	1	Primary Producer	2	Primary Producer	12	Primary Producer	1
Industry Sector	5	Industry Sector	6	Industry Sector	12	Industry Sector	2
Aboriginal Community	6	Aboriginal Community	8	Aboriginal Community	8	Aboriginal Community	0
Educator	11	Educator	13	Educator	4	Educator	2
Community Member	31	Community Member	24	Community Member	21	Community Member	4
Community Sector	9	Community Sector	8	Community Sector	7	Community Sector	0
Environmental NGO	8	Environmental NGO	17	Environmental NGO	11	Environmental NGO	1
Other	10	Other	14	Other	14	Other	3
No. of ages provided	49	No. of ages provided	45	No. of ages provided	44	No. of ages provided	2
Average age	56.2	Average age	52.0	Average age	53.6	Average age	29
Mount Barker 29th		Mount Barker 30th		Berri		Yunta	
Registered	25	Registered	60	Registered	35	Registered	9
Male	11	Male	27	Male	15	Male	
Female	8	Female	22	Female	11	Female	
Other/blank	6	Other/blank	11	Other/blank	9	Other/blank	
Landowner	14	Landowner	25	Landowner	16	Landowner	2
Volunteer	10	Volunteer	19	Volunteer	16	Volunteer	
Primary Producer	6	Primary Producer	6	Primary Producer	10	Primary Producer	6
Industry Sector	8	Industry Sector	5	Industry Sector	6	Industry Sector	
Aboriginal Community	1	Aboriginal Community	0	Aboriginal Community	0	Aboriginal Community	
Educator	5	Educator	8	Educator	3	Educator	
Community Member	12	Community Member	21	Community Member	24	Community Member	
Community Sector	4	Community Sector	1	Community Sector	3	Community Sector	
Environmental NGO	6	Environmental NGO	17	Environmental NGO	7	Environmental NGO	
Other	4	Other	8	Other	5	Other	1
No. of ages provided	13	No. of ages provided	40	No. of ages provided	20	No. of ages provided	2
Average age	46.6	Average age	59.5	Average age	60.8	Average age	54.5

Leigh Creek		Marree		Grange		Mount Gambier	
Registered	13	Registered	5	Registered	44	Registered	23
Male	3	Male	2	Male	12	Male	13
Female	5	Female		Female	14	Female	8
Other/blank	5	Other/blank	3	Other/blank	18	Other/blank	2
Landowner	5	Landowner	1	Landowner	12	Landowner	6
Volunteer	2	Volunteer		Volunteer	18	Volunteer	6
Primary Producer	1	Primary Producer	1	Primary Producer	1	Primary Producer	7
Industry Sector	2	Industry Sector		Industry Sector	3	Industry Sector	2
Aboriginal Community		Aboriginal Community		Aboriginal Community		Aboriginal Community	
Educator	1	Educator		Educator	9	Educator	
Community Member	8	Community Member		Community Member	17	Community Member	6
Community Sector		Community Sector		Community Sector	3	Community Sector	1
Environmental NGO	3	Environmental NGO		Environmental NGO	4	Environmental NGO	3
Other		Other	1	Other	4	Other	5
No. of ages provided	5	No. of ages provided	2	No. of ages provided	18	No. of ages provided	21
Average age	59.2	Average age	41.5	Average age	59.5	Average age	54.0

Bordertown		Meningie		Marion	
Registered	30	Registered	21	Attended	42
Male	13	Male	8	Male	10
Female	5	Female	8	Female	20
Other/blank	12	Other/blank	5	Other/blank	12
Landowner	14	Landowner	5	Landowner	9
Volunteer	6	Volunteer	4	Volunteer	16
Primary Producer	11	Primary Producer	4	Primary Producer	1
Industry Sector	3	Industry Sector	3	Industry Sector	1
Aboriginal Community		Aboriginal Community		Aboriginal Community	
Educator	2	Educator	2	Educator	3
Community Member	11	Community Member	6	Community Member	6
Community Sector	1	Community Sector	2	Community Sector	2
Environmental NGO	5	Environmental NGO	5	Environmental NGO	5
Other	8	Other	6	Other	3
No. of ages provided	14	No. of ages provided	13	No. of ages provided	13
Average age	55.6	Average age	52.7	Average age	54.0

1.3.3 Engaging with Aboriginal Nations

Whilst there was representation from Aboriginal nations at several of the above community forums across the state, and strong input received around ongoing engagement of Aboriginal communities in natural resource management decision making in to the future, advice from leaders was sought throughout the engagement process to identify opportunities for further focussed engagement, as they arose.

This included taking up opportunities to engage with the Statewide Native Title Group, hold specific sessions for the Kurna, Four Nations communities (Kurna, Peramangk, Ngadjuri, Ngarrindjeri) and Point Pearce Aboriginal community, meet with members of the APY Land Management Executive and South Australian Native Title Services.

1.3.4 Meetings with NRM Boards

The 8 NRM boards were met with to seek their knowledge and expertise around the existing natural resource management system, seeking input around the same key reform proposals that were shared with the community. These board meetings included:

- Kangaroo Island NRM Board - 21 August
- Eyre Peninsula NRM Board - 27 August
- Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board - 6 September
- South Australia Arid Lands NRM Board - 10 September

- Northern and Yorke NRM Board - 11 September
- SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board - 17 September
- South East NRM Board - 17 September
- Alinytjara Wilurara - 2 October

1.3.5 Engagement with staff

Alongside the public engagement process, internal engagement with staff was undertaken via 11 facilitated staff sessions across the state, based on the same key proposals. An additional 4 internal sessions were facilitated by staff for staff using the same format.

An internal iShare page was developed to provide staff with further information about the reforms and how they can could get involved and provide their feedback. Staff could choose to provide anonymous feedback based on the Discussion Paper via a secure online form.

Alternatively, group submissions could also be made from branches or teams by emailing the Landscape Reform inbox. Some staff also made written submissions.

The reports from the internal engagement process and written submissions made by staff have been supplied separately to the Minister for consideration.

1.3.6 Focussed conversations

Towards the end of the engagement process focussed conversations were facilitated with Aboriginal Nations, and stakeholders including local government and young people to share with them what had been said during the engagement process to enable deeper conversation to occur.

Concurrent sessions with the Primary Production and Conservation sectors were also held, bringing them together for a combined workshop afterwards.

Towards the end of the engagement process, the NRM Partners met again, providing opportunity to debrief on what had been heard during the engagement process. Focussed conversations undertaken included:

- Local Government Planning and Environment Forum – 13 September
- APY Lands Management – 27 September
- Youth and Community in Conservation Action – 29 September
- Kurna workshop – 2 October
- Primary Producers organisations – 3 October
- Conservation organisations – 3 October
- Combined Primary Producers, Conservation organisations and NRM Partners – 3 October
- NRM Partners – 4 October
- Four Nations workshop – 10 October
- Native Titles Services meeting - 11 October

1.3.7 Online engagement

The face-to-face engagement was complemented with the opportunity for online commentary.

A page was set up on the state governments YourSAy portal with opportunity to learn about the reform via video, the Discussion Paper, the Discussion Paper Summary, and the FAQ document. Members of the public were able to make comment on the page and these comments have been included in the appendices of this report. The opportunity to comment online was promoted in the Discussion paper, in letters to stakeholders, via social media and in local newspaper adverts.

There were 8,473 unique views of the Managing our Landscapes page on YourSAy during the engagement period. The Discussion Paper was downloaded 754 times. 64 people participated in the online discussion and their comments can be found in the appendices of this report.

1.3.8 Written Submissions

A total of 194 written (email and letter) submissions were received by the Independent Facilitator from individuals and organisations with the community. These can all be found in the appendices of this report, minus 3 submissions that were made confidentially. The confidential submissions have been provided separately to the Minister for consideration.

1.3.9 Staff-led community engagement

Demand for engagement within the community was high, and whilst the facilitation team undertook vast engagement facilitating 60 conversations with over 800 people, there was still demand for more. Where the facilitation team weren't able to meet with a group of interested people, staff from the Department for Environment and Water were equipped with a process to undertake their own engagement with communities.

This occurred on three occasions and in the interest of transparency, these sessions are collated separately in the appendices of this report.

2 | What's Working Well



In all meetings and community forums we asked participants to consider and discuss the main things they feel are working well in the existing natural resource management system.

The below summary provides an overview of the top six themes we heard again and again when we asked people what they feel is currently working well in natural resource management. We have also included references from other input received.

All forum reports, meeting notes, online commentary and written submissions can be found in the appendices of this report.

2.1 Frontline staff

When we asked what is working well in the current natural resource management system, there was overwhelming appreciation and respect for the staff across the majority of the state, and more specifically front-line staff involved in delivering ‘on the ground’ activities.

Local staff connection with community, and their level of professionalism within ‘local ranks’ were highlighted as working well in Port Lincoln. Specific staff, and their role in facilitating local programs were attributed as being a great resource. In Ceduna, staff in local offices were said to be working well. In Port Augusta, on-ground staff working in rural areas who enable local decision making with the local community were said to be working well.

In Victor Harbor, it was noted that some participants felt staff being passionate about what they do and doing their best was noted as working well. The role of volunteer support officers was noted as working well and needing to be maintained and retained. The Local District Officer model was noted as good and there was a request to keep well qualified staff and experts.

In McLaren Vale, the success of projects was noted as being reliant on good officer and landholder relationships with the McLaren Vale Biodiversity Project being noted as a great example of a project working well based on trust and good relationships. Participants noted the easy access to staff across a whole range of areas of expertise.

“Volunteers need leaders who are well educated in biodiversity to support and co-ordinate their activities... I have found the present staff at AMLR NRM to be extremely helpful and supportive because they have the same goals as we do.”

Valerie Wales, via written submission

In Mount Barker, participants noted that they don’t want to lose the expertise of existing staff and their vital role in supporting volunteers. In Murray Bridge, some participants noted that the right people have been employed. In Kingscote, the current staff delivering effective outcomes were said to be working well by one group of participants. In Clare, relationships between staff delivering

natural resources management and stakeholders was said to be working well, and it was highlighted that on-ground activities and relationships must be retained. In Gawler, it was again noted that local staff who are 'close to the ground' have built up good networks. In Berri, Department for Environment and Water employees and motivated individuals were noted to be working well.

At Mawson Lakes, specific staff were referenced as being invaluable, with NRM Officers and their connections with already established community groups and landholders said to be working well. Authorised Officers were said to be working well, with it good having them based at councils.

In Glenunga, it was requested that the in-house specialists be retained to provide the best available scientific support. The education focus was said to be working well and a call was made for more on-ground staff as they are crucial in achieving this. The practical support provided for Friends Groups was also said to be working well. Again, Volunteer Support Officers were highlighted as invaluable. This was also echoed in Grange. In Marion, on-ground facilitators were noted to be an excellent conduit between government and community, providing technical direction, adding value and supporting volunteers.

"The support that they are able to provide to schools and kindys around sustainability, climate change, food gardens, natural play spaces, water and waste has been invaluable... The staff are extremely knowledgeable and have been consistently amazing to work with."

Vanessa Green, City of West Torrens, via written submission

In Bordertown, the people at the local NRM office were noted as being awesome, with participants liking the friendly, respectful can-do attitude from staff. In Meningie, the friendly staff were also said to be working well.

In Coober Pedy, the Community Engagement Officers and regional staff were noted as working well by participants, including the way they communicate. In Leigh Creek, pastoralist issues being listened to was noted as working well.

In their written submission, the Friends of Sturt Gorge noted that local NRM staff and volunteer support systems have worked very well for their group of volunteers.

2.2 Volunteers

The role that volunteers play in managing natural resources was acknowledged as critical in many discussions across the state.

In McLaren Vale, volunteer groups across the region were said to be working well. Local Action Planning groups were also acknowledged for the support they provide.

In Kingscote and Berri, participants noted the effectiveness of Landcare projects. In Berri, participants noted that Landcare groups do exceptional work in organising volunteers, despite limited resources.

Participants at the Port Augusta community forum specifically noted that volunteer programs are working well. Participants in Glenunga noted the good support provided from people through local NRM and volunteer groups. In Mawson Lakes it was noted to value the community involvement of volunteer groups. In Gawler, community groups such as Trees for Life, Barossa Bush Gardens, Kersbrook Land Care and Buffers to Bushland through the City of Playford were noted as going a great job, but more funding support is needed.

Again, as noted above, the support from staff for volunteers was noted as valuable and critical to retain. It was noted in Mount Barker that volunteers cannot take over the role of paid staff.

Written submissions from individuals also suggested that there should be continued support of volunteers and volunteer groups including continued partnerships with them for on-ground works and an increased focus on attracting volunteers back.

2.3 NRM Education

NRM Education featured highly in conversation about things that are currently working well.

Education with schools was noted as working well by participants in Ceduna and engagement with schools was noted as contributing to achieving on-ground work in Port Augusta.

In McLaren Vale and Grange, NRM Education heavily featured in conversations about what is working well. Participants noted that NRM Education and schools-based learning is a major strength, especially is partnership with Local Government. One group of participants requested that NRM Education be extended to the community.

In Murray Bridge, participants said that NRM Education has had a powerful influence on the next generation of leaders. In Mount Barker, it was noted that NRM Education currently works with thousands of students, teachers, parents and members of the community. It was felt that this 'future proofing' activity would be disastrous to lose.

"As an educator, the NRM education program has been most valuable in attempting to get a plan for our school to be sustainable and teach environmentally sound practices to our senior secondary students." Mandy, via YourSAy

In Clare, NRM Education was noted as important in educating school children and should be retained. In Gawler, long term relationships were said to be working well, including through NRM Education. In Berri, NRM Education was noted to be working well, though participants called for more investment, improved logistics and resourcing.

Education was commented on by many participants at the Glenunga, Marion and Mawson Lakes community forums, with the program providing great outcomes and influence through investing in the future, and also providing a mechanism for flow on benefits to families and communities. Many people felt that NRM Education could be further built on.

Many written submissions and online comments also highlighted the positive work of NRM Education.

"Our early childhood Centre has been well supported by the NRM education program. The support has enabled community members and educators working together to receive practical knowledge and guidance in designing and planning improvements to the children's outdoor learning environments." David, via YourSAy

2.4 Existing programs and services

A number of existing programs and services were noted as currently working well across the state.

Specific programs and services noted to be working well included, but aren't limited to –

- The Biteback program, including dog baiting and aerial baiting programs – many participants in Port Augusta, Yunta and Marree noted this program as best practice community engagement;
- Continued marine sanctuary and coastal protection - noted in Victor Harbor;
- The Community Natural Resource Centre in Willunga, and the Willunga Environment Centre – noted by participants in McLaren Vale;
- Urban Creek Recovery Program, work programs for land restoration, noted in McLaren Vale;
- Revegetation program, fencing, guest speakers, and goat and deer pest management, noted in Kingscote;
- Landscape biodiversity projects, including Living Flinders and Rewilding Yorkes, plus fox baiting and deer control, noted in Clare;
- Education programs such as Bush Kind and the River Torrens Recovery Project, noted in Mawson Lakes;
- Incentive programs and work undertaken with respect to pest plants, noted in Gawler;
- Field Days, noted in Coober Pedy;
- Useful website and resources, noted in Mount Barker;
- Water Allocation Planning process, noted in Berri;
- Weed and pest control programs, noted in Yunta;
- EMU Program, noted in Leigh Creek and Marree;
- Field days and traveller information for the region, noted in Leigh Creek;
- Nature play and existing reserves, noted in Glenunga;
- Coastal Ambassador System, noted in Grange;
- Weather monitoring and advice on adapting to declining rainfall, noxious weed identification program and weed inspectors, noted in Mount Gambier;
- Monitoring and evaluating condition of groundwater and Bucks for Bush grant program and linkages to the Green Army, noted in Bordertown;
- Treeplanting, noted in Meningie;
- Arid Land funding for pest control, permits to control over-abundant native animal species, creation and preservation of National Parks, noted in Marion.

“I would like to support the great work of the Adelaide and Mt Lofty NRM in the support and advocacy of the Living Smart program.” Melinda, via YourSAy

2.5 Working together

Many participants of the community forums noted that people and organisations working together was something that was working well.

Examples given included but weren't limited to –

- Collaboration across industries in the South East (Mount Gambier);
- Good working relationship between EP NRM and AW communities of Yalata and Oak Valley (Scotdesco);
- Listening to pastoralists issues (Leigh Creek);
- Partnerships between NGOs, community and government (Mount Barker);
- Council partnerships – NRM Placement hosted positions (Gawler);
- McLaren Vale Biodiversity Project (McLaren Vale);
- Connections 'at the coal face' with landholders as partners (Glenunga);
- Opportunities for community to be involved in water allocation planning (Murray Bridge);
- Joint projects with Birds SA and NRMs working well (Conservation Council member groups).

"We currently have a great working partnership between NRM Education and the Cities of Marion, West Torrens and Holdfast Bay, to deliver three school garden professional development workshops across our three council areas annually."

Melissa, City of Holdfast Bay, via YourSAy

NRM Groups were also noted to be invaluable as a way of working together with the community by participants in Port Augusta, Coober Pedy, Yunta, Leigh Creek, Marree and Murray Bridge.

In Port Augusta, it was noted that given the vast area of the region, these groups are able to maintain an on-the-ground community presence and should be further supported, or their role enhanced. This was also noted in Murray Bridge and participants felt that they should be recognised in the legislative changes.

"The NRM Group structure does allow a connection between the local landowner and the NRM Board. It is very effective in educating the local landholders in their role in natural resource management and in making meaningful connections with local government."

Roger Wickes, via written submission

In Coober Pedy, NRM Groups were noted as working well and gives people a say in the way they currently work. In Yunta it was noted that NRM Groups work well but could be given more influence over how money is spent. In Leigh Creek, it was felt that these groups work well and should be retained, possibly with a greater role in representing the community or influencing decision making.

In Marree, the local NRM Groups allow for local communities to work together in their local area, feeding information and advice back up to the board.

The North Flinders NRM Group felt that the NRM group model was helping to achieve most of the five principles and felt that this model represents decentralised decision making. The North East Pastoral NRM Group felt that a lot of the priorities are being achieved by NRM groups who are local decision makers and raising awareness of NRM in their district. This was also echoed in the written submissions from the SA Arid Lands NRM Board and the Innamincka-Maree NRM Group.

In their written submission, the City of Unley noted the valuable collaboration with the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board since 2008. They included areas such as storm water, climate change, NRM education, urban living programs, and collaboration with council designers with Water Sensitive Urban Design projects as being good.

2.6 Traditional Owners

During the engagement process, many positive things were said about the work that has been undertaken to involve Aboriginal communities in the environment or natural resource management system to date.

In Ceduna, the model of co-management with traditional owners was noted as having been effective within parks and Indigenous Protected Areas governance structures, noting that both of these are not directly related to the NRM Act or planned Landscape SA reforms, but provide good examples of co-management working well.

Participants in Victor Harbor noted Aboriginal representation on boards. In Murray Bridge, effective programs in getting Aboriginal community making a significant difference on the ground was working well.

“SA has the only full Aboriginal Board in Australia and it is a model that other first nations around the world can see works and should not be lost. A change without good reason that the first Nations people see is real sends the wrong message.” Neil, via YourSAy

In Glenunga, it was noted that the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board have come a long way in Kurna engagement, especially regarding language and signage. In Mawson Lakes, participants also noted that partnerships with Aboriginal communities were working well.

The involvement of Aboriginal communities was identified as a priority by participants during this reform process, building on what has already been achieved to date. Further detail of this can be found later in this report.

3 | Top 20 Priorities for Natural Resource Management Reform



YELLOW: PRIORITIES FOR THE REFORM

Local Decisions

LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Accountability

ON-GROUND WORKS

Landcare gaps might be reinstated.

Planning & Engagement

SIMPLIFIED PLANNING PROCESSES

to engage clearly supported and clear and to incorporate local knowledge into plans.

Stewardship priorities as Coastcare Planning

Planning

Water

WATER RESOURCES

Understand the role of water resources in the community

Water resources

Funds

REDISTRIBUTION OF FUNDING TO REGIONS

Need funding to plan and manage in the future

APRA Fund will be used to get funds from city and to regions

Clear reporting on funds in working budgets

Regional funding to support the planning process

less red-tape when applying for community funding

Funds/Process

Streamline the red-tape - reduce burden of applying for funds (esp. for small groups) - speed up approval processes (not for some activities, eg. agriculture)

Board

BOARD SELECTION CRITERIA

Balance boards - mix of skills & representation

more subgroups within the board system

Education/Community Groups

More attention for sustainable practices in market control - create opportunities - create change - best practice

In all meetings and community forums we asked participants to consider and discuss the priorities that they would like this reform process to achieve in relation to natural resource management in their region.

Where groups were large, the facilitator asked participants to work in small groups to discuss their priorities and reach a consensus on the top priorities. The facilitator then sorted the priorities in to themes and shared them with the whole group for discussion. Where groups were smaller, the facilitator either asked individuals to identify their top three or five priorities, or simply discussed priorities for the region as a whole group.

As a result of the above process, an outcome of every meeting or forum was a set of priorities for the reform relating to that region, themed in to overarching priority headings. These headings have been used to shape this section of this report and act as a point of reference for all input received whether via face-to-face meetings, written submissions or online commentary.

The facilitators also explored key reform proposals with those who attended face-to-face meetings. Whilst these overlap with many of the priorities raised at the beginning of each meeting, commentary provided during the process is discussed in later sections of this report.

All forum reports, meeting notes, online commentary and written submissions can be found in the appendices of this report.

The below summary provides an overview of the Top 20 priorities for reform that we heard. They are ordered starting with the most commonly discussed priorities.

3.1 Funding

Many people stated that funding is one of the most fundamental and critical items in the whole reform discussion. Many were worried that the reform could just be a cost shifting exercise, and that the current finite 'bucket of money' has no potential for more resources through the reform process. Many agreed that natural resource management demands and requires more resources. Several stakeholders questioned whether the proposed governance changes would really affect the availability of funding for more ongoing action.

3.1.1 State treasury funding

We received many comments relating to the role that society has to play in funding the sustainable management of the environment.

The issue of recent funding cuts was raised in various locations, with participants concerned about the impact on resourcing, and also staff morale. It was noted that many dollars have been lost from the system over the last two decades. Participants in Mount Barker raised concern at budgets being at a 20-year low for both federal and state government funding for the environment.

At the combined conservation and primary producer organisation meeting it was felt that there needs to be a more substantial dedicated state budget that is committed to the environment. Members of the group commented that they would like to support the Minister for the Environment and Water in obtaining at least 5% of the state budget to be directed to soil, water and biodiversity management. It was felt that the state has incredible assets that need to be returned to good health, and with climate change coming, we need to be preparing for that too.

"We wish to take this opportunity to highlight the severe and concerning lack of State and Commonwealth investment in natural capital which impacts on NRM Boards' ability to achieve ensuring NRM outcomes... State funding must increase if levies are not increased and it must be targeted at those people in the landscape who can make the best, informed decisions based on science..."

Native Vegetation Council, via written submission

The same topic was raised around the state. Participants in Port Augusta want to see an increase and guarantee of treasury funding, in addition to NRM levy, to be 3% of the state budget. They would like this funding to be written into the legislation. In Grange, there was strong commentary that questioned why there is a levy for environment when other areas of government don't have a levy but rely on the overall state funding 'pot'. People in Murray Bridge stated that the Department for Environment and Water should contribute funding to the Landscape Board programs.

In Meningie, participants noted that state funded programs are essential to support on the ground actions undertaken by the boards. They felt that this ongoing support and balance between state and local action is a necessity.

In Mount Gambier, it was felt that the funding for pest plant and animal control, soil and water management for public lands must not come from the levy. These programs need to be well coordinated with NRM programs but should be paid for by either the relevant department or funded by the state.

In Berri, participants agreed that money raised through levies in the region should be spent in the region but felt strongly that the Murray-Darling is a state resource, and this should be funded accordingly.

In the written submissions from individuals, some people expressed a general wish for increased funding for certain aspects including Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens, pest plant and animal control, Aboriginal people, volunteer groups, and the environment in general.

3.1.2 Redistribution of levy funds to regions

It was widely accepted that equitable distribution of funding across the state will be essential. This included both the acknowledgement that levies raised in a region should be returned to that region, as well as the acknowledgement that a proportion of levies collected within the Green Adelaide region should be redistributed to support those regions with less opportunity to raise income from levies.

In Glenunga, the distribution of levies, was acknowledged as being a very tricky and sensitive topic but collecting a levy on a state basis with allocation then being based on environmental needs or values would be ideal. However, it was noted that boards having to bid for their budget could be problematic and that if the model that is being proposed goes ahead, then Green Adelaide should definitely give a bigger proportion of dollars to the regions.

In recognising the difference between regions, such as issues, conservation values and rate base, participants in Mount Barker suggested the redistribution of dollars to the three quarters of the state's landscape with low human population, such as the Arid Lands, Eyre Peninsula and Alinytjara Wilurara. Participants in Yunta noted that the size of each region must be taken in to account.

Participants in Victor Harbor talked about the need for levies to be allocated to where the problems are. In Port Lincoln, the need for redistribution to the region was highlighted and participants in Murray Bridge gave strong support for the reallocation of funds from Adelaide to the regions, particularly to support on the ground initiatives. Participants in Kingscote noted that the appropriation of levy funds from Green Adelaide, as well as additional state budget allocation, were critical for the Kangaroo Island. In Berri, participants were keen to see levies raised in the region being spent to benefit the region that pays them.

In conversation with the Northern and Yorke NRM Board, there were overall concerns about funding and distribution of the levy, with members noting that they are worried that the sums don't add up as to how boards will survive with levy income being distributed to other pots such as the Landscape Priorities Fund and Grassroots Program. They felt that there needs to be further work or information in explaining the anticipated distribution of funds.

In the final meeting with the NRM Partners, it was suggested that the \$2million Grassroots Grants program and Landscape Priorities Fund should come straight out of the levies collected in metropolitan Adelaide, rather than collecting levies back from the regions. It was agreed that this would be a simpler and more acceptable process that is consistent with the principles of decentralisation.

In their written submission, the SA Wine Industry Association noted that they are concerned that the proposed reform may not address the disturbing past trend of ‘cost-shifting’ that, in their opinion, may have diminished the funding available for on-ground activities.

More input regarding levy calculation, collection and distribution can be found later in this report.

3.1.3 Transparency of levy calculations and distribution

Transparency and coordination of how levies are calculated and distributed was highlighted as very important by many people across the state. Participants in Mawson Lakes accepted that a portion of levies raised within Adelaide would be distributed to the rest of the state, as long as it was well explained and there was a clear strategy and coordination across the state. Participants in Mount Barker were happy to retain the levy on the grounds that it is used wisely.

“I only ask one thing. If we have to have these levies or taxes or whatever at least have the courtesy to tell us what OUR money is being used for.” Paul, via YourSAy

Representatives from the conservation sector agreed with the allocation of available levy funds collected in metropolitan Adelaide being made available across the state, particularly for use by groups and organisations to access for specific projects.

The City of Victor Harbor, along with other Councils in their written submissions noted that greater transparency is needed in income and expenditure to gain community support.

Members of the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM board would like to see the Act strengthened in communicating why a levy is in place, and that this is a good opportunity to clarify how levies are collected and distributed across the state. Conversation included that the difference between a land and water levy is clunky at the moment and this makes it difficult to communicate why the levies are in place. The group noted that there is an inconsistency of philosophies across the regions, for example this board land based and water-based levies are pooled, and spent on highest priority things, whereas in other regions this is done differently.

3.1.4 More funding to 'on-ground activity' and less spent on bureaucracy

Many people around the state commented on a desire to see funding being allocated to directly achieving environmental outcomes rather than spent on unnecessary administration.

Participants in Victor Harbor noted that a lot of money is paid in levies and showed concerns with how much is spent on bureaucracy. They suggested that funds be used to achieve objectives and not go to administration and management.

Representatives from the Conservation sector echoed this sentiment, calling for more resources to ensure efficient delivery, especially via community and well-established non-government organisations, rather than this resourcing being concentrated in bureaucracy. Mount Barker participants would like to see more funds 'hitting the ground' via non-government and not-for-profit organisations.

Participants in Glenunga requested adequate funding for on-ground works. They would like to see funding for community groups clearly and fairly allocated. They would like to see environmental monies being spent on environmental projects.

Similar sentiment was shown on Kangaroo Island, with requests for funding to 'hit the ground' more effectively, being less top heavy. In Berri, funding was also identified as a priority by the majority of participants, with increased dollars and resources needed for on-ground works.

The Eyre Peninsula NRM board supported the concept of trying to retain more money in the region for delivery of on the ground services, minimising the dollars that go back into government for administrative purposes, as well as having the autonomy to seek services from the region that are price competitive.

Requests for specific grants were common in our conversations, such as participants in Kingscote wanting to see more grants for private farmers; and there were requests for funding for pasture cropping practices, pest plant control and to educate landholders on livestock management practices from participants in Port Augusta. People in Gawler also talked about greater support being needed for land holders to make change, through demonstrating how change can work.

Participants in Gawler requested it be noted that there is only so much on-ground activity that can be done by volunteers and their good will. Adequate funding is essential.

The focussed conversation we had with young people identified a strong vision for the future where funding for community projects is abundant.

3.1.5 Budgets managed by Boards

Local decision making regarding how money is spent was raised as a high priority.

This sentiment was particularly strong in the Arid Lands region. Participants in Leigh Creek felt strongly that the local region is best placed to decide how funds should be spent. In Port Augusta,

self-determination of budgets by the new boards was really important, ceasing the ‘capture’ of funds by South Australian government agencies. The participants in Marree felt that the money collected from the levy should remain in the region under the control and management of the Board. In Yunta, it was felt that the region should decide where the money is spent as the local community are best placed to understand the most pressing issues that the region is trying to manage.

To the same point, in Berri participants felt that boards should have final approval for monies being spent on cross-boundary projects and that the money shouldn’t just be taken from the budget. Boards should work together to make decisions on where the money should be spent. In this region, the proposal of boards having control of their own budgets was welcomed, with the opinion that they can deliver more efficiently than government.

At the Meningie community forum, people felt that decisions that are made at the state level need to be made in consultation and collaboration with the boards, for example, in making decisions to de-list weed species, engagement with local landowners who may be affected, need to be taken into account. They said a bottom up approach is needed in order for such decision making to be informed.

3.1.6 Access and timeliness of funding

Some participants across the state gave priority to making funding more easily accessible. A conversation held in Scotdesco highlighted the current difficulty in accessing funding for projects, with excessive bureaucracy in applications and reporting processes in place. This was echoed in Coober Pedy with a priority for more easily accessible funding. One participant in Mount Barker would like to see a reduction in the time spent applying for grants.

The timeliness of funding was also raised during the engagement process. Specifically, participants in Mount Barker, Berri, and Kingscote requested more long-term reliable funding to support longer-term environmental projects and plans, including ongoing maintenance and monitoring of projects. Participants in Berri suggested 3-year funding.

Continuity of funding from projects was noted as important by participants in Mount Barker, with examples being provided where a good start had been made on projects but no follow up occurred due to termination of funds. The timing of funding was also discussed, with specific examples of processes taking up to six months to receive support for relatively simple projects. Participants would like to see an ongoing funding commitment where access to funds, information and advice is readily available when needed.

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board felt that the current grants program makes for uncertainty and therefore creates difficulty when trying to plan and deliver programs and projects.

In the written submissions from individuals, one person specifically pointed out a need for more long-term funding for pest control and others mentioned, in relation to volunteer groups, that funding (specifically grants) needs to be easy to apply for and they didn’t want a system where volunteer groups were solely dependent on grants as before.

3.1.7 Alternative sources of funding

In Gawler there was discussion around finding innovative ways to raise funds to protect landscapes, other than via the levy, such as tourism assets which ultimately attract people to the region. The concept of finding innovative ways to raise alternative funding was discussed in other regions too.

One participant in the combined conservation and primary production sector meeting acknowledged that there should be opportunity to consider the possibility of increasing the ‘bucket of money’ available for natural resource management. He suggested that we need to think innovatively about how we do this and suggested that the concept of match funding has worked well at a national level for organisations he has worked with.

3.1.8 Greater funding for staff resourcing

Whilst the staff on the ground are seen as a major strength of natural resource management across the state, our conversations told us that the community want to see more of these staff funded to be ‘at the coalface and less in the office’. One Yunta participant wrote that “a boots on the ground approach” was needed.

“Less suits, more flannelette shirts!”

Participant at Yunta community forum

In addition to financial support, people in Glenunga noted the importance of staff knowledge, mentoring and support for community groups. In Bordertown, more on-ground staff with decision making ability were sought. A participant in Gawler referred to visible damage being caused in Parks and felt that limited staff visibility and enforcement was an issue.

3.2 Planning, Accountability and Coordination

3.2.1 Planning

As part of the engagement process, many people asked about the status of current NRM plans and whether they will be rolled over. Participants in Mount Barker noted that a lot of work has gone in to the current plans and they would not want them to be lost in the transition. Some participants in Berri felt strongly that an audit should be undertaken of planning work already undertaken, rather than coming up with new plans all the time. In Scotdesco, the Healthy Country Plan currently under development was referenced several times as a valuable piece of planning work that should be utilised by Landscape SA in the future. Participants do not want the good work already put into this plan to be lost. Participants in Bordertown noted the 5-year plan already set up is based on community decision making.

The current Eyre Peninsula NRM Board explained that their current plan took five years to develop and, in their opinion, would be well aligned with the Minister's key principles of the reform. It included extensive community consultation and significant investment by staff. They are concerned that reducing it to a five-year plan would potentially see a loss of continuity. They feel a longer-term vision is needed. The transition process to a new model needs to consider plans that have been recently developed and actioned. This board also felt that to avoid regions having multiple disconnected plans (such as Native Vegetation, NRM, Coast Protection), the state needs an overarching plan that individual boards 'roll up' in to.

The Northern and Yorke NRM Board also recently spent 18 months developing a 10-year Business Plan, engaging the community through a Community Action Planning process in doing so. The board, staff and community are very proud of this plan. It was felt that 5-year plans are too short.

At the Port Lincoln community forum, simplified planning with measurable outcomes was desired. In Clare, people felt that the boards must be strategic, not operational. In Leigh Creek, participants felt that the region should prioritise what it is going to 'chase' – and remain focussed and committed to those priority issues and ensure resources and funding are allocated accordingly.

A long-term view of natural resource management was felt important by participants in Mount Barker, particularly to assist in finding the balance between conservation and sustainable production. They suggested rather than a 5-year plan for each board (which was felt to be too short when dealing with landscapes), each board prepares a 20-year vision, and then has 5-year plans containing actions to help reach that vision. Participants in Berri felt the same, spending some time discussing visioning and planning, with a longer-term view that is driven by local people being sought. They also proposed a 10-20 year bipartisan vision for the region, noting that a 5-year agreement on projects is just not long enough. A participant in Grange noted that rather than having a bipartisan planning process, she suggested boards having a 4-year plan to align with the political cycle.

The Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board also felt that 5-year plans for the boards aren't long enough. They suggested that if there are going to be 5-year plans then they need to be nested within longer term plans, such as 20-year plans.

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board feel that boards need to be more involved in setting the state policies as they represent the community and can provide valuable insight into the key issues.

In Grange there was a suggestion around the concept of a separate board to focus on the River Torrens, particularly relating to all council areas that have the Torrens (and associated creeks) running through should work together. The same suggestion was made with regard to councils in coastal areas.

From the written submissions from individuals, there were some comments supporting simplified planning with plans being for 3-5 years, only being principles and not dictating actions, integrating all aspects into one plan, and using evidence to support planning goals. One person specifically mentioned simplified water action plans. There were also comments regarding Aboriginal engagement and participation in planning. One person also noted that the Community Action Planning groups are working well in the Northern and Yorke region and they want to see that continue.

In the written submission from the Eyre Peninsula LGA, it was suggested that the new boards shouldn't re-plan but instead use existing plans. It was also noted that community want to see outcomes not outputs.

In their written submission, Greening Australia suggested setting agreed priorities that facilitate the streamlining of regional planning. They would like to see a scientific evidence-based landscape plan as the basis of local prioritisation actions and feel that this will streamline priority planning actions at the regional and local levels. They noted that a consistent format and terminology can be established at a state level in language that is accurate but accessible, that can then be applied to regional planning.

3.2.2 Accountability

In Kingscote, the question of 'who controls the board' was asked by one participant, and it was suggested the answer was currently centralised government. Participants were keen to see the board have independence from the Department of Environment and Water. Another participant asked if the board was a 'puppet' of government – because they felt it certainly shouldn't be. Participants in Victor Harbor requested no political interference, to enable fearless decisions to be made.

A participant at the Youth and Community in Conservation Action session questioned that if the Landscapes Boards are kept 'at arm's length from the government', how will they be kept accountable? Another young person questioned how this new Act will ensure that the same issues with NRM won't happen again.

At the local government focussed conversation, one participant suggested that there needs to be some high-level guidance for Boards and questioned the role of the state strategy in informing this. He questioned whether the state strategy would be prepared first, and then the regional plans. There was also a suggestion to focus more on the accessibility and communication of the plans, noting the need to have a narrative that gets the community on board.

Members of the group in Kingscote were pleased to have a Minister that is not so risk averse but suggested that the Minister needs to have a direct relationship with the local Boards, and those boards need direct access to the Minister. Decentralised decision making is good, but this direct relationship is important.

In Ceduna, participants asked how the boards will be held accountable. One participant noted that giving greater autonomy will require great governance. At Victor Harbor, clear definitions and principles were noted. Clear distribution between strategic and operational matters were called for. Several participants in Gawler said that they would like to see clear and regular reporting of works being delivered locally.

Members of the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board felt that there is a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities. For example, Corellas are often raised as an issue, but these aren't the responsibility of the NRM Board and they have no role in managing them, but it can be frustrating because it isn't clear who has this role. This board would like to see clearer roles and responsibilities and feels that this is a good opportunity for the Minister to talk about roles and responsibilities including the board, the department, local government, partners, and so on.

In Grange, outcomes and reporting were a priority, with participants wanting to see clear key performance indicators linked to core natural resource management outcomes, with better transparency of the investment of the levy. At the Marion community forum, participants wanted to see improved transparency and accountability with set milestones that are monitored.

Participants in Coober Pedy noted government agency accountability as a priority. In Mount Barker, responsibilities in managing land need to be better extended to large government landholders and the Crown and they need to be held accountable.

In their substantial written submission, the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia noted an important aspect of the reform will be improvements to monitoring in order to evaluate the impact of the investment made by the community in the management of our landscapes, ensuring it is effective and that results can be used to inform future efforts. They advocate for a rigorous and transparent monitoring and reporting framework for each region that demonstrates how project management activities and programs are addressing identified priorities and targets within the Landscape Plans.

3.2.3 Co-ordination

From the community forum in Yunta, we heard that there needs to be better coordination across government departments and different levels of government with respect to the administration of the various legislative requirements. For example, a secure dog fence (Federal funding) will effectively support the Biteback program which will in turn help the Bounce Back Program and improve ground cover. Unless all of these programs work together, and adequate funding provision is made for the dog fence, investment in only one of the three will not realise the desired outcomes. Landscape SA needs to better integrate with other areas of government to ensure maximum effect. A collaboration between all government departments is required and participants felt that there

are currently silos working autonomously. Similarly, in Port Augusta, members of the group wanted co-ordinated pest plant and animal control across land tenures.

The same sentiment was expressed in the Leigh Creek forum, with natural resource management needing to be embedded in environmental management across private parks, state parks, properties, Aboriginal Nations, and so on. Participants said that going 'back to basics' is fine but this approach will need to be communicated and coordinated, at the regional level. Participants said that programs need to be at a landscape level ensuring all property owners in a region are on board otherwise if one property deals with Mexican Poppy weed and another doesn't then the program is a waste of time.

Similar sentiment was noted in metropolitan Adelaide at the Grange community forum. It was noted that many people and groups are trying to do things in the natural resource management space. One participant noted that streamlining the work of departments, groups and agencies to combine efforts would be more effective in delivering outcomes.

"Collaboration is critical. We acknowledge different statutory bodies and agencies have differing roles within outside of the broader natural resource management system, but they do also cover the same community and can have some overlapping roles and common goals..." Pastoral Board of South Australia, via written submission

In the McLaren Vale community forum, participants felt that cross regional and statewide priorities would need to be taken into account with decentralised boards. In Glenunga, people felt that planning processes need to be integrated and holistic with overarching coordination across regions. In Meningie, it was suggested that a strategic approach needs to be underpinned by good on the ground engagement and coordination that can leverage the support of local landowners to participate in landscape scale projects.

One participant in Kingscote highlighted that whilst Kangaroo Island is unique, there are issues that are broader than the Island so input from external expertise is needed and a bigger, broader focus and therefore good coordination is needed.

There needs to be strong integration and coordination with other Departments and legislation, according to members of the group in Mount Gambier, including greater clarity as to who does what.

At the combined Conservation and Primary Producer organisation meeting, participants felt that it is important for South Australia to perform well in a national context and that statewide coordination is critical to this. One participant suggested a statewide board that is independent and provides frank and fearless advice to the Minister. The board might also preside over some of the processes such as accrediting regional plans or selecting board members. The role of this board could also be overseeing the Grassroots Grants or Statewide Priority Fund. This would keep the coordination at arm's length from government. If there was such a group, we'd need to again think about the membership of this group to include leaders to really help South Australia stand out.

In response to a letter from the Minister seeking input regarding key priorities for the reform, Primary Producers SA noted the role of state government as coordinator, in developing statewide policies with input from regions and primary producer representation.

In their written submission, Conservation SA noted that there needs to be statewide coordination alongside regional empowerment. The organisation supports a cross-sector advisory body and would like to be part of it. It was noted that it needs to be ensured that the Department for Environment and Water has the capacity to provide policy, legislature, monitoring and evaluation, and cross regional coordination.

In the written submission from the Local Government Association of SA, it was noted that they would like to see a state-based management body (State Landscape Council) which includes local government to direct investment at state and local levels and administer state-based fund to support the management of key landscape assets across the State. They also suggested the establishment of a statewide annual business plan, including priorities, actions and statewide investment. The written submission from the Limestone Coast LGA also noted that members would like to discuss the idea of having one single body that can consolidate statewide regional issues.

3.3 Community Engagement

Community engagement was a big priority throughout the engagement process, with people commenting on the need for genuine, ongoing engagement in to the future. Whilst this closely related to other priorities such as partnerships and collaboration, engagement with community was a standalone phrase referenced time and time again as a priority.

Community engagement in the planning, delivery and evaluation of natural resource management were all highlighted as important, as was engagement with a number of different individuals, groups and stakeholders. In addition to this, people referenced how they would like the Minister to engage, as well as the Landscape Boards and staff on the ground.

In their written submission, Greening Australia noted that the facilitation of community engagement in natural resource management is essential in achieving water, soil and biodiversity conservation outcomes. They noted that people are central to the effective management of natural resources.

3.3.1 *When we want to be engaged*

The conservation sector would like to see landscape boards facilitate collaborative planning with delivery by, and with, others, noting that this could be done via the Landscape Priorities Fund and Grassroots program. In our conversations, they felt that the Landscape boards should facilitate engagement in the development of the regional plan and facilitate others to deliver via a model of devolved delivery.

One participant in Berri mentioned examples of natural resource projects being run well in the region, but without NRM board or staff involvement, suggesting that it had been easier to get things happening without them involved. Another example was given where volunteers in the community felt frustrated that they would come up with an idea and ‘government’ would take it over, ‘doing it their way’ and not engaging in doing so in the process. Following this comment, it was noted that the community would like to be equal partners at the start of planning processes, not brought in once decisions are made.

People who attended the Murray Bridge community forum felt it is important to ‘loop back’ at the end of engagement processes to ensure key groups especially those who are likely to be involved in key partnerships have the opportunity to see how their input is being used, using this engagement process as an example, wanting to know how their input has been used to shape the legislation. They also said it is important to ensure that engagement processes don’t just tick a box. In Mount Gambier, people said that communities need to be more engaged with the Boards, to understand the role of the Boards and see the relevance of the Boards. They suggested that communities need to feel empowered, involved in decision making around the priorities and see how their feedback can make a difference.

The NRM Partners talked about community-led landscape scale projects. They would like community engagement to be carefully designed to include community empowerment, whereby

communities are involved in decision making and devolved delivery. They would like to see multiple participation pathways for engagement and on-ground activities.

3.3.2 How we want to be engaged

In Port Augusta, staff engagement with the community was discussed, with a preference for face-to-face engagement rather than via email or over the telephone. At a Primary Producer meeting, one participant asked for less fact sheet engagement and more face-to-face engagement and genuine relationship building.

Participants in Berri suggested that the boards stop being so invisible, noting that they don't really know what they do, noting that they would also like to see the boards stop being seen as a part of government. In Gawler too, some suggested that the Boards need to stop being invisible, stating that much good work was happening but the community weren't aware of it.

In Clare, participants requested more frontline staff on the ground for connecting with key groups, partnerships and delivering programs that make a difference. doing engagement for the sake of it. Mount Barker participants noted the need for proactive community engagement using tools such as email and Facebook, as well as connection to community groups. In Ceduna, participants requested more meaningful input in to processes, and feeling more listened to.

Participants in Berri requested non-political engagement that is independent and focusses on good communication and listening.

In Marree, participants highlighted that many people are time poor and are required to travel vast distances across the region to attend meetings which in itself results in a reluctance for some to become involved. A potential solution to this was put forward in Leigh Creek, with a suggestion that with more staff on the ground, located across the region, there would be greater opportunity to provide information, educate, create awareness and celebrate achievements. The idea of six-monthly community forums was also put forward.

At Mawson Lakes, participants saw that bringing the community together through good community engagement was important. They felt that well designed and funded community engagement, including active citizenship, is needed.

Members of the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board said that they would like to see the community more involved in developing draft plans early in the process, rather than simply be presented with a final draft for comment. They felt that this part of the existing Act hasn't moved with the times, for example for Water Allocation Planning. For this, the board works with the community to understand what's up for discussion. They prepare a plan together. They consult at the end just to test that what has been discussed is reflected in the Plan. The legislation in this regard should be less prescriptive regarding consultation.

3.3.3 Who needs to be engaged

In McLaren Vale there was acknowledgement of the level of knowledge and experience at the forum and it was noted that participants were keen for ongoing engagement from the Minister to help inform decision making around the reform process.

In Gawler, engagement with volunteers to achieve local action was a priority. They would like to see greater communication within the community and more primary producer involvement in things like water allocation, to enable understanding from different perspectives. They suggested more interaction and consultation between broad acre farmers (and the community in general) and natural resource managers, with greater engagement on the ground.

In Glenunga, participants would like to see Landscape Boards and communities being brought together on an equal footing. They felt that decentralisation was a good opportunity for on-ground delivery of work through local engagement. They felt that the planning process needs to be simple and engage volunteers, not just landowners, with less hierarchical management of volunteers and better dialogue.

In Clare, participants wanted to see more focus on primary industry, with better food producer involvement in natural resource management. One participant in Murray Bridge also noted concern about ongoing support with respect to land management programs to support their operations. In Mount Gambier, better and improved consultation and engagement with the agricultural sector and associated landowners was sought.

The conservation sector would like to see more opportunities for community groups and organisations to be engaged in the delivery of projects. In Victor Harbor, people also wanted to see ongoing engagement with local groups and organisations, including recognition of landowner contribution to Natural Resource Management. They noted that landowners have a lot of knowledge and concern for the environment and this needs to be captured.

Engaging with Traditional Owners was raised at the community forums all over the state. Participants wanted to see early engagement with Aboriginal people that puts them at the top of the decision making process, not simply as advisors to a decision making process, as well as engagement via co-management systems and through real and meaningful partnerships. More input regarding this is discussed later in this report.

At the focussed conversation with young people, participants questioned how Landscapes SA will involve youth in their activities. They feel it is important to normalise environmental issues via widespread participation in rectifying them. They also felt it important for more community groups to be involved in environmental science.

The South East NRM Board members noted that the removal of NRM groups lost the community to some extent and added to the disconnection with the Board and its work.

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board noted the success of the District Group model for their region and how this needs to be retained as a means to ensure regional representation and diversity across sectors. Community at all sessions in Marree, Leigh Creek and Yunta all discussed the merit for this model and the board agreed that it provides for a bottom up approach with the Board taking an added strategic view across the region.

Recognition of community input was cited as very important in Coober Pedy.

3.4 Partnerships and Collaboration

Closely relating to the priority of community engagement, partnerships and collaboration were regularly referenced as high priority for the reform. Whilst it is acknowledged that partnerships were noted as a current strength of the natural resource management structure in many conversations held, participants across the state highlighted improvements they would like to see.

3.4.1 *Actively and genuinely working together*

At the start of our engagement process, the NRM Partners talked about a desire to see active partnerships with all stakeholders in place, with good representative structure across South Australia. They would like to see a community-led focus, independent from government, but with government being a partner along with industry and community. Whilst boards would be more localised, they felt it very important that boards would still work in partnership with state government, other regions and industry to be able to take in to account a broader perspective. Later in the process, at the combined Conservation and Primary Producer focussed conversation, it was noted that great partnerships with agencies are needed and this small state can't work without this.

Participants in Ceduna suggested being more creative and innovative with partnerships, suggesting boards think outside the square to deliver programs. In Port Augusta, development of working partnerships that show true collaboration (not just ticking boxes) were desired. In Clare, participants would like to see more use of existing resources and less duplication of programs.

In Kingscote, connection to landholders was highlighted as important, with local primary producers seeking more collaboration and visible increased partnering with the farming community. Participants in Gawler suggested Citizen Science as a tool for providing great partnership opportunities.

Partnerships were a high priority in Mount Barker too, including collaboration with industry, farmers, government, and volunteers. It was acknowledged how important it is to get all of the right people involved.

In Murray Bridge, people felt that partnerships need to be elevated and be considered a priority for the new Landscape Boards. They must be true partnerships based on trust, mutual respect and clarity around roles and responsibilities. The group want to ensure that partnerships are meaningful and that there be a recognition that the delivery of regional on the ground programs can be done more effectively and efficiently through partnerships if the right support and recognition is in place.

In working together, participants in Leigh Creek felt that there needs to be a focus on personal relationships, with local people working in small regional centres like Leigh Creek that know the community and through proactive communication can provide the necessary support. Staff need to get out and go to the land owners and managers and not operate from afar. In Yunta, participants want to see collaboration between all government departments and felt that it is currently 'just a bunch of silos working autonomously'.

In Glenunga, several participants said that it is important for everyone to take responsibility for natural resource management, and not just assume it is a government role.

Volunteers at the Glenunga session highlighted that natural resource management is not just about landholders and that recognition must be given to the role volunteers play in managing the environment, both in on-ground works, but also at a board level. They also noted the importance of partnerships with private landowners, citing the few existing wetlands in Adelaide as examples of being on private property.

3.4.2 *Building on existing good practice*

In McLaren Vale, participants highlighted that there are very positive existing partnerships with landholders and there are many examples of good practice, including the McLaren Vale Biodiversity Project who have planted over 10,000 trees in the region via a partnership between local landowners, over 100 volunteers, the City of Onkaparinga and NRM staff based in Willunga, who provide great technical advice which has significantly contributed to the success of this initiative.

A participant in Berri highlighted the work being undertaken at Glenithorne National Park as an example of great partnership, linking corridors and trails to generate interest and excitement and would like to see similar visions being undertaken in the regions.

The Conservation sector highlighted successful initiatives that should be built on, such as Wild Eyre. The group said they would like to see removal of any obstructions to cross-regional project delivery and cooperation. A whole of landscape approach requires a whole of sector approach.

“...we suggest the increased use of formal agreements, such as Memoranda of Understanding, between the new Landscape Boards and various key stakeholders in the region would enable stronger partnerships to be established.”

Nature Conservation Society of South Australia, via written submission

In Bordertown it was suggested that the new Landscape Boards continue with strong partnerships and look to enhance these and build others with a greater emphasis on on-ground effort at the community level.

In Gawler it was suggested that working closely with farmers who are progressive be used as examples in moving forward.

At the combined Primary Producer and Conservation organisations meeting, it was noted that the two sectors agreed on more than they disagreed. Participants felt that this puts everyone in good stead of the new legislation and they hoped to be able to continue to work together and build and strengthen the relationships that were in the room. One participant noted that the one thing particularly uniting the two sectors was that the climate is changing really fast, and whether coming from an environmental or a farming perspective, it was critical to work together to build a resilient landscape.

In the written submissions received from individuals, many people supported or encouraged partnerships across regions and boundaries. Some also specifically mentioned partnering with

Aboriginal people and some suggested using partnerships with local government or others for on-ground works.

In the written submission from the City of Holdfast Bay, it was noted that local councils undertake work on the ground in relation to natural resource management. However, they often struggle to understand the roles and responsibilities of various state and regional institutions. They also suggested the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding between individual Councils and the Landscape Board about the priorities and activities in a council area. This arrangement should be reviewed on a three-yearly basis. They noted that most local councils have their own environmental management programs in place and urge the Minister to take advantage of local council expertise and passion for natural resource management and use that as the spearhead the state.

3.5 Local Decision Making

In asking people across the state what their priorities were for the reform, local decision making was a phrase we heard time and time again. This correlates with one of the guiding principles for the reform, decentralised decision making, and specific feedback on this principle can be found later in this report. Below is a summary of some of the commentary we heard around local decision making as a priority.

Primary Producers SA would like to see the boards re-empowered, particularly around important policy setting and decision making, for example with water allocation planning, and prioritisation of pest plant and animal priorities.

In Port Lincoln many participants gave very strong support for local decision making and local representation on boards, including expertise based in regional areas. Some Victor Harbor participants noted a desire for increased autonomy via decentralisation and those in Murray Bridge called for a regional focus with greater focus on programs that deliver on the ground benefit with transparent spending.

In Kingscote there was strong support for local decision making, valuing and respecting local knowledge, allowing local decision making and embracing local wisdom. This included discussion around the Kangaroo Island board currently being all local people, enabling localised decision making. Participants were keen to see the board be independent of the environment department, valuing and respecting local knowledge, allowing local decision making and embracing local wisdom.

Similar sentiment was given in Berri, where participants want to see decentralisation of decision making away from the Department of Environment and Water, with greater community-led investment that is community driven.

At a meeting with the NRM Partners, members of this group want to ensure that the new Boards have full direction and control over its entire levy budget, including what and where it spends funds relating to water planning and science. They would like to see regional boards being able to employ their own staff and engage contractors as appropriate.

At both Mount Barker community sessions, local decision making was important. Participants wanted to see better autonomy to local groups, more of a bottom-up approach, with small boards that are able to outsource delivery.

“As a member of a surviving LAP group, I have become incredibly frustrated. LAP began before the NRMs were set up... I voiced my concerns at the time about an extra layer of bureaucracy and I was assured that NRM boards would be assisting LAP groups. History has shown this not to be true.” Andrew, via YourSAy

In Yunta, participants discussed the role of NRM Groups in decision making and felt that the groups need greater influence over how money is spent. It was noted that they do have some difficulty in

securing broader community support not only because of distances, but a lack of ability to demonstrate how the levy can benefit the region. It was felt that greater transparency, less administration absorbing funding and more local input on noxious weed control might encourage others to get on board.

A participant at the Grange Community Forum highlighted that decentralised decision making doesn't work without decentralised funding and decentralised expertise. More feedback relating to decentralised decision making can be found later in this report.

3.6 Pest Plants and Animals

In relation to the natural resource management reform, pest plants and animal management was discussed as a priority across the state. From within the guiding principle of *Back to Basics*, the management of pest plants and animals was the most commonly mentioned aspect.

On Kangaroo Island, a number of people in Kingscote raised pest management as a priority for the reform, including more focus on feral species management, weed control, and cats and pigs. It was noted that to date, one of the areas of success on Kangaroo Island had been goat and deer eradication.

In the outback, Nepabunna representatives identified feral goats as a significant ongoing challenge, and an issue that would benefit from a cross-regional or statewide strategy. They queried why the IPA at Yappala (Southern Flinders, Northern and Yorke NRM Board) had a goat culling program with the NRM Board but Nepabunna did not.

In Coober Pedy, managing feral species that compromise native biodiversity should be a priority.

In Marree, the increasing number of feral pigs; the ongoing problem of dogs; and native animals such as kangaroos and emus that have become pests in some areas are the main issues affecting pastoralists and more needs to be done to manage these matters on the ground. In our conversations, it was suggested that staff working from the various small centres across the region would enable them to get to know the community, build key relationships and gather the local intelligence about priorities and needs. It was felt that effectiveness is lost when staff are based centrally in Port Augusta and tied to administrative processes. Participants in Marree also discussed native plants that are a pest, such as *Pimelia Simplex*, highlighting that pest plants are not just about introduced weed species.

In Yunta, the above sentiments were echoed with participants requesting greater focus on having more on the ground staff across the region able to work with pastoralists and land managers to help coordinate programs, provide advice and provide gentle encouragement and guidance to help land owners do the right thing. They noted that the Biteback program is a model that has worked across the SA Arid Lands region. This program was driven locally, there was good communication and participation, the program has been extremely effective and relevant and NRM should look to this program as an example of how to deliver great programs that work. It was suggested that the new Landscape Boards should base their planning and delivery models on this example.

“There is a massive wild dog problem in the Pastoral Properties throughout SA. There needs to be a minimum standard set by ALL Pastoral Station Owners whether it be tourism, mining or livestock... If there was a minimum compulsory standard, then we will be a step closer to minimising the risks that livestock owners face daily.” Herbie, via YourSAy

In Mount Barker, participants requested more help and support for weed and pest control, such as working with interested new landowners in tackling inactive olive trees. They would like to see a renewed focus on weed management, with a focus on rabbits and foxes. There was also a request for more clarity in the Act around who is responsible for management of weeds on road reserves.

Participants in Clare wanted to see more money and time spent on eradicating weeds and feral animals in National Parks and adjoining private land. They felt that many landowners are not doing anything to control feral animals. A member of the Northern and Yorke NRM Board also noted more emphasis on the pests, plants and weed control as a priority.

Port Lincoln participants wanted improved abundant native species control and management. For Ceduna, participants wanted more on-ground works and local autonomy in tackling pest plants such as Nitrebush and Buffalo Grass, and feral animals such as cats, foxes and starlings.

Conversations in Victor Harbor were about seeking more control over pest plants and animals at a local level, with less paperwork and red tape and more facilities on the ground. Deer, kangaroos, foxes, corellas and blackberries were all listed as problematic. Some participants wanted to see control of pests and weeds in an environmentally and sustainable way, and conservation of local threatened species. It was noted that everyone needs to be involved in pest plant and animal and over abundant native species management, to ensure there is no cost to the farming community.

"I think weeds are a huge issue for everyone at the moment. I think community groups need to step up and help out in areas of communal benefit. I also think we need to stop expecting things to be done for us." Derek, via YourSAy

Participants in Victor Harbor also noted that they also want to see government doing the right thing on their own land. This was also said in the local government focussed conversation, with one participant acknowledging that weeds from state governed parks such as the Prickly Pear are spreading. These parks should be demonstrating good practice, but it was felt this in this regard they aren't.

In McLaren Vale, participants want to see increased co-ordination and resourcing of cross-boundary pest animal and plant control. They felt that there is too much responsibility on individuals, and we need to bring multiple landholders together to co-ordinate implementation of a more strategic and proactive approach. There was an emphasis on using organic controls and methods at this session, as well as comments regarding protecting the natural landscape via ongoing removal of feral weeds from cracks and roadsides.

Participants in Marion noted managing numbers of excess native animals as a priority. One group discussion noted there need to be legislative procedures for land access focussing on environmental actions. It was felt that there is a current lack of control of over-abundant native birds, such as corellas. In Glenunga, adequate resourcing for long term strategic priorities was requested.

In Mount Gambier, a noxious weed identification and eradication program was seen as priority. The South East NRM Board members noted that compliance around pest management is messy and

complex. The current intent is for the Board to work with landowners, but it was felt that people take advantage. This reform is an opportunity for the process to be made simpler and easier.

There was wide support for including and prioritising pest plant and animal control in the written submissions received from individuals, with one person expressing desire for continuous funding for it, one wanting minimum standards set, and one specifically mentioning an integrated approach. One person seemed to object to dingoes being considered a pest as they there's no evidence they damage the landscape and they wanted the reference to wild dogs removed from the discussion paper and replaced with a different pest example.

In their written submission, Top Note Vineyard highlighted as serious problem with high kangaroo numbers around Kuitpo and the Adelaide Hills and could see no concerted control efforts because kangaroos are not considered to be feral. Frustration was noted that the kangaroos eat grapes, damage infrastructure, are road hazards, and hamper biodiversity of neighbouring native scrub. They suggested consideration be given to implementing a culling program and potentially allowing commercial harvest in the area. Zoos SA confirmed that they see pest control as a vital part of conservation and for creating healthier landscapes and as part of their written submission provided a copy of their submission to the Senate inquiry into faunal extinction in Australia.

"We wish to express our concern and dismay at the continued and accelerating degradation of land and water course on the Fleurieu Peninsula caused by weeds."

Fleurieu Beef Group Inc. via written submission

The written submission from the City of Port Adelaide Enfield noted overabundant native species, referencing that corellas are causing significant damage to industrial infrastructure on Le'fevre Peninsula and that such species should be controlled directly by regional Landscape boards. The written submission from the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board noted overabundant species and suggested that the new legislation should include a link or principle around the management of these species. The City of Mitcham felt that state government needs to increase weed control in National Parks and not just rely on volunteers. They suggested increased funding to councils for urban animal and plant control and noted that there needs to be a consistent approach to mapping pest plants across the metro area.

Birdlife Australia felt that pest management must be wholistic and well-researched prior to undertaking management, prioritised and focussed. In their written submission, they gave an example of nest cameras being used to gather direct evidence of nest failure before undertaking pest control. They suggested considering expanding the definition of pest animals to include domestic animals, such as pet cats that roam and dogs off leash brought into sensitive areas.

In their written submission, the SA Wild Dog Advisory Group noted that pest animal management requires a landscape, integrated approach. They made several recommendations including (but not limited to) the current NRM Act declaration for a wild dog be located inside (south of) the Dog Fence be retained in the Landscapes SA Act and that wild dog management be prioritised under the 'Statewide Project Fund' which will be funded using the Landscape SA levy.

3.7 Compliance

The topic of compliance was regularly raised as a priority throughout the engagement process, however there were many different perspectives and opinions within this.

3.7.1 Education

At the McLaren Vale community forum, historically low trust of NRM by landholders was highlighted by one participant, particularly stemming from property access issues. Participants wanted to see more officers on the ground available to talk to landholders, closely connecting the role of education and building relationships with compliance.

In Gawler, education was a key topic raised throughout the session and it was felt strongly that people need educating, particularly relating to compliance. A story was told by a participant to the group around a situation between a land owner and NRM officers gaining access to a property. When explored by the facilitators, the desire for the reform relating to this story was a need for greater empowerment and education of primary producers, acknowledging that not all land holders are doing the right thing. They need strong support and education.

In Clare, it was felt that there is a lack of compliance officers on the ground and the Boards appear to be restricted by administrative issues. They said this this seemed especially so with respect to native vegetation and clearance. Participants asked for more support and education for pest and weed control and stronger enforcement of the Act.

3.7.2 Working together with landholders

Some participants in Gawler also suggested that as well as education and empowerment, they would like to see a respectful process around compliance. When something wrong is being done, fair enough, but the process must be sound, respectful and fair.

“Having struggled for years doing compliance under these various Acts and trying to get landholders to understand their management requirements and enforcing legislation where needed, I can see this heading for another native vegetation act fail, where all of the Act’s regulations and powers will be stripped or dulled down as per its new name.” Dan, via YourSAy

Some primary producers at the Mawson Lakes community forum felt that compliance is currently too heavy handed. It was suggested that landowners and farmers should be empowered to make the right decisions and want to have a good relationship with NRM staff to work together through issues, rather than just handed a fine at the first point of contact. One cattle farmer asked the

Minister and Department to consider how it makes him feel when the first contact he has with them is the threat of legal action.

In Mount Barker, it was suggested that compliance should be a more proactive process, supported by more funding to assist landholders in a joint effort.

At a conversation with the NRM Partners, members of this group said that they would like to see a more comprehensive, flexible compliance tool kit with lower on the spot fines for minor breaches, enabling an earlier compliance focus before 'ramping up' happens. Participants want more mechanisms to encourage, empower and enforce on-ground action.

In Kingscote, one member of the group highlighted that he didn't want any further regulation such as meters on dams, asking that there be no further restrictions on economic development and farm management. He asked that local century-old knowledge of farming practice should be leveraged, with a greater focus on trust rather than regulations.

"Minister Speirs and to all present and future new board members, current and future department staff, and the future Minister of the day, please sort the compliance backlog!!! This needs to happen to go forward." Lee, via YourSAy

In their written submission, the City of West Torrens suggested that a compliance awareness campaign is required, with prompt action according to the offence being required.

In their response to a letter from the Minister seeking thoughts around top priorities for the reform, Primary Producers SA noted that court processes should be the last resort and careful consideration should be given to the ability to expiate for significant transgressions regarding pest plant and animals.

3.7.3 Pathways to Enforcement

In Mount Barker it was felt by some participants that there is a current lack of enforcement on compliance issues such as removal of native vegetation on property or roadsides. Participants in Ceduna want to see compliance for wild dog control that can be enforced.

At the Bordertown community forum, it was noted that the process pathway to compliance needs to be addressed. There are examples in the region of significant non-compliance and nothing is done. The process needs to be tightened and action taken to ensure property owners are held to account. The process needs to be timely, and the new Act must enable easy and effective compliance.

At the early engagement with Conservation Council member groups, participants requested a strong and effective framework of regulation. They would like to see enforcement of the legislation with a biodiversity focus. Whilst they acknowledged this should be a community effort, they felt it

was necessary to see greater compliance. The broader Conservation sector representatives who attended the focussed conversation event wanted to see compliance strengthened, enforcing the Act, particularly in relation to its interaction with other key legislation. It was noted by one small group that this was a high priority.

In their written submission, Conservation SA noted that compliance needs to be maintained with a consistent approach state-wide.

The South Para Biodiversity Project Inc. noted in their written submission that compliance is critical, and there needs to be commitment to enforce legislation and follow up. They noted that there needs to be employment of staff whose sole role is to deliver compliance based activities. They noted that enforcement of the Act needs to be made much more efficient, less red tape, currently it is difficult to gain momentum with enforcement.

3.8 Less Red Tape

In asking people across the state what their priorities are for the reform process, the idea of having less red tape was mentioned consistently. Whilst specific feedback on the guiding principle of *A Simple and Accessible System* can be found later in this report, below is a summary of priorities that emerged during our conversations regarding a system that has less red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy.

Early in the engagement process, a conversation with members of the NRM Partners included making the Act more enabling and efficient. Those at the meeting said they would like to see less complexity in the Act, with it being more flexible rather than prescriptive. At the same meeting, participants said they would like to see simple, flexible and efficient water management, providing improved management of water without increased prescription, especially in non-prescribed areas. They would also like to see more streamlined planning and reporting, reducing the time and expense of compliance and reporting to make use of limited funds.

Comments were made all over the state regarding the reduction of red tape. In Port Lincoln participants wanted less burden of applying for funding for small groups, and to see approval processes for marine industries to be faster. In Mawson Lakes participants wanted to simplify paperwork. In Victor Harbor participants wanted simpler processes and clearer roles of organisations involved. In Kingscote, participants wanted less complexity to allow action. In Glenunga, improved efficiencies were a priority, resulting in improved field-based outcomes. In Berri participants wanted a simpler and less bureaucratic Water Allocation Plan. In Scotdesco, excessive bureaucracy in applications, funding and reporting was frustrating. People in Mount Gambier want less layers of bureaucracy to get through to get things done – especially for local councils and local government.

In the APY Lands, there was some feedback on small grants in that the administrative burden of accounting and reporting for small grants, and the difference between smaller and larger amounts isn't recognised.

At the community forum in Leigh Creek participants felt that there needs to be a balance achieved between good governance, responsible fiscal management and minimising red tape. Participants asked whether there are there other models interstate or internationally from which we can learn, showing what works well and what doesn't. They felt there is a need to consider how good land management programs and initiatives can be coordinated with the right level of governance without over-burdening communities as they are already busy. They said that in order to reduce red tape we must start at the conceptual level.

In Marion, concern was raised highlighting that a reduction of red tape must not make inappropriate development easier. Further feedback on the *A Simple and Accessible System* guiding principle can be found later in this report.

3.9 Water Management

Whilst it was highlighted throughout the engagement process that this stage of the reform process did not include significant water management reform, this topic was still raised consistently as a priority across the state.

In Port Lincoln, water management was identified as a critical topic for the Eyre Peninsula and participants felt it must be addressed urgently. Participants in Victor Harbor noted achieving sustainability of water resources as a priority. In McLaren Vale, one participant said that water reform can't wait and urged the Minister to consider looking at the business of water management as soon as possible. The local grape growers were congratulated on the work they undertook in the early 1990s and it was suggested everyone involved be talked to again to reflect on what's going well but also looking at what else we need to do.

In Mount Barker, water management and allocation were identified as priorities and people questioned where water prescription and management fit in relation to the reform. They felt that the current Act is poorly written, and water needs to be reviewed as part of this transforming process.

In Glenunga, participants wanted to see more enforcement of land owners' duties to manage catchment areas. They discussed community use of water bodies such as dams, reservoirs, and streams as a priority and called for stormwater management reform.

In Berri, water was identified as a major priority, including water security, availability and sustainable water management. Participants want to see sustainable water management to sustain healthy ecosystems.

In Clare, discussion occurred regarding better regulation of irrigation. One participant noted that encouraging people to use less water in general was a priority, highlighting the importance of monitoring ground and surface water supplies.

In Marree, several members of the local Aboriginal community identified water as a critical local issue. Groundwater and the potential for extraction to impact on local mound springs (sites of considerable significance to the Arabunna people) has been raised previously.

In Mount Gambier, participants felt that water needs to be better managed in the region. It currently flows out to sea via the SE drainage system and greater effort needs to be made to look to ways to harvest the water or retain it in the natural environment. Consideration should be given to legislating this to ensure resources are applied to minimise discharge to the ocean. Those at the community forum also sought a simpler water allocation process, supported with more on the ground monitoring, as well as a quicker approach to issuing water licences that is efficient and transparent. Participants noted that the Drainage Board has an important role to play but needs stronger connections and coordination with the Board. Community in Bordertown felt that there is room to reform water management through a greater understanding of the interactions between surface water and groundwater in a transparent manner.

In the written submissions from individuals, water management was a very popular topic with a wide range of comments. As a general rule, many people wanted to see a change to water management in the state. Some specific comments were one submission noting concern regarding bore use and bore sharing agreements, and another person was especially concerned with water management to support native fish. One submission included thoughts that water management has been going well on the Eyre Peninsula. One was supportive of environmental flows, and one wanted simpler water allocation plans and for the cost recovery charges recommended by the National Water Initiative to be adopted. Another didn't like how current water management is only concerned with preventing resource decline and doesn't consider other issues, such as too much water in water table causing rising salinity.

In their written submission, the Northern and Yorke NRM Board said that they consider that ground and surface water management should be included in landscape legislation. The Eyre Peninsula NRM Board noted the importance of keeping water management with regional administration in the Act, along with other thoughts around the need for simple, flexible and efficient water management. The South East NRM Board noted that the current requirements to unbundle licenses will lead to much more complex and cumbersome Water Allocation Plans. In their written submission they noted that this does not align with the Minister's aim of simplifying planning for the community.

In the written submission received from the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board, they said it is essential that water management remains in the Act to enable a catchment approach. They also strongly advised that Boards must continue to take the lead role in the development and decision making related to Water Allocation Plans.

In their written submission, Trees for Life recommend a review of water un/bundling for the new Act to ensure the provisions are fit for purpose and that all water assets can be managed as required. Unbundling can work for water assets in a large system like the Murray River but not necessarily for other systems. They noted that this is currently an issue on the Adelaide Plains.

In their written submission, Primary Producers SA noted that water management legislation needs to be simplified but suggested to keep it in the new legislation due to time constraints at this point of the reform. They suggested incorporating flexibility for regions to use the most appropriate planning and management tools, with detailed work to follow enactment of the Act.

Primary Producers SA also noted the urgent work required in the Virginia region (to address water table and flood mitigation issues), Mount Lofty Ranges, the South East (to ensure appropriate drainage infrastructure investment and monitoring of ground water systems) and with River Murray water users. Their submission also discussed water licencing, water rights and the need for a regular independent review of water planning and management costs.

3.10 Biodiversity

From very early in the engagement process it became apparent that biodiversity was a high priority for those operating in the natural resource management space, but that many felt it was missing from the reform proposals. Biodiversity was raised as a priority across the state and its limited focus in the reform proposals was one of the major tension points in our conversations.

At an early meeting with the NRM Partners, members of the group explained that biodiversity and native outcomes go beyond pest and soil management and that there needs to be an explicit focus on native flora and fauna as well.

In a conversation with Presiding Members, they highlighted that biodiversity is really important. Members of the group said they felt it was derogatory when people say farmers aren't interested in on-farm biodiversity. As part of their survival, if not anything else, farmers have to be interested in it. They highlighted that this work is about proactive management.

The Presiding Members felt there were a couple of ways that biodiversity could be included in the Act –

- Listed as one of the objects of the Act;
- And/or a few clauses or schedules about biodiversity – some principles just to support the work “that we all do”, suggesting that the Act be specific – we don't want *all* biodiversity addressed – just on private land or where private land impacts.

Conservation Council member groups wanted to see biodiversity being maintained and improved, preventing further extinction. Participants requested stronger legislation and regulations that protect biodiversity and landscapes in the long term.

People in McLaren Vale said that biodiversity matters and needs to be included in the new Act. They suggested that the Back to Basics concept include soil, water, pest plants and animals and native vegetation. Participants stated that these elements are closely related and inter-dependent. Others at the McLaren Vale session would like to strengthen the focus on biodiversity protection and restoration of habitats, and preservation and extension of remnant vegetation of systems.

“I note in the blurb regarding proposed changes, the lack of the word, biodiversity. Caring for the biodiversity and ecological status of the state's 'natural' areas is fundamental and support must be given to threatened species and protection of these areas.”

Delores, via YourSAy

In Port Lincoln, participants noted recognising the importance of watercourses and vegetation to biodiversity and creating resilient landscapes. In Murray Bridge, the community said that biodiversity must be included as a priority asset along with soil and water, reminding the Minister that thousands of farmers are landscape managers. It was noted that while the concept of Back to Basics was supported, biodiversity is seen as a critical component that needs just as much focus.

In Clare, biodiversity was noted as critical and fundamental to good landscape management. This cannot be ignored or forgotten in going back to basics. At Mawson Lakes, participants recommended engaging with Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010 – 2030 to assist in achieving its outcomes.

In Gawler, biodiversity was raised, specifically around the need for better management and enhancement of conservation and biodiversity. It was felt that this was missing from the Back to Basics approach and participants were keen to see it highlighted as a priority.

"The definition of biodiversity is underemphasised... to me this is paramount and needs to be at the forefront of any legislation and takes precedence over anyone and/or everyone's desires and rights." Almeda Peer, via written submission

Participants in Mount Barker called for a definition of biodiversity in the Managing our Landscapes documentation. They would like to see this including conservation of rare and threatened species; flora and fauna and insects, stronger legislation to conserve existing native vegetation and re-instate native corridors, and policy and funding to promote SA native flora in horticulture and gardens. They said that there needs to be more explicit content on biodiversity as it was tacked on to the 2004 NRM Act.

Participants in Mount Barker also noted the pressure put on biodiversity by over population and urban sprawl (including its impact on production areas) the frustration this causes in this region. It was however acknowledged that this is an issue that goes beyond the NRM Act. They noted that there are other elements needed to create vibrant biodiversity, such as restoration, propagation, consumption, and more. The activities currently listed under the back to basics principle are not enough.

In Berri, biodiversity was highlighted as important for this region, with facilitation of volunteer involvement in biodiversity conservation mentioned. One group noted that better legislation to achieve better biodiversity was needed, whereas another noted that maybe more legislation wasn't the answer but to instead look to what we've already got and tweak that.

"While 'Vibrant biodiversity' was mentioned on page 8 of the Discussion Paper, the document has scarcely any mention of biodiversity in the description of the proposed changes in the pages that follow." Peter, via YourSAy

In Mount Gambier, participants felt that biodiversity needs to be included in the *Back to Basics* concept. Native vegetation needs further consideration about how it is managed when it impacts on private productive land, noting that some flexibility is needed.

In Meningie, it was accepted that there needs to be a stronger focus on the back to basics, but participants felt that the Landscape Boards can't just be weeds and rabbit boards. Native vegetation

and fauna are currently missing, and this was seen as a gap. Participants felt that there needs to be a stronger focus on biodiversity and assisting local landowners adapt to climate change and conserve threatened species. This includes supporting and encouraging land owners to not only focus on back to basics but to link to broader landscape scale approach to projects and initiatives.

In Bordertown, biodiversity was noted as being at risk and that a regional biodiversity strategy is needed with funding to match. Participants felt that by maintaining the health of the landscape, other problems reduce. They would like it to be easier for private landholders to conserve native bushlands, and to see efficient protection and conservation of biodiversity.

“The ongoing stewardship and restoration of our natural, biodiverse ecosystems is at the heart of building landscape resilience at scale, and essential for ensuring productive farmland and healthy natural assets.”

Conservation Council of SA, via written submission

In Glenunga biodiversity was identified as a priority, with recommendations that this be integrated in to the landscape approach and be clearly stated in the priorities.

In Grange, participants felt that biodiversity is a priority, with more protection of native biodiversity required. Natural assets were highlighted as important, with integrated catchment management and improved natural assets across the state, such as water, soil, flora and fauna. Biodiversity corridors were discussed, with reference to the need for people to work together to strategically plan corridors as opposed to undertaking small patches of work.

At the Marion community forum, participants wanted to see a strategic approach to revegetation corridors to support biodiversity. They would like to see the preservation of diversity of plants and animals and for wildlife corridors to be maintained and enhanced. There was recognition that the greatest threat to biodiversity is land clearance.

“We desperately need to focus on soil, our native flora and fauna and waterways to ensure they are healthy again or we will lose our lovely ecosystem.” Cheryl, via YourSAy

At our focused conversation with young people in Willunga, they noted that there was not much mention of preserving habitat in the Managing our Landscapes SA documentation and felt that this is very important for conservation. They also questioned how and where threatened species management and conservation come in to this Act.

In our conversation with the Conservation sector as a group, biodiversity was a major priority. The group felt that biodiversity protection and enhancement should be a strong part of the Act, as a key objective. They would like biodiversity conservation included in the Landscape SA Act and that it remains as a foundation. In our conversation with the primary production sector as a group, participants felt that putting a value on good land management and natural resources management

and rewarding stewardship of natural resources and natural environment was important, for example vegetation.

At the combined Conservation and Primary Production sector meeting, there was a large amount of dialogue regarding biodiversity. Participants felt that given the vast input regarding the need for a greater focus on activity that promotes biodiversity during the engagement process, it could be useful to explain the value of environmental restoration and the activities associated with this, whether they be threatened species recovery, revegetation, wetland restoration, or environmental flows. One participant said that these are some of the positive, proactive things that we could and should be doing through the Landscapes Act, as well as the basics of soil, water and pest plant and animal management.

At this session too, it was noted that a really important message to go back to the Minister is that one of the key ways that we connect with communities is through biodiversity works. If you go back to the Landcare days, most of that work was around biodiversity – protection and conservation of native vegetation, primarily undertaken by primary producers.

Participants in the combined Primary Production and Conservation session also noted that the three pillars in the *Back to Basics* principle are currently a mix of assets and threats. They suggested that it would be better to have it all about assets, for example, land, water, biodiversity and people are our assets. Pest plants and animals and climate change are our threats. They noted that the mix as it currently reads is perhaps part of the reason why we struggle with it. They accept the reality that this is driving the Minister's focus but because there's a mix, it confuses the priorities.

Everyone at that meeting agreed that it's really important that soil, water and pest plants and animals be included but they want to see something added around biodiversity.

The written submissions from individuals included general support for biodiversity being a focus in the Landscape SA Bill with some thinking it should be the most important aspect and one person specifically mentioning threatened species in relation to biodiversity.

In their written submission, Trees for Life noted that they strongly support 'vibrant biodiversity' as one of the government's priority outcomes but recommend nature conservation as a stream of work is also included as a means to achieve it. When Trees for Life refers to nature or biodiversity in the context of the Landscape Act they are not referring to wildlife or threatened species management, which are matters best served by specific legislation and focused investment. In contrast, they are talking about biodiversity in the landscape which contributes to ecological health.

Trees for Life noted that to achieve vibrant biodiversity, actions need to be taken at both the fine scale such as threatened species recovery, and at coarse scale such as extensive multi-purpose revegetation or landscape threat management which they noted is strongly aligned with the proposed remit of the Landscape Boards as outlined in the Discussion Paper. They felt that soil, water and pest management alone won't achieve vibrant biodiversity and recommend adopting the additional pillar of landscape biodiversity or nature to the proposed framework.

The Environmental Defenders Office SA Inc. included in their written submission specific suggested amendments of the existing Act, to broadening the criteria for interpreting the duty of care provision to include protection of biodiversity.

3.11 Transparency and Communications

Transparency and communication were words that we heard a lot when meeting with people across the state to discuss their priorities for natural resource management reform.

In our early engagement conversations, members of the Primary Producers NRM Committee felt that better communication was needed with community and landowners, but by using existing networks, and building personal relationships rather than more factsheets!

In Port Lincoln, participants at the community forum had a desire for more transparency in how rates are calculated. This was especially expressed by those in local government. In Ceduna, participants said they were unclear on what the NRM board actually does and better communications are needed. The same was said in Port Augusta where participants at the community forum discussed greater visibility of boards and departments being a high priority.

At the Victor Harbor community forum, people wanted a more transparent budget process. They said they needed greater transparency regarding government decisions, including how decisions are made and who contributed to them. In McLaren Vale, community wanted improved communication between government departments.

In Glenunga, participants said they are looking for certainty and transparency on how decisions, priorities, programs, government and board interactions and how NRM funds are spent. Greater communication with the community on the management of resources, monitoring and reporting was also requested in Gawler.

“We believe that the community are concerned about the complexity of the NRM system, its transparency and are asking ‘are we getting value for money?’”

Native Vegetation Council, via written submission

In Coober Pedy, better communication with community is needed. The community want transparency around who gets funding, what they did with it and whether it achieved the outcomes it intended to. They suggested a pamphlet drop with this information. In Berri, good communication was also highlighted as a priority.

At the Grange community forum, better communication and engagement was considered to be a priority, with participants wanting strengthened communications with community and landholders, but also inter-departmental communication between government agencies (both state and federal government), as well as industry. It was also felt that there needs to be better communication with regard to experts within the Department for Environment and Water, with participants explaining that the community can make decisions, but they need direction and information from those with expert knowledge and scientific technical advice.

The young people at our focussed conversation in Willunga wanted to see awareness of the environment and its issues spread throughout South Australia.

3.12 Board Structure

Getting the structure of the new Landscape SA Boards right was a priority for many people that took part in our conversations during the engagement period.

A participant during our focussed conversations suggested that the first thing to identify should be what makes the most effective board. From this, we can determine the best model that would lead to having an effective board.

People across the state said that they want boards that make good governance decisions, but also that create a sense of ownership amongst the natural resources management community through good engagement and transparent communication. People want the boards to be visible (both board members and staff) and to feel a sense of personal connection to their boards, particularly in regional South Australia.

From our conversations we know that people want the Landscape SA boards to be made up of people from within that region. For example, people in Victor Harbor said that decent representation was important on the new boards, with representation across the various interests and community.

People across the state were also keen to see diverse representation on the boards. This specifically included representatives from Aboriginal Nations, women, and young people. It also included diversity in knowledge and experience. Specific input regarding board membership can be found later in this report.

In many places across the state people questioned the relationship between decentralised decision making and strong governance. In Ceduna, one participant noted that greater autonomy requires greater governance.

Participants at the Port Lincoln community forum recommended developing a governance and operational framework, system or model, inclusive of reporting and engagement, that can be used by the boards for consistency across the state. This kind of framework however must be adaptable to local needs and priorities. Specific input regarding board accountabilities can be found later in this report.

It was widely felt that a community election process is not an appropriate mechanism to recruit people on to the Landscape SA boards. Further details on this can be found later in this report.

3.13 Employment

The topic of employment with the natural resources management system was discussed many times during the engagement process.

In Scotdesco and Ceduna, participants noted that there had been some success with trainees. There was a call for more Aboriginal Rangers. There was some concern that training provided must be linked to genuine employment prospects.

“All Landscape Boards need an achievable Aboriginal employment target as part of boards measurable targets and have a long-term employment strategy with board programs.” via Neil, YourSAy

The Port Lincoln and Ceduna communities noted that the region needed greater job security within the environment sector. Many staff are operating on temporary short-term contracts and this causes issues for both the progress of the environmental work happening in the region, but also the economic stability of the region and capacity to retain employees.

Participants in Berri also wanted to see more long-term contracts for staff. Community in Port Lincoln and Ceduna said they too wanted to see more security for staff, feeling that 12-month contracts are too short and provide insecurity for both the staff themselves and the projects they work on. This makes many things difficult, including retaining staff and longer-term planning of programs. In Clare, a need for more Park Rangers was also noted. It was acknowledged that this request wasn't necessarily part of the NRM reform but that the Minister had noted it in his presentation and there was strong support for this as a statewide initiative.

In Victor Harbor, farmers spoke about how they feel that country towns are dying, and agriculture has an ageing workforce. In Gawler, one participant highlighted the lack of good agriculture courses available locally, with 8 courses recently lost at Roseworthy College. This means that good land managers aren't coming from that source anymore. A similar sentiment was felt by people at the Glenunga community forum, noting that they felt there are no jobs for highly qualified individuals, leading to job insecurity for many. These participants also noted the need for more rangers 'at the coalface', with smaller regions to look after.

In McLaren Vale a priority for one group was around developing a seasonal workforce to sustain ongoing on-ground work. In Gawler, participants wanted to see less management and more feet on the ground – with less planning and more doing.

At our focussed conversation with young people in Willunga, participants asked what job opportunities will come from the new Landscapes SA Board. They wanted to know how they should prepare for these jobs and what they should study. They want jobs in the future to do with the environment. At Bordertown, one participant suggested making the “Green Gang” a statewide model, providing jobs for young people.

3.14 Evidence-based Decision Making

During the early engagement with the NRM Partners, conversation was held regarding decentralised decision making and it was agreed that regional communities need to be enabled and empowered to make decisions. There was discussion around the support required for regional communities to make good decisions such as having access to all of the correct information, including support from experts within the Department for Environment and Water. To do this, there needs to be a strong central policy basis to support regional decision making, and water management and water science were used as an example of a valuable statewide asset within the Department.

The sentiment of making decisions based on expert knowledge, fact and science was loudly echoed around the state.

For example, in Port Augusta participants said that Landscape Boards need to be given all of the factual information of what's happening in the regions, with access to technical and scientific knowledge from a range of sources including state government, community and local government. In Port Lincoln, participants said that decisions need to be based on facts and science, not individual agendas.

It is important to ensure that there are agricultural specialists amongst staff skill sets across the regions, who can provide relevant free advice for landholders. These skill sets to include native and introduced grasses, weed control, farm animal nutrition, animal health and welfare, water conservation, storage and reticulation, small property planning and biosecurity.” Julie, via YourSAy

In Leigh Creek the community said that science and data need to be retained in decision making. Previous data needs to be accessible with communities having a better understanding of what's available. They said that having access to the best information and data available is critical to decision making at a landscape level.

In Gawler, several people in the group noted that good access to scientists or other experts through the Department for Environment and Water or local councils, where good partnerships are in place was important. They said that locally driven decision making is good, provided it is backed up by sound science and expertise. Participants in Glenunga said the same, noting that nothing in the current reform proposals demonstrate this.

At the community forum in Mount Gambier, participants noted that in managing water resources, precautionary principles should apply based around science and evidence. In Meningie, it was noted that boards require a landscape vision to inform programs based on science and knowledge, and that this should be a fundamental part of decentralised decision making.

At our focussed conversation with young people in Willunga, participants asked how the passing of information from scientists to the general community can be improved. They also questioned whether the 'simple and accessible framework' will still be based on strong science.

“Failure to use the science will lead to failure of Landscape SA.”

Western Adelaide Coastal Residents Association, via written submission

In the written submissions from individuals, there was general support for evidence-based and science-based decision making but it needs to be transparent and incorporate local knowledge.

In their written submission, the Landcare Association of South Australia noted that whilst an integrated landscape-scale approach must be science based to understand the issues, particularly relating to consideration of actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change, it must also incorporate local knowledge. They also acknowledged that community empowerment does not diminish the role of the Department for Environment and Water and other state government agencies in provision of scientific expertise and knowledge, monitoring and evaluation and custodianship of state databases; policy, legislature and compliance support; and more.

National Trust SA also noted in their written submission that while the focus on community engagement in landscape programs is valuable, decisions about program priorities by a community-based board may tend to be subjective. They noted that processes will need to be carefully managed to ensure that programs are evidence-based and informed by adequate scientific analysis.

3.15 Protection and Preservation

Closely aligned to other priorities identified, such as biodiversity and compliance, the topic of protection and preservation of native vegetation was specifically and consistently raised during the engagement process.

At the early engagement session with members of the Conservation Council, participants noted that this reform process should increase the focus on protection of biodiversity and nature conservation, particularly the objects of the Act and Duty of Care provisions.

In their written submission, the Local Government Association of SA noted that they would like to include Coast Protection and Native Vegetation in the new Act, to improve outcomes and efficiencies managed through one board. Port Adelaide Enfield echoed this in their written submission, noting that efficiency could be gained by merging the Coastal Protection and Native Vegetation Boards into Landscape Boards.

At the community forum in Clare, people wanted to see the Native Vegetation Act and Regulations strengthened, and more staff to administer it. They also noted the need to retain existing native vegetation, coastal protection, protection of salt lakes, and protection of native birds, fish and animals. They would like to see encouragement for landholders to plant more trees and preserve or recreate native vegetation.

“We would be wise to ensure the new Landscape South Australia Bill has provisions that protect our land and water systems and continue to restore them to benefit all South Australians into the future.”

Rose, via YourSAy

In Gawler, community want to see a halt to biodiversity loss, with a request to stop clearing and start replacing vegetation and habitat. They felt protection and maintenance of natural parks and other areas of natural vegetation against mining, buildings and other man influences to be a high priority and want to see better protection for the environment, not worse.

Participants in Gawler also want to preserve agricultural land for agriculture noting that Australia is the food bowl of the world and South Australia relies on small areas of productive land. In Victor Harbor similar sentiments were said, with the preservation of quality agricultural and other land and the right to farm. Participants noted that proactive and wise strategies for population increases are needed for that are happening in our region in their region, and this includes the need to feed people from good soil, water and land.

In Glenunga, people felt that better protection and compliance is required, particularly with reference to protection of native vegetation being at risk due to poor compliance and limited resourcing for enforcement.

The Conservation Council member groups noted that the removal of 'red tape' cannot be used to avoid environmental protections. Compliance requires some enforcement measures.

In written submissions from individuals, some people showed frustration with native vegetation including one person complaining that they couldn't build an adventure park on their property due to native vegetation restrictions and another concerned with roadside native vegetation management. Others supported encouraging revegetation and possibly giving native vegetation responsibilities to the Landscape Boards. One person wanted to know if NRM could assist them with revegetating parts of their property.

3.16 Education

Throughout the engagement process, we heard that education is working well now and is a priority for the future too. Many times, it was noted that education is not just for children and young people via schools but educating and empowering the greater community on a range of topics. Both are seen as incredibly valuable in the natural resource management space.

3.16.1 Educating young people

At the focussed conversation with young people in Willunga, participants questioned how this Act will educate young people about the environment. They asked the Minister how high a priority environmental education is to him personally and would he push for it to be compulsory. They feel that a really big push for environmental education is needed and learning about the environment should be a compulsory core subject as part of the SA curriculum.

At the community forum in McLaren Vale there were participants who were very passionate about NRM education and the provision of existing programs, which they urged to continue. Specific reference was made to the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AUSSI) SA model delivering education for sustainability in educational settings. It was noted that over 50% of South Australian primary schools are supported by NRM in education to effect school community cultural change and delivering Education for Sustainability (EFS) within the curriculum. Participants also noted that NRM education in South Australia is the envy of other states and territories and a beacon of leadership.

In Mount Barker, a large number of participants highlighted how much they valued NRM Education and this is currently working very well, particularly in schools. Participants felt strongly that this needs to continue and be enhanced. Participants in Yunta wanted to see an increase in education of natural vegetation, including tree planting involving schools.

In Glenunga, engaging children with nature and environmental sustainability was noted as gaining momentum in community and seen as a positive approach.

3.16.2 Educating the farming community

We received many comments about the need to educate farmers and landowners.

Members of the Primary Producers NRM Committee discussed the need for farmers to receive recognition for work they do in managing natural resources, as well as information or greater understanding of how they can generate value from managing natural assets, whether it be demonstrated through income generation, property value, or something else.

In Port Lincoln, participants requested more education for sustainable practices in a modern context, taking in to account business opportunities, climate change and best practice. Participants

in McLaren Vale suggested concentrating education on working with farmers and landowners to concentrate education on overseeing large and small parcels of land.

In Victor Harbor, farmers in attendance showed an interest in having more local information and support for the farming community, with reference made to the important role local government plays in supporting this. They saw this being provided via access to on-ground officers who are in charge of their own programs and are empowered to make decisions.

In Mount Gambier, participants felt that there needs to be a continued emphasis on education programs regarding the importance of biodiversity and wetland management and better and improved consultation and engagement with the agricultural sector and associated landowners.

In Mount Barker, participants suggested a toolkit be developed for landowners to assist their work in managing the natural environment. They suggested strengthening bush care and water catchment management through funding and education of landowners.

In Port Augusta, workshops on weed identification, Buffel Grass and climate change were all suggested, as well as mangrove education and weed management training.

In McLaren Vale, there was very strong support for the existing Natural Resource Centres, with particular reference to the centre in Willunga. The community, including local landholders, felt that it is critical to maintain this highly regarded local resource. The local expertise and guidance of NRM staff is invaluable and participants raised this as critical to maintain.

3.16.3 Empowering the community through education

In Gawler, people suggested education with respect to environmental issues be a priority, supporting community through providing training to community groups and primary producers. In Grange, participants said that education of the community, particularly relating to the coast, is important.

In Glenunga, empowering community to be active agents of change through education, awareness, funding and building capacity was highlighted as important. Visibility of their own contribution on the ground, participation in decision making, education and engagement for community were all things that participants felt would lead to an empowered community.

"I feel that while some of the reforms may benefit some parties, it excludes supporting people with expert knowledge in the environmental and sustainability sector, placing the focus on landholders without improving the land quality through expert advice and guidance, and most importantly, education."

Isa, Year 12 student, via YourSAy

Participants in Glenunga also noted that making natural resource management relevant to community was critical, communicating why it should matter to people.

3.17 Traditional Owners

At many of the community forums we held across the state, engagement with Aboriginal communities was highlighted as a priority.

3.17.1 Insights from the statewide engagement

At Murray Bridge, it was acknowledged that Aboriginal programs have been incredibly effective in getting the Aboriginal community involved in making a significant difference.

In Berri, participants said that early engagement with Aboriginal people should be at the top of the decision making process, followed by the community, who then go together to the government. It was noted that early engagement with Aboriginal groups was essential.

The Conservation Council member groups said that they would like to see more informal involvement of indigenous groups in co-management of conservation areas. In Ceduna, co-management was highlighted as something that was working well, with outputs and outcomes well planned, realistic and linked to a budget.

In Scotdesco, discussion focussed on the success of co-management in the Ceduna region and this should not be lost in the reform process. The group felt that there is a good working relationship and partnerships between Eyre Peninsula NRM and Alinytjara Wilurara communities (Yalata and Oak Valley) which is not through any formal mechanisms but cooperation and collaboration in the Ceduna office (where EP and AW staff are co-located). Forum attendees were keen to see this level of collaboration continue.

Participants said that it is important to note the distinction between advisory roles for Aboriginal people and decision making. The Minister's interest in greater leadership for Aboriginal people was welcomed, but in Scotdesco the point was made this should not be in an advisory capacity, where advice may be ignored by the Board, but as equal decision makers with the Board. Having at least two Aboriginal representatives on the Eyre Peninsula Board was suggested, considering the large number of Aboriginal nations in the region. Participants at the Gawler community forum also noted a desire to see strong representation of local Aboriginal people on the Landscape Boards.

“Natural resources should be managed in South Australia in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples of interest.” Alan, via YourSAy

In Mount Barker, people felt that the Discussion Paper was relatively silent on the need to have Aboriginal voices to support biodiversity and needs a stronger focus in the Act. In McLaren Vale too, participants wanted to see more communication and involvement with Aboriginal communities highlighted within the legislation.

In Victor Harbor, a comment from an Aboriginal participant included “I feel daunted that I don’t fit in the picture” after reading the reform materials. He noted that it is critical to build strong partnerships with Aboriginal communities in this reform.

In Glenunga, participants prioritised real and meaningful partnerships and engagement with Kaurna and other Aboriginal groups, leading to capacity building and real outcomes for the community. This includes indigenous leadership. Similar to discussions in Scotdesco, it was suggested that if this is to be genuine, then Aboriginal people need to be very much included in decision making, including represented on the boards.

In Ceduna, participants felt that Aboriginal people need to be paid appropriately for their cultural knowledge in natural resource management. In Port Lincoln, one participant noted to never underestimate local knowledge, include Aboriginal people and their environment.

In Leigh Creek, participants felt that NRM groups must have Aboriginal involvement and their voice needs to be considered in the nominations for board positions.

Members of the North Flinders NRM Group would like to see the bushfood industry developed as a potential income stream for landholders and more involvement with Aboriginal people.

The Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board noted that they provide a model for engaging including co-planning, project developments, program design, community engagement, traditional protocols and cultural leadership, with Aboriginal land holding authorities, their leadership, Aboriginal Nations and Aboriginal communities and ‘cultural’ key movers and shakers, that other Boards can learn from.

In the written submissions from individuals, it was noted that Aboriginal recognition, inclusion, and support needs to be included. Comments included ensuring Aboriginal representation on the boards, quarantining some funds from grant programs to only go to Aboriginal projects, cultural awareness of staff, using Aboriginal-owned business for works, and better engagement with Aboriginal people in consultation, planning, and decision making.

In their written submission, Nature of SA noted that there needs to be understanding that our landscapes and wildlife co-evolved with Aboriginal people. They said that by understanding this we recognise that the Australian landscape has been shaped by people and their relationship with the land for many years and that their knowledge, practices and culture are highly valuable to understanding how the land works and how to live more sustainably. They commended the Discussion Paper for recognising the critical skills, knowledge and interests of South Australia’s Aboriginal nations in natural resource management and the importance of ensuring they are well represented in governance, decision making and leadership.

3.17.2 Insights from our focussed conversations with Aboriginal Nations

From our focussed conversations and workshops with Aboriginal communities and organisations during the engagement process, we gained a number of deeper insights in to the role of Traditional Owners in natural resource management. Individual reports from our focussed conversations can be found in the appendices of this report.

Our conversations told us that there is considerable diversity in the way Aboriginal Nations are involved in natural resource management.

Factors that influence this involvement include the nature of rights and interests in land (such as specific rights to land including Aboriginal freehold title and native title), as Traditional Owners (without specific rights or title to land) and in many cases as business owners or operators (for example pastoral, tourism, and aquaculture). Much is also determined by the land use and environment in a particular region.

With the exception of the Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Region (as an all-Aboriginal Board), the extent to which Aboriginal Nations are engaged with existing NRM Boards and regions is determined primarily by the Boards and NRM staff. There is no consistent approach, and the level of engagement varies from region to region.

In regions where there is good engagement with NRM Boards, Aboriginal Nations are concerned that the positive and productive working arrangements are not lost in the reforms. In their written submission, the Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board said that the leadership role of Aboriginal Nations in landscape management must be addressed through the current reforms

Parks co-management and Indigenous Protected Areas were consistently raised as approaches to land management valued by Aboriginal communities, noting that both of these are not directly related to the NRM Act and planned Landscape SA reforms. In both cases, there is considerable funding and resources to support these initiatives in SA (from commonwealth and state government), providing employment opportunities on country and a high level of Aboriginal involvement in land management. Aboriginal Nations frequently drew on these experiences to demonstrate leading practice for Aboriginal NRM partnerships and programs.

The objective of greater Aboriginal leadership in the new Landscape SA Act is welcomed, although it is recognised there are some challenges in how this is given best effect.

These challenges include:

- Most Landscape SA regions have more than one Aboriginal Nation within its boundaries (and in some cases a large number). While there was universal support for at least one Aboriginal Board Member for each Landscape SA Region, these individuals are in most cases not able to represent all Nations within a region;
- The proposed Landscape SA regional boundaries do not generally align with cultural boundaries. There are several examples of where an Aboriginal Nation will be engaging with up to three (and in the case of the Kurna People, four) Landscape SA Boards. This brings with it coordination and time/resourcing challenges;

- Currently Aboriginal Nations have little assurance in their long-term involvement in natural resource management policy, planning, project development and delivery, and are reliant on the level of interest or commitment of boards and staff;
- There are leadership and governance structures in place that provide a platform for the new Landscape SA Boards to engage with Aboriginal Nations. Where these are in existence, it was expressed strongly that they should be utilised instead of creating something new that duplicates or conflicts with current structures;
- In many cases, these structures are under-resourced and have limited means to generate income, for example they are unable to collect rates in the same way local government areas can, and limitations on income generation from Native Title or Aboriginal Lands Trust land;
- While Aboriginal Nations share many goals and priorities with other land interests (in relation to *Back to Basics*, examples include concerns over pest plants and animals, and improved water management), there are social, cultural and environmental factors beyond those with an economic focus that do not always align with other interests;
- There is a sense that the value created by Aboriginal Nations' involvement in natural resource management is not fully appreciated and that cultural knowledge and the time of contributors is not adequately valued or resourced;
- Popular elections were identified as potentially problematic for Aboriginal representation, if those elected did not have sufficient connection to the region, cultural knowledge and cultural authority;
- Provision of advice does not constitute decision making. It was expressed on many occasions that decision making authority for Aboriginal Nations was an important aspect of increased leadership and genuine partnerships in natural resource management.

Our engagement process focussed on identifying issues and opportunities associated with the reforms. Throughout our engagement with Aboriginal Nations, the groups who we met with articulated some clear themes in terms of potential solutions to the challenges identified above. These include:

- At least one Aboriginal Person with a cultural connection to the region on each Landscape SA Board;
- There are examples of Advisory Boards or Groups that can provide a more formal mechanism to integrate Aboriginal Nations in policy, planning and project development and delivery. This can be particularly effective where there are many Aboriginal Nations in a region;
- A long-term commitment to resourcing the participation of Aboriginal Nations in the new Landscape SA framework was a common theme of consultations;

- Picking up on the Landscape scale goals of the reform, there is also strong support for reestablishing the Statewide Aboriginal NRM Advisory Group. There is also recognition that some NRM challenges extend beyond regional or cultural boundaries, and larger scale coordinated projects are required to address them.

In their written submission, the AW NRM Board also highlighted the need for adequate representation on the new boards of the Land Holding Authorities (LHA) represented in the region. They advised that this should not be via an election but through nomination from the LHAs as currently occurs.

In their written submission, amongst other many other valuable suggestions, the Kurna Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Advisory Group recommended cultural awareness training for all Landscape SA staff and board members. They suggested that there should be three phases of this training including general cultural awareness training, Kurna cultural awareness training and walking Country with Kurna.

3.18 Climate Change

At the focussed conversation with the Conservation and Primary Production sectors, one participant articulated that one thing that unites everyone is that the climate is changing really fast. He said that whether you're coming from an environmental perspective or a farming perspective, or both, we need to build a resilient landscape which is ultimately going to have to be biodiverse. He urged that everyone in the natural resource management space needs to come together and work out how we're going to move forward. He said that the most resilient communities work together.

His sentiments of addressing climate change in natural resource management were echoed in different areas of the state. In McLaren Vale, participants urged for the new legislation and system to be responsive and adaptive to our changing climate. It was noted that a climate focus needs to include water issues and dealing with less water available. In Meningie, it was felt that there needs to be a stronger focus on biodiversity and assisting local landowners adapt to climate change and conserve threatened species.

"I was surprised that the document did not start with the key issue for any land manager right now: the impact of climate change on landscapes in the future... I suggest that you start from climate change adaptation as the key future driver of change to landscapes." Peter, via YourSAy

In Glenunga, one priority was to achieve action on climate change to sustain the landscape for future generations. Participants felt that we need to consider how climate change will impact natural resources as well as contribution natural resources can make to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

At the Mawson Lakes community forum, the resilience of the environment and people in relation to climate change was noted as a priority, with the need to be climate change ready through future proofing. Participants in Marion acknowledged that active action on climate change is required as that is currently the biggest threat to our natural environment and biodiversity. In Gawler and Grange, climate change management was a priority too, with participants noting that it needs to be taken seriously.

"We want to see a landscape management system that supports climate-ready, resilient communities, economies and landscapes."
Resilient Hills and Coasts, via written submission

In the Mount Barker community forums, participants stated that the new Act needs to ensure it addresses threatening processes that are being instigated through climate change. The suggested building climate change considerations into everything. Participants suggested the need to be innovative through seeing farming areas as contributing to conservation outcomes, and in turn becoming climate change resilient.

The young people in our focussed conversation in Willunga questioned how this Act will take measures to control global warming. If adaptation for global warming is the plan, does that mean we are accepting it and stopping active work? They asked the Minister if when he's talking about 'adapting' does that mean that he is accepting climate change instead of looking at ways to decrease the development?

"To not adequately consider climate change is ridiculous."

Deb, via YourSAy

One participant in Mount Gambier noted that a measure of success for this reform process is that we are confident we can deal with climate change. Another participant in Port Augusta noted that a measure of success in 2020 would be that climate change is central to planning and actions.

3.19 Planning Legislation

The connection between the new Landscapes SA Act and the Planning Act was raised at a number of our community forums, particularly those closest to metropolitan Adelaide and peri urban locations.

In Mawson Lakes, biodiversity was a major priority for this group, including its relationship with South Australian Planning Legislation and reform. Frustration was felt that planning legislation took priority over protection the natural environment via the NRM Act and many felt tired at trying to influence the Planning Act and the way natural resources are managed within it.

Participants in at the Glenunga community forum discussed the link between planning legislation and the new Landscapes Act as being absolutely critical to acknowledge. There was concern by several participants that the planning legislation could be contradictory to the contents of the Landscapes Act, with negative implications for natural resources. The importance of green spaces in urban planning was noted, as was urban tree canopies and wildlife corridors. Participants called for an integrated holistic approach to sustainability, minimising impact on natural systems with better urban planning.

In Grange, participants said they would like to see a rebalance of power between developers and the natural environment. Reference was again made to the relationship between the NRM Act and the Planning Act, and that it is important that the Landscapes Act takes priority over planning and development.

In Gawler, participants talked of their fear of housing development occurring on valuable land such food production and environmental value.

At the McLaren Vale forum, the role of NRM in supporting protective legislation for the McLaren Vale region was noted. The written submission from the McLaren Vale Grape Wine & Tourism Association noted their support for the maintenance of the *Character Preservation (McLaren Vale) Act 2012* and *Character Preservation (Barossa) Act 2012*.

Participants in Mount Barker called for protection of land from built development. Another participant asked the reform to take into account the Mining Act and Petroleum Geothermal Act and the risk to natural resources. She asked that these acts be not allowed to override the NRM Act, on and off shore.

At the focussed conversation with local government, the relationship between the NRM reform and planning reform was discussed. Participants questioned how the new act will integrate with the Planning Act and saw this as a good opportunity for the two Ministers to work together.

A written submission from the City of Victor Harbor noted that urban growth in the area is putting continued pressure on the landscape.

A written submission from Sabine Koolen at the City of Tea Tree Gully notes that integration between the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act and the Landscapes SA Act is required. It was highlighted that this hasn't always worked well in the past. Sabine noted that the high

aspirations of Green Adelaide may not be realised if the Minister for Environment and Water is unable to influence planning legislation.

In the written submission from the Western Adelaide Coastal Residents Association Inc., they suggested making the Development Act and the Mining Acts subservient to the proposed Landscape Act rather than vice versa.

The Planning Institute of Australia referred to a need for greater education and training of planners about natural resource management in their written submission, as well as training of natural resource management staff about statutory planning.

3.20 Soil Quality

Soil quality was a priority that emerged from early engagement with the Primary Producers NRM Committee. Participants at these meetings listed sustainable agriculture, soil health, and erosion as key priorities. This was followed up in the written submission from Primary Producers SA, noting that soil and land management are critical components of natural resource management.

A participant in Mount Barker requested support to manage soil, including putting carbon back in to the soil, with on the ground support and funding needed. Other participants felt that there needs to be better support for land managers, particularly around reducing costs for land holders and providing incentives for good land management practice, particularly for retiring non-viable land.

“Are the soils becoming anaerobic and thereby facilitating the decay of tree tap roots, along with impairing natural soil structure and drainage? A very practical hands-on agency is surely needed to help resolve such soil issues.”

John, via YourSAy

Soil management was also noted as a priority by some participants on Kangaroo Island.

The South East NRM Board noted that in relation to soil, the current legislation is weak with compliance, messy and difficult. The reform provides an opportunity for this issue to be addressed.

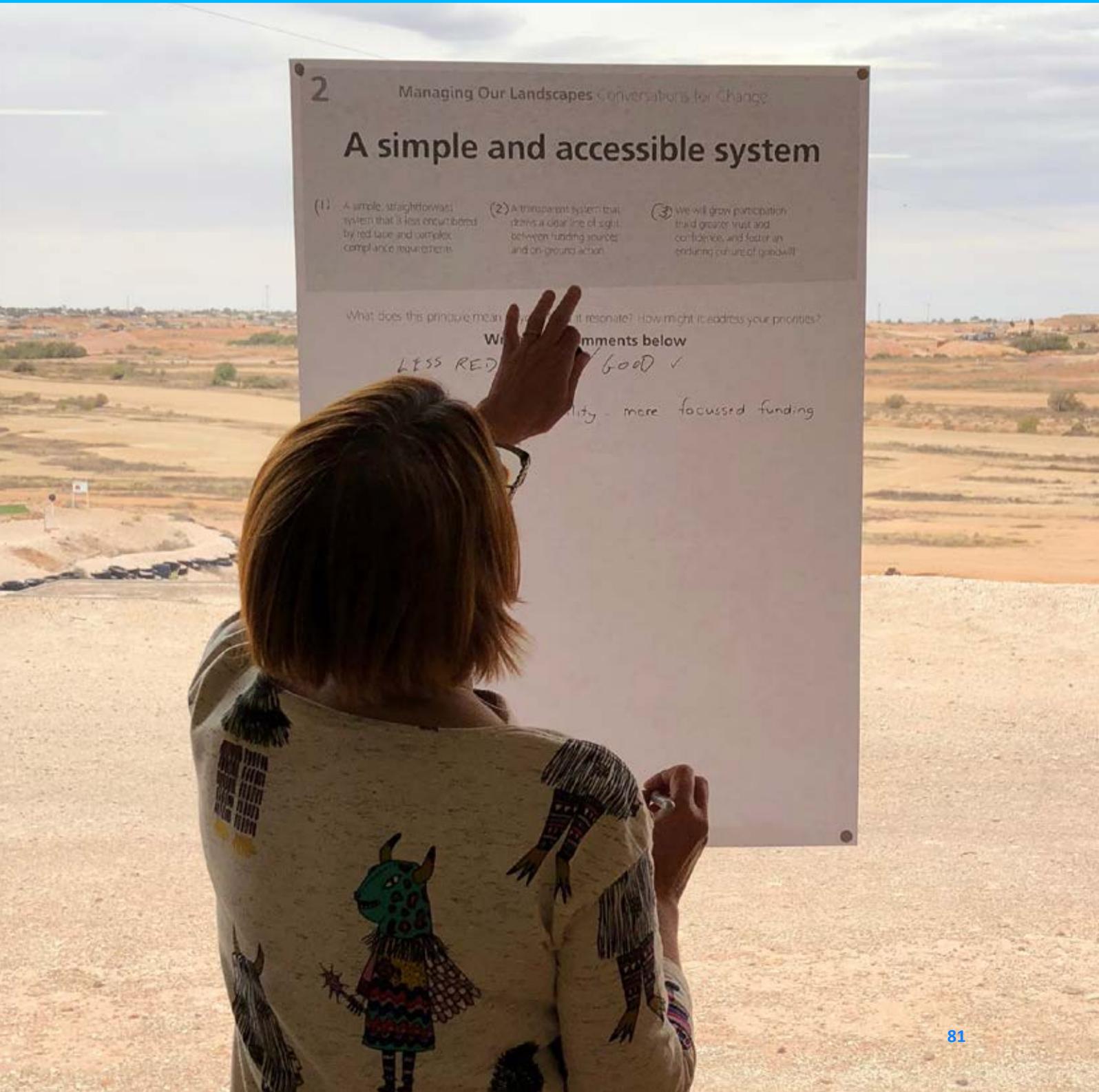
In their written submission, the Northern and Yorke NRM Board noted that there is an obvious link between soils and sustainable agriculture, although the respective responsibilities of PIRSA and NRM in sustainable agriculture needs clarification. The Eyre Peninsula NRM Board also noted the need for focus on protecting and improving soil.

A participant at the Conservation Council member group early engagement session noted that better managed soils, water and biodiversity resilience were a measure of success for this reform process.

A participant in Port Augusta wrote that balanced management of soil, water and biodiversity seen as good NRM and good business by landholders, would be their measure of success. Someone in Victor Harbor said that their measure of success would be a long-term increase in soil carbon levels.

In the written submissions received from individuals, there was support for soil being included in the Landscape SA Bill as it is an important aspect but with some questions surrounding implementation including enforcement of legislation and minimum standards surrounding soils.

4 | Feedback On The Guiding Principles



The Minister prepared five guiding principles to provide an overarching framework that covered the philosophies of the proposed reform.

These principles were used as a basis for conversation at the facilitated meetings and forums, with participants being invited to give initial reactions and opinions to each of them. Notes from all sessions, written submissions and online commentary can be found in the appendices.

4.1 Decentralised decision making

4.1.1 General commentary

The principle of decentralised decision making resonated with many across the state, though many questions were raised, primarily in relation to how it will be implemented and what it will actually look like when it is. There was a general sense gained by the facilitation team that the principle resonated more in the regional areas visited and less so in the Adelaide metropolitan region, though this was not affirmative as there were so many diverse perspectives across the whole state.

Participants at the community forum in Coober Pedy felt that decentralisation is a great concept, and if well implemented and managed it will have significant positive impacts on the community. Participants in Yunta noted that “People with dirt under their finger nails will greatly assist with the decision making process”. They also felt that input and funds will give districts in their region the ability to perform activities, properly and responsibly.

In contrast, at the large community forum in Glenunga, many comments were made questioning the approach of decentralised decision making, such as the tension between decentralised decision making and a whole of landscape approach. It was felt that the two are contradictory. At Mawson Lakes it was noted that people in the regions are not the only stakeholders and also that Green Adelaide doesn't sound very decentralised. At Mount Barker, one participant noted that decentralised decision making is crucial in many areas, not all.

“...there is a very strong argument to retain a centralised technical and policy capacity that covers the entire state and supports the new Landscape arrangements.” Coast Protection Board, via YourSAy

Members of the Primary Producers NRM Committee were supportive of decentralised decision making, seeking regional local boards to manage regional investment on regional priorities.

Member groups of the Conservation Council noted that if this means an increased voice for community groups and skilled individuals with expertise in decision making then it is a good outcome. At Bordertown, the principle was supported as long as the Board is in ‘sync’ with the community.

A member of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board agreed with the need for this principle, but suggested it be renamed 'Independent Decision Making'.

Members of the Northern and Yorke, Eyre Peninsula, and SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Boards felt that they already operate under this principle, being active, connected community members. The SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board did note that some elements of the reform go against this principle, such as the Statewide Priorities Fund and Grassroots Grants program.

At Murray Bridge, people noted this concept as being "Back to the future" and suggested we examine what went wrong last time, why things were centralised or merged, and what lessons were learnt. One participant in Clare noted that they didn't think the current system felt centralised, other than periodic Ministerial directions, and that the current plan for the Northern and Yorke region was already decentralised.

There was some concern that decentralised decision making might become a failure to make decisions in Mount Barker, or that decision makers are passing the buck. In Grange a participant wrote that the principle was good in principle, as long as it isn't code for government abrogating responsibilities. Conservation Council groups wanted to ensure there is responsibility taken for the decisions, with no opportunity for 'passing' the bad environmental outcomes.

The Minister needs communities to take calculated risks and not be stifled if it becomes 'uncomfortable' for government, was the opinion of a participant in Victor Harbor.

In their written submission, Agriculture KI supported the notion to decentralise decision making and supported the idea of giving greater empowerment for the community to determine the direction of natural resource management in their regions. They hope that the government will liaise closely with the key existing community organisations, in particular farming systems groups like AgKI, who have considerable knowledge of their region, land management issues and key priorities. They attached a paper to their submission, proposing a new way of dealing with natural resource management issues in a more holistic manner.

4.1.2 Access to the information and support for good decision making

In our early engagement with the NRM Partners, it was agreed that we need to enable regional communities to feel like they can make decisions. There was discussion around the support required for regional communities to make good decisions such as having access to all of the correct information.

In Port Lincoln there was very strong support for local decision making. The need to make sound decisions based on facts and science, not on individual agendas was a priority. The same sentiment was expressed in Murray Bridge, noting that regional communities must not forget emerging science. In Gawler and Meningie, many participants noted that local decisions must be backed by good science.

In Leigh Creek participants provided an example of work that has occurred in the region with staff on the ground collecting and analysing data, that they felt was an excellent example of what can be

achieved. The staff were eventually pulled back to Adelaide and the data collected is not seemingly available for communities to utilise in decision making at the community level. It was pointed out that there is data available via the Arid Lands Information System, but it seemed as though little was known about the system or what can be accessed. It was hoped that this kind of problem would be solved through decentralised decision making.

In Marion, in response to the concept of decentralised decision making, one participant felt that there must be agreed high level outcome-based principles to provide guidance for the boards. It was felt to be a good concept overall, but one participant noted the need to include experts in community consultation processes.

There was strong support for local decision making, valuing and respecting local knowledge, allowing local decision making and embracing local wisdom on Kangaroo Island. Participants noted that small regions have limited resources and may need outside expertise and resources to enable them to manage their natural resources. Members of the KI NRM Board felt that this priority fits well with their priorities but that they would still want the support of government behind them for legalities, finance and to provide evidence bases.

4.1.3 Good governance is essential

Participants at a Conversation sector meeting noted that if the system were decentralised it would need to still be highly visible, accountable and transparent, ensuring high value for money. Concern was shown that becoming decentralised could lead to a potentially inefficient approach.

Participants in Port Lincoln suggested that to support decentralised decision making, there was a need to develop a governance and operational system or model that can be used by the boards for consistency across the state. In Clare, it was noted that the board needed to be able to speak freely, but decentralisation must not lack oversight of processes.

In Leigh Creek, it was noted that the Landscape Boards will require clear top-down guiding principles and governance and accountability for both dollars and how objectives are being met. The principle was agreed with, but participants also said there was a need for facilitation to enable good governance, links to government priorities and knowledge and communication of management processes. In Clare, a participant noted the need for local benchmarking.

Participants in Murray Bridge supported the concept and noted the need for good governance around potential conflicts of interest around local awarding of contracts to family and friends. In Mount Barker, a participant was concerned that vested interests might ignore science and a wider view beyond their patch.

4.1.4 Coordinated decision making

There were some concerns were raised during the engagement process that the principle of decentralised decision making felt to be 'at odds' with an integrated landscape approach and that

the concept needs further definition as at times it does not make sense to make decisions out of context from bigger picture priorities.

At the McLaren Vale community forum, one person noted that it was important that decentralisation doesn't lead to duplication. In Port Augusta it was suggested that inter-region co-ordination is essential, and one participant noted that the legislation should require a co-ordinating forum for all Landscape Boards.

Participants at Mawson Lakes noted that decentralised decision making may empower local communities (which they noted is really good) but will also make large scale projects more difficult. At Grange, it was noted that decentralising can result in problems if every little area does its own thing without regard to the overall good of a region.

Members of the Conservation sector felt that this approach has risks of being adhoc, not strategic and generally inefficient. They suggested that there needs to be an overarching framework. Members of the Primary Production sector also felt that there needs to be connection across borders and across the State through state wide objectives, guidelines and strategies. They suggested that where there are efficiencies in a collaborative approach (such as research on pests) boards should take a partnership or state approach but deliver local programs at board level.

4.1.5 Devolved Delivery

At the community forum in Murray Bridge, one participant felt that decentralising decisions was good, but that Landscape Boards should then delegate the implementation to others.

One participant at the combined NRM Partners, Conservation and Primary Production section session highlighted devolved delivery as a really important model, in boards having their own staff as employees of the board and being contract managers – delivering programs through established non-government organisations, community groups, industry, contractors, and also engaging agencies on a fee-for-service basis. In doing this, it would bring many more resources to the boards.

The written submission from Renmark Paringa Council noted that the South Australian Government should fund environmental programs not just rely on commonwealth funding. Local government should be funded to undertake the work on their behalf. A similar suggestion came from the City of Victor Harbor, noting in their written submission that the levy could be given to councils who then engage contractors to save duplication of contracting, often at the same sites. They said that joint programs have worked well and should continue.

In their written submission, Nature Foundation SA noted that devolved or outsourced delivery would be expected to have the effect of growing the number of people, groups and organisations involved in landscapes management. They noted that this in turn this would contribute more expertise and private resources, amplifying the effort, stimulating regional jobs, innovation and enterprise, and sustaining regional communities.

4.1.6 Resources to support Decentralisation

In Murray Bridge it was felt that the approach of decentralised decision making will only work if levies are spent in the region that they are collected.

In Grange, there was concern that decentralised decision making doesn't work without decentralised funding and decentralised expertise. It was noted that decentralised decision making demands decentralised funds for their implementation, monitoring and for being accountable for action.

In Mount Barker too, participants felt that decentralised decision making is good if there are decentralised funds to empower the decisions.

4.2 A simple and accessible system

4.2.1 General commentary

Many people were in favour of a more simple and accessible system, though many had concerns that simplification comes with significant risks in the natural resource management space, particularly in relation to enforcement of the legislation.

In Glenunga, one participant said that practice may not prove the reality with regard to a simple and accessible system, noting that Boards have different needs necessitating a level of complexity. For example, they noted that simplified levy collection basis will upset a lot of people.

In Gawler, it was said that a simple system sounds good but that the environment is complex. Someone else said it should be a system that is easy to understand and links well with all aspects – water, biodiversity, and the coast but don't lose any important information in the reform process.

In Berri, people felt that this was a principle based on jargon that sounded good on the surface but means nothing. It was also questioned how a simple system could be created that is driven by government department processes. In Grange it was felt that it is not possible to have simple and effective systems for managing complex entities. One participant suggested that this reform should aim to develop management that is responsive to, and responsible for complex natural and social systems.

The Eyre Peninsula NRM Board members liked the concept of this principle but would not want to see good governance and financial accountability lost as a result. The KI NRM Board noted the important role of the Community Engagement Officer in enabling a simple and accessible system. The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board members understand from the outside looking in that it looks complicated but that they are managing and are accountable for a budget of over \$33million so there needs to be some sort of system in place. The SA Murray-Darling NRM Board members also noted that some things just can't be simple, such as Water Allocation.

In Glenunga, one participant said, "To every complex question there is always a simple answer – and it is always wrong."

4.2.2 Simple and accessible legislation

In early conversations with the NRM Partners, there was agreement that the system does need to be enabling and as simple as possible. It was highlighted that whilst being simple, the system also needs to underpin property rights around water. The Act can be simple, but the detail needs to come in the regulations.

The Primary Producers NRM Committee acknowledged that there are clunky parts of Act, such as water, animal and plant control and it can be hard sometimes to take required actions or achieve required outcomes.

When asked for reactions to this principle, Conservation Council member group representatives felt that robust and effective regulation is what is required, and that regulation and compliance are needed to protect natural systems from rogue operators. They said that simple is good, but the Act needs to be robust, with participants requesting that outcomes are not compromised for simplicity. They felt that the removal of 'red tape' cannot be used to avoid environmental protections. They noted that compliance requires some enforcement measures.

At the Kingscote community forum, one participant noted that good intentions don't automatically lead to good outcomes, suggesting that some level of guidance and regulation is required to establish best practice standards. In Mawson Lakes too, participants noted that some regulation and red tape is essential for things such as preventing land clearing for habitat protection. They said that simple shouldn't mean that controls and conditions don't exist.

In Gawler, it was noted that streamlining should not remove checks and balances which are protections not merely 'red tape'. In Coober Pedy it was felt that less red tape is good, though it was noted that in cutting red tape, the environment must not be left open to exploitation. It was felt that the existing NRM Act is weak and needs 'more teeth' especially with compliance to land degradation issues.

In Mount Barker, one participant noted that "red tape has a purpose!" and another added that over simplifying the processes can lead to setting a dangerous precedent by allowing decision making by unqualified people. In Bordertown, one participant noted that a simple and accessible system was OK, as long as people cannot pay their way out of non-compliance, and as long as the culture supports legislation and is effective.

4.2.3 Simple and accessible planning

Participants in Port Lincoln noted that they would like to keep processes and planning simple and easy to understand, with a call for no more long-winded planning.

They requested that when making Landscape Boards make plans, those plans must be able to be implemented with accountability. In Victor Harbor, someone noted that they would like to see the business of the Boards come back to local towns and halls.

Participants in Mawson Lakes called for simpler plans, noting that numerous reports and management plans are compiled and then filed away, so they would like to see simpler action plans that are implemented.

4.2.4 Simple and accessible funding

Participants in Port Augusta discussed access to funding for projects, with a current lack of clarity around how to find and apply for grants, and how to fill in forms. One participant said, "Landholders like me are clueless about government departments!"

On Kangaroo Island, the community felt there is too much time spent applying for funding and questioned how it can be streamlined, or specific projects prioritised.

In Yunta, it was felt that a large percentage of funds is being eaten up in administration and participants were very much in support of streamlined governance.

“We support the establishment of a Grassroots Grants program... we would suggest a simple, short application process with a level of reporting and acquittal that is commensurate with the funds being made available.”

Nature Conservation Society of South Australia, via written submission

In Scotdesco, it was noted that one of the challenges in working with NRM is the difficulty in accessing funding for projects with excessive bureaucracy in applications, funding and reporting.

In their written submission, Riverland Landcare noted that they feel secretive tendering and competitive funding arrangements puts NRM groups against each other and undermines landscape-scale approach.

4.2.5 Simple and accessible information

In Clare, when asked for their reaction to this guiding principle, people said that they wanted communication on an annual basis using simplified information graphics so that rate payers know where the levy is being spent.

The same was echoed in Glenunga with participants saying they want to be clear about what money is spent on, and clarity on the purpose for which it was raised. Another participant hoped that community would be able to attend and access minutes of meetings of the Minister and Landscape Boards.

At the Mount Gambier community forum, one participant noted that as a young person in the agriculture industry, it is very unclear and confusing as to who is responsible for what.

4.2.6 Use of Blockchain

One participant at the McLaren Vale community forum suggested that the use of blockchain technology to create a simple and accessible system has many merits. He explained that Blockchain provides an immutable record within a decentralised and distributed network. This means that there is the possibility for a greater level of transparency from the governmental to community level. He suggested that the ease of accessibility of information by all stakeholders could engender a greater amount of confidence in reform implementation which could see a significant and necessary rise in participation and suggested imagining a scenario where user feedback can be achieved through a simple smartphone application that will allow direct comments on policy decisions.

4.3 Community and land owners at the centre

4.3.1 *General commentary*

The topic of community and landowners at the centre came through strongly in the priorities for people during the engagement process, with engagement, partnerships and collaboration regularly talked about, as well as decentralised decision making and board structure. However, in addition to this the following commentary was made when we asked participants for their reaction to the principles.

Participants who attended the community forum in Coober Pedy noted that this principle is very relevant in their region, stating that their pastoralists are custodians and have a keen understanding of the land and sustainability. They should have a key role in decision making and implementation.

However, in Glenunga, one participant felt that they cannot trust those seeking short term profit and lacking scientific knowledge to sustainably manage. In Clare, participants noted that land owners and community are well placed, but not necessarily most skilled or knowledgeable. There was again concern from a participant that some agricultural producers are more interested in land protection than biodiversity and landscape approaches. It was noted that there still needs to be laws controlling and/water use, not just allowing landholders to do whatever they want without regard to neighbours and the environment.

In Mount Barker, it was noted that this principle will only work if landowners and the community are working for the greater good of the environment. It was suggested that community champions should be identified. In Gawler, some felt that owners come and go but the land and the landscape remain, suggesting that all action on land needs to consider the land in perpetuity.

It was noted in Glenunga that many volunteer groups do not live or own land in the area they work. It was felt that they need to have a say, not just land owners, based on their ongoing and long-term resource commitment. In Port Augusta, a participant asked who is defined as a land user as it currently feels narrow and needs to be more encompassing.

A participant in McLaren Vale noted a similar sentiment that being a 'land user' does not mean competency in landscape management. A member of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board suggested removal of the words 'land owners', questioning why they are separated. Members of the Northern and Yorke NRM Board said the same, suggesting that land owners are the community too.

4.3.2 *Aboriginal community and land owners at the centre*

Participants at the Conservation Council member group session said that those who work on, live on and care for the land are well placed to sustain our environment, especially indigenous people.

It was noted that land holders are key as long as we understand that means government, Aboriginal people, and non-government organisations are significant land owners too. In Gawler, it was suggested that custodianship for land management can be learnt from Aboriginal people. In Port

Augusta, one participant asked consideration be given to how we engage with indigenous people and learn from ancient practices.

In Glenunga, treaties with First Nations were acknowledged, noting that Aboriginal people have sustained the land for thousands of years. They acknowledged that Aboriginal people have a special connection and this needs to be recognised in governance. In Victor Harbor, it was noted as being critical to have Aboriginal partnerships as a key success factor.

At the staff-led engagement session with the Point Pearce Aboriginal community, it was noted that the existing NRM Board has not been accountable to Point Pearce, and there has been only small help for the Indigenous Protected Area at Wardang Island. The people at the meeting suggested that the Landscape Board should start by communicating and visiting Point Pearce. It was noted that transparent dissemination of information is required so that Point Pearce knows what available, what opportunities exist and where they can step in.

During the engagement process, the importance of recognition of Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Landholding Authorities and Aboriginal Nations as 'Landholders' was noted.

4.3.3 Supporting land owners

In Port Lincoln, participants said that local NRM staff need to be supported to be responsive to local community needs, such as in response to natural disasters and ongoing land management. In Mount Barker, it was noted that land managers and volunteers need support such as technical expertise, strategic planning, and workplace health and safety. The principle was agreed with but people felt that it will only work if there are paid staff to support them.

In Gawler, it was noted that history shows landowners are not always good land managers. The same sentiment was acknowledged in Mawson Lakes, noting that "some land owners are terrible land managers" and that we should support the excellent ones, while improving performance of others.

In their written submission, Ag Excellence Alliance noted that broad acre farmers are the largest land managers in the state and that they integrate the management of their productive landscapes with the natural landscapes on their properties. They noted that farmers are very aware of the impacts of their farming systems on the natural systems on their properties and recognise the value of maintaining and enhancing soil health, water resources and native vegetation on their properties.

4.3.4 Community and land owners on Landscape SA boards

During the early engagement process, one member of the Primary Producers NRM Committee reflected on their time on an NRM Board where they would make decisions as a board but there'd be resistance from staff to implement the decisions. This led to great frustration.

At the McLaren Vale community forum, one participant noted the need for a Board and a set of partnership committees all equal in status but with different, complimentary roles. In Victor Harbor, it was suggested that Landscape Boards should be the 'user-friendly' interface between landowners and government policies.

In Marree, one participant noted that they loved the idea of landowners at the centre but said that time away from running their own business could be a barrier to participation. In Mount Gambier, participants noted that community will be involved if their opinions are respected.

4.3.5 Community and landowners working with others

Conservation Council member groups felt that this principle works but the other component to consider is to build successful and supportive coalitions across landholders, industry, government and the wider community. Landholders need support and partners, they are a wonderful part of the solution, but not the only.

In Mount Barker, the need to engage broadly was acknowledged. One participant said, "To say you spoke with one person from a subset or one family group or one organisation is not enough."

On Kangaroo Island, whilst it was agreed that there needs to be very strong representation from farmers, landholders and agriculture, it was noted that there are times when we need to consider broader issues such as climate change and marine water management that are beyond the local island community. A participant noted that there are other stakeholders other than those who work, live on and care for the land who also have ideas about management.

4.3.6 The Environment at the centre

"The natural environment must be at the centre otherwise we are doomed" was noted in Glenunga, and a member of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty NRM Board noted that this principle should put the environment at the centre, with community and landowners being a way of achieving what needs to be achieved.

4.4 A whole of landscape approach

This guiding principle was in the majority supported and it was linked to many via the priorities identified including biodiversity, partnerships, and protection and preservation. Many people felt that this represented the approach that has been adopted in recent years and many questioned its relationship with the new *Back to Basics* guiding principle. Many people asked for further definitions of this principle.

Broad support for a landscape-scale approach was also received via written submissions from individuals, as people noted that many issues don't respect boundaries and landscape ecology must be considered. One written submission from an individual suggested that there is somewhat of a contradiction between 'landscape' and the focus in 'back to basics.'

4.4.1 *Defining a whole of landscape approach*

When discussing a whole of landscape approach with the Primary Producers NRM Committee in our early engagement, the group felt that more information, or at least a definition was needed. The member groups of the Conservation Council noted that they were most committed to this principle but wanted to know more about how this principle might function, stating that a better definition was needed.

The NRM Partners mentioned that the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region is at the end of many of the systems and a whole of landscape approach to them is about integration. They suggested that they can't just work on weeds in one patch and someone has to make decisions about priorities. It was suggested that there needs to be more definition around Back to Basics and a Whole of Landscape Approach.

Participants in Port Lincoln noted that whatever is decided, everything is connected - society, science, and local knowledge. In Mount Barker, one participant said that we need to define whether 'Landscape' is a catchment, a region or something else.

At Glenunga, participants suggested the principle be rewritten in to everyday English. It was also suggested that 'landscape restoration' needs to be defined.

4.4.2 *A whole of landscape across both private and Crown land*

In our early engagement with the NRM Partners, the question of "Who pays for this?" was raised whilst discussing a Whole of Landscape Approach. Private landholders pay a levy, therefore perceive this should be about private land. It was felt that consideration needs to be given to recognise the impact of what they do on their neighbours. It was also suggested that the Crown should also pay a levy.

In Mount Barker there was recognition that agricultural land contributes to conservation outcomes. It was suggested that a whole of landscape approach needs to include both vegetation and farming on private and public land. In Clare, it was noted that the current approach removes the distinction

between public and private biodiverse land and that it is important to ensure the new focus embraces private land and land managers working with National Parks to improve functionality for wildlife.

In Port Augusta, it was acknowledged that thousands of primary producers care deeply about their native vegetation and need help to manage this for future generations and healthy catchments.

4.4.3 Partnerships and cross-boundary collaboration

In our focussed conversation with the Conservation sector, the desire to remove any obstructions to cross-regional project delivery and cooperation, for example promoting collaboration when it makes sense to do so, was noted. The approach also needs to be backed by long-term biodiversity reform and legislative backing. To have longevity and to be de-politicised, a whole of landscape approach needs community backing and to be driven by grass-roots, from the bottom up.

In Port Lincoln, it was noted that large scale projects and programs require strategic prioritisation and investment and supervision. The Conservation Council member groups also noted that large scale vision needs to be supported by the whole community and strategic, guaranteed long term funding to support it.

In Mount Gambier, it was suggested that Landscape SA needs to incorporate current government departments to avoid 'silos' all having different objectives. In Meningie, it was felt that this approach will require integrated management of land, water and biodiversity, noting that this is difficult to achieve when efforts are fragmented across different issues or land tenures.

In Coober Pedy, participants agreed with the approach and suggested that we need to ensure that strategic prioritisation and investment is managed to achieve high end sustainable outcomes. It was noted that large scale combined efforts will still need community input and raised visibility to meet transparency aims.

In Gawler, one participant suggested some landscape scale fire planning, using reservoirs and horticultural and viticultural areas as fire barriers. A participant at Mawson Lakes suggested that there needs to be state wide inventory and mapping of natural resources to identify threats and achievements, noting that South Australia is very behind in resource mapping. At this session, it was also questioned how a whole of landscape approach will work with decentralised decision making.

In Clare, the need for encouragement of volunteer groups who work across landscapes, such as Trees for Life, was noted.

On Kangaroo Island, the community noted that this approach helps to connect landholders and likeminded passion for conservation and landscape health.

4.4.4 Funding a whole of landscape approach

In Mount Barker it was suggested that a whole of landscape approach requires multi-year committed funding.

One participant in Clare noted sustainable agriculture as a system with the flexibility to fund innovative projects derived by farmer groups and organisations. It was said that we need to acknowledge sustainable agriculture and its role in healthy productive soils and water assets.

Members of the Conservation sector said that this principle demands a whole of sector approach, ensuring non-government organisations and community groups have equitable access to a range of funding opportunities, large and small. It also requires a more realistic timeframe for programs to deliver outcomes, for example a minimum of 3-5 year projects.

4.4.5 More than just the land

A participant in Meningie noted that we must also consider Coast and Marine. In Mount Barker, it was said that this principle needs to take in to account the sea. In Port Lincoln it was noted to recognise importance of watercourses and vegetation to biodiversity and creating resilient landscapes. The same was said in Kingscote, requesting that seascapes be considered for the island.

In McLaren Vale, it was suggested that the whole of landscape should also include the marine and coastal environment via a catchment to coast approach.

In Mount Barker, one participant felt that 'landscape' is a bad name, insinuating that is above the surface and instead we need to also take note and look after what is below the surface.

In Gawler, one participant suggested that nothing should be left out such as biodiversity and waste management. They noted that landscape includes people too. At Mawson Lakes, one participant noted that true beauty is in interfacing of species and land forms, not just landscapes.

Alternative names were explored by participants in McLaren Vale, with suggestions such as Managing our Ecosystems, Managing our Biodiversity, Managing SA Biodiversity, Bio Regional Management and Managing Yerta (using specific Aboriginal language to the specific board area) were included.

In their written submission, Southport Surf Lifesaving Club noted that the reform proposals contain too much of a focus on terrestrial issues, especially considering all by one region has coast as a part of the geography. Along with several other written submissions, they suggest coast and marine management carry as much weight as any other aspect.

4.5 Back to Basics

Out of the five principles, the Back to Basics principle created the most deliberation. Many people noted the tension between this principle and a whole of landscape approach, and many noted the need to include more than just soil quality, water management and pest plant and animal control as ways of achieving vibrant biodiversity.

At our early engagement with the NRM Partners, some participants suggested that the *Back to Basics* concept would resonate with farmers. It was suggested by one participant that farm biodiversity should be included as part of the *Back to Basics*. Another suggestion was that this principle should be called Sustainable Agriculture – a more useful, integrated approach.

Back to Basics was a key priority for the Primary Producers NRM Committee members. It was felt that this linked well to the principles of community and landowners being involved. It was acknowledged that as well as soil quality, water management and pest plant and animal control, native landscapes or native vegetation was missing from the diagram provided.

At the focussed conversation with the Conservation sector, the biggest concern relating to the guiding principles was the perceived inconsistency between *Back to Basics* and the *Whole of Landscape Approach*. Participants felt that there is a large gap in the back to basics approach of biodiversity, feeling that the principle overall is completely redundant and an integrated approach to landscapes is needed. Members of the group felt that this principle is backwards facing, and it needs to be future focussed.

“Back to Basics? Really?... The basics listed are not enough anymore in the 21st Century.” Betty, via YourSAy

The Kangaroo Island NRM Board members felt that this principle doesn't cover the complete biodiversity, ecosystems and whole of landscape approach that is required. The Northern and Yorke NRM Board noted that there was nothing basic about natural resource management! The SA Arid Lands NRM Board noted that a *Back to Basics* approach needs to be balanced with a whole of landscape approach and equitable distribution of funding provided to enable Boards with smaller populations to be effective.

The Eyre Peninsula NRM Board members felt that this principle is delivered relatively well already in their region and that they never left this approach.

Members of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board showed concern around *Back to Basics*, though acknowledged that this is an area they could do more of. Discussion occurred regarding previous NRM approaches that would include going out to spray weeds or do soil management, but there was no logic or strategic thinking around this and they feel that this needs to be there. Members of this group noted that global science is saying that the strategy is more important than ever, and not a back to basics approach and feel that it's not effective to achieve enduring outcomes.

Members of the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board believe in social and ecological systems based on catchments and say that there needs to be a strong focus on biodiversity. They feel that the *Back to Basics* approach is simply treating the systems, whereas the whole of landscape approach treats the cause. This board aligns mostly with the latter. They said that the *Back to Basics* approach is what they did twenty years ago and is frustrating because it undermines the work that has been happened. They also noted that what they need to do isn't basic – it's complex – it needs to be smarter than going back to the basics, however the board did note that this depends on the definition of basics.

“We acknowledge and recognise the vital importance of water, soil and pest plants and animals to effective landscape management. In addition, there are a number of other key threats and assets that should be integral to the work of the Landscape Boards and new Act, including climate change, biodiversity and people.”

Conservation Council SA, via written submission

In McLaren Vale, participants commented on pest plants in National Parks, stating that they are out of control and being managed largely by volunteers. Participants questioned where the management of pest animals currently is.

Participants in Murray Bridge wrote that this principle should include the basics being pest plants and animal control, soil stabilisation, revegetation and water conservation. In Kingscote, suggestions included funding landholders directly for creek crossings, fencing, lime sand and perennials.

A primary producer at the Clare community forum referenced the summary document where it says that regional communities want to focus on soil, water and pest plants and animals, noting that this is not the case for them, and that they really care about native vegetation, native fauna and biodiversity as a whole.

In Glenunga, one participant wrote that the basics need to be science based, not people-centric. They said that functioning ecosystems support us all.

There was some tension around the concept of this principle at Mawson Lakes with many participants feeling strongly that biodiversity should be one of the priorities listed as part of *Back to Basics*. Several participants noted that they felt this as a narrow and dated approach to NRM, feeling that it won't achieve the results that are needed in the broader environment. One participant noted the coastal communities and said, “We are not all farmers.”. In their written submission, the Northern and Yorke NRM Board, along with others, noted that they believe coastal zones and marine ecosystems are part of the landscape and should be actively managed and included in legislation.

In contrast, 300 kilometres away in Yunta, discussion occurred around the need to have more of a focus on having more on the ground staff across the region able to work with pastoralists and land managers to help coordinate programs, provide advice and provide gentle encouragement and guidance to help land owners do the right thing. It was said that NRM has grown into a predictable

bureaucracy and lost its purpose to work on land improvement and allowing Pastoralists and other land users to use funds to address issues adequately. One participant wrote “Back to Basics - This wish is repeated again and again by long-term owners and managers.”

In their written submission, the Eyre Peninsula NRM Board noted the need to retain connection between biodiversity and ecosystem health with going back to basics, including finding balance between protection and recreation too.

In the written submission from Naracoorte Lucindale Council, it was noted that the back to basics principals of the reform were supported, as there is currently a “ridiculous extent of consultation and engagement”.

Responding to a letter from the Minister asking for key priorities for the reform, Conservation SA acknowledged and recognised the vital importance of water, soil and pest plants and animals to effective landscape management but noted that there are a number of other key threats and assets that should be integral to the work of the Landscape Boards and new Act, including climate change, biodiversity and people. The Goolwa to Wellington Local Action Planning Association also referred to a focus on assets and threats being the most appropriate approach to natural resource management in their written submission.

In their written submission, the Australian Coastal Society SA Branch notes that Minister Speirs makes it clear that the emphasis for the new legislation is on ‘soil quality, water management and pest and animal control’ rather than integrated natural resource management. They feel that such a restrictive approach does not allow scope for proper stewardship of coastal and marine resources.

5 | Feedback On Key Reform Proposals



5.1 Board membership

The Discussion Paper and all forums and meetings held around the state provided information regarding the proposal that the nine Landscape Boards will have seven members, with three elected by the community. The other four members, including the Chair, would be appointed by the Minister in a more traditional recruitment process as currently occurs.

5.1.1 *Widespread concern regarding the cost of a community election process*

There was widespread concern at the potential cost of a community election process. In many locations it was felt that an election process would be a waste of money, take a lot of time, and participants weren't sure who would vote. It was felt that a community election process could be costly and result in three appointments of the same type of people and thereby missing out on an opportunity to increase diversity.

Concerns were raised from NRM boards about whether the cost of the election process would be funded by the levy.

5.1.2 *Concern regarding vested interests and single-issue lobbyists*

In Clare, participants noted that the Boards need to comprise of skilled individuals and not people who are wanting to promote their own agenda or who have vested interests. In Berri, there was great concern regarding an election process, including that this could become a popular vote process. It was felt that personal interests need to be kept out of the boards and 'community' needs to be written in to their governance. This was seen as a significant risk with the proposed community election process in many locations.

In Mount Barker, participants were curious as to how the four Ministerial appointments would be selected, highlighting a need to avoid vested interests and suggesting that clear criteria would need to be set.

"The really difficult aspect of democracy is for the people eligible to vote getting to know the candidates well enough to choose who they want to vote for." Robert, via YourSAy

At our focussed conversation with young people, they advised that they felt sceptical about the proposal election process, noting that anyone could be elected via a popularity vote. One participant said, "My grandmother doesn't know about environmental field but could get elected!"

If the proposed model were to go ahead, many people felt it important that clear criteria needs to be set, which candidates being pre-selected or nominated need to meet.

There was concern from Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board members that an election process may lead to bias on boards, and there may be too much self-interest with a popularity approach.

The Eyre Peninsula NRM Board felt that community interest in voting would be minimal. On the Eyre Peninsula it is considered that it would be difficult to obtain enough of an interest.

In Scotdesco, participants felt that whilst the principle of community elected representatives had some appeal, there were some problems or constraints identified for the Alinytjara Wilurara region, including the potential for larger families to have greater influence in the voting process and when people are elected as individuals, they don't have an obligation or requirement to bring information back to the communities they represent, leading to a lack of understanding and transparency.

“...how the new Boards will be elected... questions if those with vested or commercial interests and are well known in the community because of their high profile will be elected. Will the bigger picture be the focus, or will they be elected on platforms that suit their own purposes?” Gayl, via YourSAy

In their written submission, Agriculture KI noted concerned with the possibility of members being elected via a popular vote as they feel this may discount some people from nominating, as they do not have the time or inclination to run a campaign to garner votes. They noted that one of the keys strengths of the current boards is the strong emphasis placed on skills. The said that the popular vote option does not guarantee the appropriate cross section of skills, experience and local community knowledge.

In their written submission, the Electoral Reform Society SA suggested that voting should be voluntary.

5.1.3 Finding balance between elected and appointed positions

Participants at the community forum in Marree suggested that if the current proposal is to be implemented, at least four members should be elected by the community, with three including the chair elected by the Minister, noting that all board members must come from the region.

The same suggestion was made by participants in Kingscote, suggesting that the make-up of the board should be switched from the Minister's proposal so that 4 members be elected by the community, and 3 appointed by the Minister, in order to get true local decision making.

The same sentiment was expressed at the community forum in Victor Harbor, with some participants suggesting that they felt the smaller the better, with regards to board size. However, some participants proposed a board size of eight, with the community electing four positions and the Minister appointing four people.

In Mawson Lakes, participants also asked that four positions be elected by the community, and just three appointed by the Minister, though the cost of the election process was a major concern. In Leigh Creek, participants suggested that if this proposal goes ahead, four people should be elected by the community and three people appointed by the Minister.

In Mount Barker, the ratios between Minister appointed positions and community elected positions were the subject of conjecture and debate. Concern was shown around the Minister appointed Chair, and whether they'd be just a 'yes' person to the Minister. A suggestion was that the Chair should be elected by the board.

In Grange, there was also concern that the proposed approach would be 'stacked' by the Minister, and some participants felt this would be no change to how it is now. They felt that the proposed structure doesn't demonstrate community decision making. Some participants said they would like to see four elected by the community and three appointed by the Minister.

“Your proposal to appoint some members through a process that you undertake and another through a community election will create an imbalance, and an inequity inside the board room.”

DemocracyCo, via written submission

Members of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board showed concern that the proposed mix of minister appointees and community elected members could create a hybrid board who aren't sure whether they are there to represent the community or something else. Members of the Northern and Yorke NRM Board felt that the proposed structure of community elections runs a risk of board members having a vested interest, and only those with great lobbying power, and the loudest voices, would win.

Some members of the group in Port Lincoln felt the whole board should be community elected.

In Ceduna, the group felt strongly that equality is extremely important, particularly when considering board representation. The group also felt very strongly that all residents (not just levy or rate payers) should be eligible to vote for community members on to the Landscape board. Participants in Bordertown provided opinion contrary to this, where they felt that those paying the levy should be eligible to vote, with one vote per property owner.

Most comments received via written submissions from individuals pertained to board membership including wondering why there would be more minister-appointed positions than community-elected, concern about getting people with the appropriate skills onto the boards, ensuring diversity in board membership, and how elections would work.

Members of the forum held in Glenunga felt it odd that the Green Adelaide board would be structured differently to the other Landscape Boards, stating that it was suspicious that there were no community representatives involved. There was also a specific concern as to why Green Adelaide would only have minister-appointed members in written submissions from individuals.

5.1.4 *The importance of good local skill and knowledge mix*

At our focussed conversation with young people, participants asked how the Boards will ensure that there is equal representation of people from both environmental and agricultural backgrounds.

In Port Lincoln, it was strongly felt that board representation must be skills based, whether appointed by the Minister or elected by the community and that a shortlisting process could help with this. In Port Augusta, there was general support for the structure of the new boards, but participants were keen to ensure the right people are allocated through due process and against relevant criteria. Members need local knowledge and have the ability to contribute skills and experience.

In Marree, it was noted that appointees must be local people who understand the uniqueness and challenges of the outback region.

In Mount Barker, participants questioned that if the community were to elect three representatives on to the board, how this would adequately cover off on the breadth of industries and interests that utilise the landscape across a broad region. It was felt that industries such as fisheries, agriculture, vines, as well as Aboriginal culture all need to be represented and reducing the board to 7 members would limit representation opportunity.

"...both community elected, and government appointed board members should be selected from all community representatives. It needs to recognise that tourism in the SA Arid Lands has increased exponentially and needs representation on the Board."

Prue, via YourSAy

In Victor Harbor, participants felt that the boards must be made up of a diversity of thinkers including scientists, famers, Aboriginal landholders, including geographic representation across the region. It was suggested that the current boards are dominated by people from government, and perhaps these people could be ex-officio. In Mount Barker, participants felt that there needs to be a better representation of industry sectors and landholders on the new Landscape SA Boards.

In Meningie, it was noted that board membership must include expertise, skill mix and knowledge and that the number of seven appointees is about right. It was suggested that the Chair could be appointed by the community as an independent person and approved and endorsed by the Minister.

At our focussed conversation with young people, participants also noted the need for qualified people on the boards, not just random people. It was suggested that there must be some criteria, including having lived in the region for a while. They suggested teaming up farmers and the best qualified people.

The Kangaroo Island NRM Board members highlighted that the existing words in the NRM Act are good in suggesting the type of representation required on the boards.

5.1.5 Representation of Aboriginal people, women and young people

In Berri, one participant noted that NRM is currently a very closed community that needs to be more open. There needs to be diversity on the boards, including Aboriginal representation and good geographic coverage. Aboriginal representation was specifically mentioned across many of the statewide forums.

Aboriginal Elders in Ceduna suggested that one of the Minister appointed positions should be an Aboriginal person, as well as one of the members elected by the community. In Nepabunna, our conversations told us that Aboriginal people would like an Aboriginal person who lives in the area to represent their interests.

At the focussed conversation with a range of South Australia Native Title Prescribed Bodies Corporate, it was said that Aboriginal Nations' involvement in the Landscapes Act must be formalised. It was felt that it can't be left as a decision of individual boards as some seem to be not interested in engaging.

At the meeting with the Point Pearce Aboriginal community, it was noted that the new boards need dedicated and identified Aboriginal members, not skills based. It was suggested that one male and one female member was needed and that Aboriginal board members needed to be strong, knowledgeable and need to be living on Country.

At the combined Conservation and Primary Production sector forum, it was noted that women are known not to put their hands up for things and generally need to be tapped on the shoulder and encouraged. The same goes with Aboriginal representation. Participants questioned how an election process would ensure diversity in board membership, together with the skills and good governance.

In Port Lincoln, representation from around the whole region was noted as being essential, plus someone from indigenous community must be on the board.

Participants in Mount Barker felt it important that consideration be given to how to attract young people to the board. Youth engagement was also raised as very important in Mount Gambier and Kingscote, with participants questioning to get representation from all demographics on to the boards.

In their written submission, Tatiara District Council proposed a model where a youth representative could be on each board, with a one-year term.

In Mawson Lakes, it was stated that young people should be on the boards as the voice of the future. Participants would like to see good diversity on the boards, with no personal interest or opportunity for financial gain.

In Clare, one participant noted that there needs to be more of a focus on skills and knowledge and community leadership, than other matters such as gender.

5.1.4 *Alternative models*

During our conversations, many alternative suggestions were made to the proposed community election process which people felt would provide a more cost-effective, efficient and effective outcome.

At the combined Conservation and Primary Production sector meeting, it was suggested that rather than have three people elected from the community, it is better to have community members to apply. It was noted that this is how it currently is. One participant suggested an alternative model to the election process that still allows for community to have a say, through establishing a selection panel which is potentially made up of peak bodies, or people from the region, and they could choose three people and recommend to the Minister the other four people, or the selection panel could recommend to the Minister all seven members.

Many people in the room agreed with the above approach and it was strongly felt that there are ways of getting community input without necessarily going to a community election. Each region could have a particular focus depending on its need for example, those regions with more of a farming focus would have more farming focus on their selection panel. The peak bodies on the selection panel could be embedded in the new legislation.

Another participant suggested an independent professional organisation could be used, similar to a recruitment agency, with a set of selection criteria for each board, and everyone can apply and then they run the selection process for the Minister and provide a shortlist. They could either make the recommendation or make the decision. This would be completely independent.

Participants in Glenunga suggested that community representation should be via nomination from key groups, including volunteer and land care groups, and not by election. Advisory Groups were also suggested as a way for boards to receive advice, with particular reference to both advice from experts who can provide evidence-based science, but also this being a way that Landcare groups and volunteers could provide input in to decision making.

A similar proposal was made in Kingscote, which no participants disagreed with, being that groups should be identified to nominate people on to the boards, noting that these groups already have a process for electing representatives. These qualified locals should be put forward for positions on the board and appointed by the Minister.

In Berri, Participants also put forward suggestions for alternative approaches to recruit to the Landscape Boards, including that nominations be put forward to the Minister and a panel of selectors make the decision based on what skills the board requires. The idea of a pool of people with identified skill sets could be available to be appointed to the board. It was recommended that local stakeholder groups such as Regional Development and local industry be engaged to determine what skills sets are needed on the board.

The Northern and Yorke NRM Board members were not averse to three community members being nominated by groups such as councils, Primary Producers SA or other relevant organisations, but it must be clearly explained what is being achieved by taking this approach. Members of the South East NRM Board said that an alternative to the community election process could be to establish a community-based selection panel drawn from across sector groups and the region to make either

recommendation to the Minister and/or appoint the community nominated members themselves based on criteria.

In Scotdesco, a similar approach was suggested whereby the Yalata representatives felt it would be preferable for each Alinytjara Wilurara community organisation's board to nominate their Board, for the Minister's approval, instead of a community vote for individuals.

In Leigh Creek it was noted that the existing NRM groups in the SA Arid Lands region work well, and that they should be retained and could be elected by the community. The groups themselves could then elect a representative to the board. It was felt that a broad based election won't work across the region, especially as this region does not have council elections and operates differently. Hence the idea that a more localised approach via the NRM groups would be a better approach. It was proposed that the NRM Board could take on more of a jury model with a diversity of local people that oversee the groups who could be community elected.

In Marree, the group proposed a structure and process for appointment of community members to the Board which delivers on the key principles being put forward by the Minister, and while different from the current proposal being suggested by the Minister, allows for a bottom up approach and representation across the region. This model would ensure the community is well represented across the region and enables the communities and staff across the region to work within their local area minimising extended travelling across the entire outback area. This proposed model is shared in detail in the forum report in the appendices of this report.

In their written submission, the Outback Communities Authority suggested considering the establishment of district groups within the larger landscape regions based on soil board boundaries.

In the written submissions from individuals, one comment made regarding board function suggested the boards appoint 'partnership committees' that can advise the boards on specific aspects such as biodiversity, feral animals, or water. One person was very critical of the duplication that NRM/Landscapes has and wanted to see it abolished, one person though changing the name from NRM to Landscapes would cause non-recognition among the public, and one person was confused as to if the new legislation would apply to all land or just public land.

In the written submission from the City of Charles Sturt, they noted that councils across the State are significant land managers and there should be greater recognition of, and support for, local government as a key stakeholder and delivery partner. With this in mind, they recommended that a representative from local government is required in the composition of each Board.

In their written submission, DemocracyCo suggested a model which would start with an Expression of Interest Taskforce consisting of a diverse blend of stakeholders and community members from all regions be convened to undertake the preparatory work to develop an expression of interest brief that defines the skills required for Board members and Board chairs and outlines the selection criteria. They suggested that the Chief Executive of the relevant departments and the Minister and shadow counterpart also sit on this group and work with it to undertake this work. Together, the Taskforce creates and agrees on the Expression of Interest document. This document is released to the public, and nominations requested.

DemocracyCo suggested the second stage being a Regional Appointment Taskforce whereby a selection taskforce is convened to assess nominations and provide recommendations to the Minister. For transparency, they suggested that one taskforce is established for each Region. This taskforce would include regional stakeholders plus people from an outside region with no previous involvement in natural resource management to ensure that appointments are based on the best, most suitable candidates, for example those which meet the criteria developed in the Expression of Interest.

They suggested that this appointment taskforce has authority to recommend for appointment all members, except the Chair, and that the relevant agency (Department of Environment and Water) has no role in the appointment process. Upon completion of their process, the Regional Appointment Taskforce would provide recommendations to the Minister. If the Minister is not willing to accept any of their nominees, he or she must explain why, and it must only be based on suitability against the criteria. In this case, the Minister would direct the Appointment Taskforce to recommend an alternative candidate. The process would end with the Minister announcing appointments.

5.1.5 Succession planning for boards

Participants in Port Lincoln suggested that grassroots initiatives (funded by the Grassroots Grants program) should include regional succession planning for Landscape SA boards, skilling up younger demographic for future roles on the board, or beyond.

Members of the Northern and Yorke NRM Board echoed a similar sentiment, noting the board felt a better use of \$2 million (when discussing the Grassroots Grants program) could be to set up a Youth Environmental Leadership program across the state, replacing one that has recently been discontinued in the region due to lack of funding.

This idea was suggested in Bordertown too, with participants suggesting succession planning be embedded into the education process through schools and that school students should be supported to attend Board meetings as observers to help them to understand what goes on and the importance of natural resource management. They felt strongly that there needs to be an increase in the level of active engagement by involving youth and preparing the next generation.

Succession planning for boards was also noted as important by participants in Mount Barker, at the Primary Producers focussed workshop and at the South East NRM Board meeting.

5.2 Board accountabilities

The Discussion Paper and all forums and meetings held around the state provided information regarding board accountabilities, noting that the new boards would:

- Be responsible for setting their own budgets, shared publicly;
- Employ a general manager, who manages staff;
- Have the power to set and manage their own levies;
- Establish a 5-year Landscape Plan for their region, identifying priorities;
- Establish partnerships and undertake outsourcing.

Much of the input received regarding board accountabilities has been captured elsewhere in this report, such as under the heading of Planning, Accountability and Coordination within the Top 20 Priorities for Reform chapter.

In addition to this, the facilitation team used this section of the statewide conversation process with community to ask participants to consider what processes are important to have in place to best evaluate and report on outcomes from managing natural resource management. Suggestions included, but weren't limited to, the following –

Establish measurable economic, social and environmental outcomes, supported by data.	Develop a governance and operational system/model inclusive of reporting, engagement.	5-year plan have staged progress reports: review process; change process.
Transparency and accountability both within region and to Minister.	Identify key partnerships via planning processes for delivery of plan outcomes.	Use of technology to manage and monitor project deliverables.
Landscape condition information kept in central place.	Reporting on what is delivered and the work of the Board – annual reporting needs to occur in detail.	Surveys – need to know what is in the environment, so you know what you are trying to manage ~ feral, native flora, fauna protection.
Assessment of community attitude knowledge and involvement.	Outcomes need to be well integrated and embedded into other community priorities such as health and education.	Every 'project' must report progress and achievement – publicly available – learning from failures (as well as success).
Standard benchmarking.	Universal definitions.	Meetings open to the public.

Participants at the focussed conversation with young people asked that if the Landscapes Boards are kept 'at arm's length from the government', how will the Board be kept accountable? They also asked how the new Act will ensure that the same issues with NRM won't happen again.

In their written submission, the Eyre Peninsula NRM Board noted that streamlining planning and modern engagement would free up resources for on-ground works and there is need for streamlined planning and reporting, suggesting a single state strategic planning document be in place, with 3-year regional plans alongside it.

5.3 Boundaries

The Discussion Paper and all forums and meetings held around the state provided information regarding the proposed nine new Landscape Boards, plus Green Adelaide.

It was stated that existing boundaries are proposed to be largely retained, however there could be some changes to boundaries depending on the outcomes of the engagement process. The boundaries for the new Adelaide region are not yet drawn.

The facilitation team raised the topic of boundaries when holding conversation events and meetings across the state and provided opportunity for the community to comment on anything they would like the Minister to know about regarding boundaries in each region.

5.3.1 *General commentary on boundaries*

In our early engagement meetings, the NRM Partners urged the Minister to not change a boundary of any region to address financial security for a board. They felt that there are other ways to address financial security. The group felt that the current boundaries of regions across the state are working well.

In many areas, boundaries were discussed with political, economic or ecology being typically used to determine them. In the majority, it was felt that for natural resource management purposes, ecological factors were the most important. It was noted in several places that this often connects also to the boundaries of Aboriginal Nations, which are generally based on the ecology of landscapes. In their written submission, the Native Vegetation Council noted that managing landscapes as bio-regions is essential for a number of benefits to be realised.

There were some general comments wanting more information about boundaries in written submissions received from individuals, and one person suggested that they follow water catchments and local government boundaries.

The written submission from the Stormwater Management Authority noted similar sentiment, suggesting that the Minister consider making boundary changes with due regard for natural water catchment boundaries and to existing local government boundaries.

In the written submission from the City of Onkaparinga, it was noted that any changes to NRM boundaries incur significant work for council data management, mapping and customer service. Alexandrina Council noted their concern that splitting the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region in to three regions will put funding for the Hills and Fleurieu region at risk.

5.3.2 SA Arid Lands

At the Port Augusta community forum, the Minister specifically asked participants to talk about whether Port Augusta should be included in the Arid Lands area, to which they all agreed it should be, together with Whyalla and the Barrier Highway area heading back south toward the Murray.

Strong consideration should also be given to shifting Whyalla into the SA Arid Lands region as well and it was pointed out that Whyalla do not see themselves in the same landscape as Port Lincoln and Lower Eyre and relate more to the Arid Lands environment. In Port Augusta, there was also strong discussion around pushing the south eastern boundary of the Arid Lands Landscape Board region further south to incorporate the region to the north of the Murray-Darling Basin area as this is semi-arid country and fits more with the northern landscape region.

In Leigh Creek, there was some concern that by including Port Augusta they will dominate how the funding is delivered on the ground given the greater population. It was felt that this is a big risk and has the potential to become what Adelaide is to the regions, albeit on a slightly smaller scale. People in Leigh Creek felt that it makes sense from a landscape perspective to include Hawker region and the Eastern Districts along the Barrier Highway pushing further south. One suggestion was to extend the entire southern boundary to the Goyder Line, but not include Port Augusta. A landscape approach to drawing the boundary was supported.

People in Yunta broadly supported Port Augusta and Flinders Rangers Council coming into the SA Arid Lands region, although noted that this may need further careful consideration, and that consideration should be given to moving the south eastern boundary further south.

At the community forum in Marree, participants felt that Port Augusta should not be included in the SA Arid Lands region. Port Augusta issues are significantly different to the SA Arid Lands region and having them included may result in a redirection of funds away from the outback area to support the community with the strongest voice.

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board also noted that Port Augusta issues are very different from the Arid Lands region. While the surrounding area around Port Augusta aligns, the issues for the city itself are very different. Port Augusta is dealing with matters related to an urban environment within a local government area that has a strong voice and in this sense is quite different when compared with the unique issues of the Arid Lands region. The board members noted that there needs to be greater thought given to the possible implications of this boundary change as it would be a risk to make the change purely from a financial perspective or perceived levy distribution benefit which may not in reality deliver the right outcome.

In Marree, it was felt that the region should reflect the unincorporated area, inclusive of the two exceptions, Coober Pedy and Roxby Downs. The south eastern boundary along the Barrier Highway could move marginally south, but traditionally this area has not seen themselves as being associated with the broader Arid Lands region. They felt that this area should decide to what extent they are included with Arid Lands. Hawker could be included in the area, but not Quorn. Participants again noted that this needs to be carefully considered as it begins to incorporate an area that has different administration arrangements, such as Flinders Rangers Council. Participants suggested that there is merit in aligning the region to the unincorporated area to avoid cross over with different administrative boundaries, levy structures and tenures.

5.3.3 Alinytjara Wilurara

In Ceduna, the option to move the Alinytjara Wilurara boundary to incorporate the town of Ceduna was discussed, though the discussion then went broader and no consensus was reached. Participants advised that people in Ceduna often feel unrepresented or heard when Port Lincoln is seen as the centre for the region they are in.

In Ceduna there was also discussion about how the Eyre Peninsula and Alinytjara Wilurara regions do not align with cultural boundaries and native title boundaries.

Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board noted potential for boundary overlaps between their region and the Eyre Peninsula, including potential for informal or formal partnerships in this area.

5.3.4 Eyre Peninsula

In Ceduna, one suggestion was that there were more accessible and responsive arrangements for people to the north of the region when there was an NRM office based out of Wudinna. There were also advantages when there were sub-regions involved in planning and delivery of projects. Some participants felt that this model warrants further consideration. While some participants (but not all) thought reinstating Wudinna as a Landscape SA hub would work, it was agreed by participants that a Ceduna hub would work best to reflect local issues and priorities.

Members of the Eyre Peninsula NRM Board said that Whyalla should stay in the region as they have worked hard with this area. It was noted that without their levy it may make the Eyre Peninsula region non-viable.

5.3.5 Northern and Yorke

Boundaries were the biggest priority for the Northern and Yorke NRM board to discuss during the meeting, and their written submission also notes this. With regard to the possibility of Port Augusta moving in to the SA Arid Lands region, the group said that if there was no gulf, it might make sense. But as at the head of the gulf, Port Augusta should stay in the Northern and Yorke region, given the amount of coastline already in this region.

However, the board suggested that the Northern and Yorke board could manage the coastline on behalf of the SA Arid Lands board, much like they already work with the SA Murray-Darling Basin Board on cross-boundary projects. The board acknowledged the sense of community in Port Augusta and that it makes sense for Port Augusta to be in SA Arid Lands region. The group highlighted that in making the final decision, the needs of Aboriginal nations in the area should be considered.

The coast was a recurring topic during the meeting with the Point Pearce Aboriginal community and Narungga Country (Yorke Peninsula) people see this zone as key to caring for their cultural heritage, engagement in natural resources management and pursuing economic development opportunities, including tourism, ranger employment, visitor management, and native plant harvesting.

With regard to the southern border, it was strongly felt that Clare belongs in the Northern and Yorke region. Members of the group said that Clare fits with the identity of Northern and Yorke, Clare is the centre and Clare is not the Adelaide Plains. It was also noted that councils to the north of Clare align south to Clare, not north to Port Augusta. One suggestion also included that Northern and Yorke could 'take in' the Adelaide Plains, though council areas should be asked where they would like to sit.

"I am concerned by the proposed boundary changes for the Northern and Yorke Region." Ruth, via YourSAy

Participants in the Clare community forum noted that boundaries for the Northern and Yorke region currently work well on 'landscape function' and focus. Consistency among boundaries used by local councils, Landscape SA and state departments was noted and the amount of work for local government increases if you split a council region across two NRM regions.

5.3.6 SA Murray-Darling Basin

There was some discussion about boundaries of the region with the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board, specifically in relation to the council areas of Alexandrina, Mount Barker and Goyder. The board feels strongly that boundaries should not be the tool ensuring the financial viability of the boards. This board believes in a landscape approach of catchments, bio-landscapes and social considerations.

The board felt that Alexandrina and Mount Barker shouldn't be split as this would be splitting the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges in half. It makes no sense to the board members. From a Murray-Darling Basin perspective, they fit in to the Basin and this was a decision based on science. The NRM Board suggested that where good relationships exist, don't change the boundaries. For example, the local people in Burra would be disappointed to be removed from our region.

In the written submission from Alexandrina Council, they noted their membership of the Southern and Hills Local Government Association and therefore feel they have the most appropriate alignment with the Hills and Fleurieu region, requesting that most of their council area fall in this new region.

In the written submission from Mount Barker District Council it was noted that the people, culture and economy of Mount Barker identifies with the Adelaide Hills and Mount Lofty Ranges region. The submission stated that Mount Barker should not be in the SA Murray Darling Basin region. They also noted that the whole council area should be in one region not two.

5.3.7 *South East*

The South East NRM Board noted that while there are no proposed boundary changes for the South East region, should consideration be given to the north west boundary north of Salt Creek, which is the boundary that receives most debate in the region, then communities of interest need to be considered together with landscape issues. This includes considering how the community structure operate and their links to key town centres.

One comment made at the Mount Gambier community forum was that the Coorong area needs to be within Murray Darling Basin region. There was also uncertainty from one participant around where the South East upper boundary is. At Bordertown, the community said that the upper south east has distinct issues and characteristics from the rest of the south east region and this needs to be considered when allocating funding to programs and projects. Often the area is treated as the poor cousin to the lower south east.

Participants in Bordertown also said that consideration could be given to the north western boundary of the region and where it is best located. It was acknowledged that this is not a straight forward issue as the lower Coorong is connected to the lower lakes and Murray-Darling Basin. Any changes need to consider levy implications and what's best for the landscape. Where possible, alignment with other regional boundaries, such as the RDA and local government, helps in developing partnerships and management plans and this in itself could be a reason for considering a shift. It was noted that the current arrangements in place have been largely driven by landscape and this should be considered in any review process. It was also noted that Alexandrina Council should be consulted if there was to be any changes to this boundary.

5.3.8 *Green Adelaide, Plans and Valleys and Hills and Fleurieu*

In our meeting with the Adelaide and Mount Lofty NRM Board, members strongly felt that the catchment split in to the three regions is the major flaw of the proposed approach. They said that boundaries must be based on a water allocation and catchment approach and decisions must be made on an environmental basis. This was also noted in their written submission. In our conversation, they added that setting up two extra boards isn't sustainable and may even cause competition between them. A suggestion was made that there could be one board for the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region, with three advisory boards. A representative from each of these advisory boards could then attend the main board meeting.

In their written submission, the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board suggested that Green Adelaide incorporates all urban council areas.

The written submission from the City of Onkaparinga suggested that the boundary for Green Adelaide should be consistent with the Greater Adelaide urban planning boundary, ending at Sellicks Beach. The boundary line should be based on the natural resources management functions and urban ecology focus. It was suggested that the remaining council area should be included in Hills and Fleurieu region which is consistent with the McLaren Vale Protected Area and considers community identity.

Relating to this, there was a good discussion in McLaren Vale with regard to boundaries of the new Hills and Fleurieu region, following the Minister asking whether McLaren Vale and Willunga should fall within this new region or within Green Adelaide. Whilst many options were explored through the discussion, a poll undertaken showed that the overwhelming majority of participants would like McLaren Vale and Willunga, with the Onkaparinga River being the most northerly point, within the Hills and Fleurieu region. A small handful of people were undecided, and just one participant supported these towns being in Green Adelaide.

The young people in Willunga felt that they suited being situated within the Hills and Fleurieu region. When discussing where the boundary for Green Adelaide should start, it was suggested that Sellicks Beach is too far away to be part of Green Adelaide, and the same for Aldinga, where the beach and scrub fit the landscape of the Hills and Fleurieu region. It was suggested that Seaford be part of Green Adelaide given its more dense, urban layout and larger shopping centres.

"I am curious about why the hills regions are to be centralised in the city and wonder if the day to day operations if the officers will be reduced and trimmed back as a result?" Carol, via YourSAy

In Victor Harbor, a discussion occurred regarding boundaries with no firm outcome. Discussion included use of local government boundaries and being cautious around incorporating areas like Mount Barker as it is more urban than the rest of the region.

In Gawler, discussion occurred particularly relating to the Plains and Valleys, with aligning similar geographies and landscapes within boundaries preferred where possible. However, advice was given to not get too hung up on 'borders' because within each boundary the communities will have access to funding their priority projects.

The written submission from the City of Playford suggested that Green Adelaide should include the urban areas of Playford council, but not the agricultural areas.

In Mount Barker, given the catchments throughout the Adelaide Mount Lofty region, it was felt that dividing the region into two separate boards could be problematic. A participant suggested considering one board with two sub boards to ensure continuity and catchment management.

However, participants in Mount Barker noted that whatever the boundaries are, there needs to be good collaboration across the boundaries, especially with respect to planning. It was also suggested that aligning boundaries with other government regional boundaries could be considered, making it easier to do business.

At the Four Nations workshop, held to consider specifically the way Kurna, Peramangk, Ngadjuri and Ngarrindjeri nations could be affected by the key proposals, it was noted that the creation of three new regions introduces some complexity for each of the Four Nations groups, both individually and collectively. It was highlighted that based on the likely boundaries, the new regions will intersect numerous cultural boundaries. This comes with various challenges including the potential demands of the time of cultural knowledge holders in contributing to program and project planning and delivery, and the need for a longer-term commitment to resourcing which would

support inclusion. A coordinated approach to engagement with the Four Nations groups was identified as a priority, to make the most effective use of people's time and input

Suggestions for the Green Adelaide boundary via written submissions from individuals were to include the Adelaide Hills parks and reserves (possibly use Adelaide and Central Hills district boundary), to not only include the CBD, and to include a coastal strip down to Sellicks Beach.

Kangaroo Island

Members of the Kangaroo Island NRM board felt strongly that the existing boundary of the island should remain, with a firm need for Kangaroo Island to retain its own board.

At the community forum in Kingscote, it was noted that the island must remain its own region. One participant said, "We are an island and want to retain our island identity. We certainly do not want to be swallowed up by the Fleurieu."

5.4 Green Adelaide

There was optimism regarding Green Adelaide and the opportunities it brings for innovation and to be a world leader in linking urban life to land management, particularly in the community forums we held in or close to metropolitan Adelaide. Participants in our community forums liked the aspirational goals it could set, and the separation of the city and country.

In Grange, one participant noted that one of Colonial Light's original visions was for Adelaide to be a "Garden City" and perhaps this should be revisited within the remit of Green Adelaide.

In written submissions from individuals, comments about Green Adelaide included questioning why there would be no elected members on the board, discussions around the boundary (that it should only include the CBD and one person wants to see a strip of coast down to Sellicks Beach included), worry that it will be too metro-focussed, support for more 'green streets,' and a desire to see Green Adelaide focus on coasts, rivers, wetlands, and water-sensitive urban design.

In their written submission, Adelaide City Council suggested that the Green Adelaide board needs a representative from each council area, urban planning, green infrastructure, water management, finance, aboriginal and open space or park management.

The written submission from Conservation SA also urged that consideration be given to a high level of community ownership be developed through the governance and operating approach of Green Adelaide, referencing the London National Park City as a fascinating example of a community driven approach to city-wide landscape protection and enhancement.

Through the statewide forums, the community were asked what they believed should be the top functions or priorities of Green Adelaide. This opportunity was offered to every forum, whether close to Adelaide or not.

The following priority themes were what we heard many times.

5.4.1 Urban planning

Participants in the community forums said that would like to see Green Adelaide focus on creating green streets and flourishing parklands, including the retention and preservation of existing natural assets. They would like to see canopy cover both maintained and increased.

They would like Green Adelaide to have a role in maintaining green space within the metropolitan area, giving input into planning and development processes. This includes Green Adelaide being involved in integrated planning processes that ensure quality green spaces are maintained and improved. Participants said that they would like Green Adelaide to have the ability to influence Development Plans that may have adverse environmental impacts.

Within this, participants noted the desire to see builders and developers connecting to Green Adelaide. One participant noted that they would like to see a 'Green Adelaide' that is supported by legislation and that can be achieved, rather than being controlled by developers. They would like to

see Green Adelaide “demonstrating world best practice, and not more bad development”. One participant noted that they would like a priority of Green Adelaide to be development that increases ambience of green open space.

In their written submission, the Resilient East Project via the City of Unley suggested that the development sector needs to be legislated to be part of the solution in relation to biodiversity. They noted that the vast majority of urban development currently being undertaken would not pass simple tests for a number of things, including preserving, protecting and maintaining natural assets, significant trees and urban gardens essential to habitat and biodiversity connectivity.

“I live in Richmond, a fairly industrial area, and I would love to see more greenery within the suburb and in all suburbs for that matter.” Kristy, via YourSAy

Participants believe Green Adelaide has a role to play in maintaining green space and ensuring that new development respects local flora and fauna, as well as having a holistic plan for restoration and conservation of rivers and creeks. They noted that they would like wildlife corridors and trails that are connected to reserves retaining, and bush land settings and habitats rehabilitating. There was a note to stop destroying habitat in the metropolitan area, for example significant trees being removed.

“We support the establishment of Green Adelaide and suggest it could establish itself as a world leader in the emerging field of Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design.”

Nature Conservation Society of South Australia, via written submission

One participant noted that a priority for Green Adelaide should be the coordination of the utilisation of all available open spaces, including very small front and backyards, so that maximum environmental outcomes for biodiversity result.

In their written submission, the City of Marion noted that Green Adelaide is an important opportunity to provide specific guidance on urban design to enhance biodiversity through defining strategic corridors and priority sites for conservation and restoration.

5.4.2 Urban biodiversity

Many participants said that a function of Green Adelaide should be to maintain biodiversity in areas of urban infill and diversity. Urban biodiversity should include private homes, public spaces and parklands.

Biodiversity and habitat must be kept, enhanced and encouraged and participants felt Green Adelaide has a significant role to play in this. A focus on remnant vegetation protection and

restoration and sites of high conservation value was noted as a priority by one participant. It was suggested that large enough spaces for meaningful habitat for species need to be planned for.

Participants noted the desire to see Green Adelaide working with Adelaide's ecologists and environmentalists to determine indigenous plant species lists for street scapes and native strips that will support native wildlife, but also deal with the increasing climate extremes. Fauna in the city and on coastal strips was noted as being important, ensuring wildlife corridors include South Australian native plant species. It was noted that planting should occur for biodiversity and sustainability.

We were told that Green Adelaide should prioritise empowering the urban community to get involved with biodiversity action within and beyond their region.

5.4.3 Greater connection to nature and the regions

Participants hoped that Green Adelaide could bring increased connection to nature within Adelaide and the broader regions, including increased awareness of regional issues and the value of regional communities. In Victor Harbor, participants saw it as an opportunity to link the actions and habits in the city to a vibrant rural community, highlighting how hard farming can be.

One participant said they would like Green Adelaide to "make city people care". Another said that Green Adelaide is an important opportunity to engage the hearts and minds of the Adelaide population base, connecting people with nature and biodiversity.

In their written submission, Adelaide City Council suggested that Green Adelaide needs to have an objective of re-connecting communities to the environment.

5.4.4 Healthy waterways

Healthy waterways were mentioned many times in relation to the potential functions of Green Adelaide.

Participants said that they would like to see Green Adelaide managing river courses as ecological entities, overseeing river health from the hills to sea, including the upkeep and ongoing maintenance of urban rivers. The health of the River Torrens was specifically mentioned, including effective sustained management of the river and creek ecosystems, weed management and water quality.

As a Highbury resident close to the River Torrens Linear Park I am concerned about the attention given the River Torrens by the NRM (or is it more correct to say lack of attention)." Paul, via YourSAy

One participant noted that they would like to see expansion of the 'urban creek recovery project' across Adelaide, to integrate management of stormwater, flood mitigation, habitat, biodiversity,

water quality. Another participant would like to see Green Adelaide managing catchment areas and restoring wetlands.

Community use of water bodies including rivers, such as the Torrens in the City, and still water at places like Craigie Burn and Thornton Park were on the priority list for one participant for Green Adelaide. Another participant wanted to see a focus on practical implementation of the water cycle in green corridors and urban environments.

In their written submission, the City of West Torrens questioned a number of things, including what the role of Green Adelaide will be in caring for urban rivers and wetlands, and whether the River Torrens Recovery Funding will cease.

5.4.5 Community engagement and education

Community engagement and education were suggested as a fundamental function of Green Adelaide many times. This includes nature education, education around valuing ecosystems and sustainable development, and education inclusive of climate change.

It was suggested that groups like Trees for Life are supported by Green Adelaide, bringing together volunteers in urban areas to support revegetation and bush protection in urban fringe and regional areas. One participant noted that education is critical and interaction with the environment essential to ensure that children don't lack understanding of the environment. It was also noted by one participant that the term nature education should be reconsidered.

"...education has progressed from nature education, to environmental education, to sustainability education and a now we have a combined environmental and sustainability education focus. I am therefore quite concerned that Green Adelaide is going to have nature education as a priority." Sharon, via YourSAy

5.4.6 Climate Change

Participants across the community forums regularly suggested priorities and functions for Green Adelaide that address climate change. It was noted that Green Adelaide should engage with longer term changes in urban planning for climate change, including how we protect and include nature in those plans. It was felt by another participant that Green Adelaide should communicate the benefits of trees, shrubs and greening to prepare for continued climate change.

The City of Port Adelaide Enfield noted in their written submission that climate change needs far greater degree of reference to this issue, especially for Green Adelaide projects such as AdaptWest. They suggested that this needs to be one of the objectives of the Act, listed alongside other key priorities.

In their written submission, amongst other things across the whole reform, the Premier's Climate Change Council noted that Green Adelaide provided good opportunity to continue and build on existing partnerships created as part of the Carbon Neutral Adelaide program.

It was noted that we need a long-term vision for the state regarding climate change and this shouldn't be tied to election cycles.

5.4.7 Urban Water Management

Urban water management was mentioned as a priority several times. It was suggested that Green Adelaide could have a role in managing responsibilities between councils, state government and boards in this regard.

Urban stormwater management, stormwater pollution, water sensitive urban design to adapt to climate change, and water sensitive cities were also listed as priorities in community forums and written submissions.

5.4.8 Coastal management

Vibrant coastal regions, and future proofing our coastline against sea level rises and climate change was highlighted as a potential priority for Green Adelaide. Participants suggested that this includes coastal and marine management, being a holistic approach of dunes, cliffs and marine.

In the written submissions from individuals, within the broader reform several people want coast and marine issues to be considered as much as terrestrial issues, either by giving those responsibilities directly to the Landscape Boards or by amending the Acts to be in support with Landscape SA. Some people believed that Green Adelaide was better-suited to deal with coastal issues than other Landscape Boards while one person thought Green Adelaide would be too metro-focused to do much with the coast.

In their written submission, the City of Holdfast Bay noted that they would like to see coastal management (including coastal protection) included in the Natural Resource Management reform scope. The City of West Torrens asked what the Green Adelaide responsibilities will be for coastal management.

In their written submission, the Coast Protection Board noted that Green Adelaide could take on the Coast Protection Board role, but it would likely be an add-on and not a priority. However, Green Adelaide could focus on metropolitan coastal issues.

Birdlife Australia noted in their written submission that the coast is a very important part of Green Adelaide. They said that it is a great and easy opportunity to make the coast a connection point with natural resources and to show the community that it is more than just 'sand and seagulls'. They noted that the already long-established programs such as the Hooded Plover and Shorebirds 2020 program connect strongly with the community at the coast.

5.5 Capping, collecting and distributing levies

Funding was identified as a major priority within the reform process and much of the discussions held around that state have been summarised earlier in this report.

The main sentiment that we observed was that however the Minister decides to cap, collect or distribute levies, a critical part of his success will be both the ability to collect and distribute levies in an efficient way that leaves boards with a fair and appropriate share of the funding pot, and the communications and transparency surrounding this.

Further commentary relating to the capping, collecting and distributing of levies is summarised below. Notes from all engagement activity can be found in the appendices.

5.5.1 Capping of levies

In Berri, there were strong views that the government has made an election promise to cap levies, so this needs to happen. Participants in Bordertown suggested that a CPI based restriction on levy increase be implemented immediately, irrespective of the new Act.

Participants in Yunta echoed the same sentiment, suggesting that levies should be capped according to CPI and whoever makes funding decisions should visit the area to meet the owners of property who are contributing more to the cost of activities carried out by NRM boards on their properties.

In Gawler, there was some discussion around levy capping, with the comment being noted by a farmer that those who live and work on the land don't have an income that rises according to CPI.

In Grange, it was felt by some people in the group that the capping of levies limits the future possibilities in relation to the overall amount of money available. In Mount Barker, it was noted that we are at a 20-year low for both federal and state funding for the environment, and one participant questioned how this government expects to do what needs to be done AND introduce a cap. It was felt that this is almost an impossibility.

In terms of calculation of levies, in the written submissions received from individuals, one person thought the levy was too high, another said the calculation methods needs to be transparent, and one specifically commented on water levy saying that the minimum levy is unfair to small allocation holders and that it should be based on usage. People agreed with levy capping and one person specifically agreed with tying it to CPI. One suggested that levy from the cities will need to be redistributed to regional areas to support them and one person suggested combining Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region with Kangaroo Island and Alinytjara Wilurara with SA Arid Lands or Eyre Peninsula, although it was unclear if they were referring to a levy pool or boundaries.

In their written submission, the owners of the Coward Springs Campground along the Oodnadatta Track, applauded the capping of land and water levies according to the CPI and noted that they need to be consistent throughout the State.

The City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters expressed its significant concerns it has, via their written submission, with the extent to which the levy has increased, noting that the increases exceed the CPI. The Council supports the continuation of the value of rateable land being used as the basis for determining the levy, however it does not support increases in the levy over the CPI, particularly where adequate justification is not provided.

Responding to a letter from the Minister seeking input regarding priorities for the reform, Primary Producers SA noted that they believe levy charges need to be contained at the lowest reasonable and sustainable level. They suggested considering the application of levy charges based on licensed volumes rather than volumes of water used.

5.5.2 Collection of levies

The process for collection of levies via councils was noted under “what’s working well?” in several of the community forums.

In the written submissions received from individuals, comments regarding levy collections ranged from one person saying they see it as a council levy since councils collect it, another saying the state should collect it since councils don’t get the money and some see it as a burden, and another saying collection method doesn’t really matter.

In their written submission, the City of Holdfast Bay noted that local councils may not be the appropriate agency to collect the levy as it leads to people mistakenly think that it is a Council charge. The same was said by the City of Onkaparinga, Alexandrina Council, City of West Torrens and others. The submission from the Local Government Association of SA also stated that the state should collect the levy, not local councils. The written submission from the City of Unley noted their support of the Local Government Association position that Revenue SA should take over the function of collecting levies.

The City of Port Adelaide Enfield noted this being a timely opportunity to review the collection of land levies in their written submission. They suggested that as the levy is partly used to fund the agency staff it is no longer reasonable to ask councils to gather this income. Levies should be collected through same mechanism as the Emergency Services Levy. It was also noted that reimbursement for councils is too low and needs review.

“I understand the need for a levy to enable this work to continue, however this should NOT be collected via council rates because it creates a false impression of where our money is going. For transparency the state government should collect their own levies.”

Dale, via YourSAy

In their written submission, the City of Campbelltown noted that should the new levy continue to be collected through local government, the reimbursement of collection costs should be retained

and reviewed to better reflect the cost of councils administering the collection and reimbursement to the Board.

The written submission from Naracoorte Lucindale Council supported levies being collected by councils, noting that this process removes the perception that levies support central Natural Resource Management support staff.

In their written submission, Resilient East requested greater recognition of the critical role of councils across South Australia in managing natural resources and supporting local communities can strengthen a whole of community response. They noted that this is particularly important as councils currently collect the levy. They stated that the new framework should continue to support and improve partnerships across local government and the Landscape Boards with representation and engagement opportunities.

5.5.3 Distribution of levies

Across the regions, there was a strong agreement with the proposal that levies collected in the region will be spent in the region. Much commentary around this is reference earlier in this report under the priority of funding.

It was widely noted across the state that there is a need for funds to continue to be taken from the levies collected in metropolitan Adelaide subsidise regional boards income. In their written submission, the City of Mitcham noted that if levies are to be spent where collected then Green Adelaide will get the “lion’s share”, which is not equitable for the rest of the State.

Many participants suggested that the redistribution of funds from Green Adelaide be done under the proviso that people who live in metropolitan Adelaide utilise regional Adelaide in a number of ways such as tourism, food supply and so on. They therefore need to support natural resource management in regional South Australia via their levy payment.

In Adelaide, the idea that levies collected in the metropolitan region are to be used to provide additional funding to other regions was supported. At the meeting with the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board and in their written submission, it was acknowledged that there must be a distribution model to share the income collected in metropolitan Adelaide with the other regions.

“I am concerned about the ability of some regions (of vast areas with a low population) as to how to fund their programs. There is a very real inequality between the regions in terms of funding resources from levies that needs to be addressed.” Di, via YourSAy

Members of the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board noted that the potential for the levy collection in the Adelaide metropolitan region will be large, and whilst the intention seems to be to distribute some of this to other regions, there is a high risk that much of the funds could end up being spent on large scale projects that are required in metropolitan Adelaide.

One local government representative at the community forum in Grange noted that whilst the council was happy for a portion of levy income to go to other regions, he would like to see a portion of the levy being transparently spent on things important to his area. He proposed that 60% of income collected in the area remain in the area, with 40% being paid in to the 'pot' to spread across other regions or landscape projects.

In Glenunga it was noted that allocation of funding needs to be based on priorities across the state and there will need to be a strong framework to determine where those priorities are.

In the written submission from the Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board, it was suggested that part of the reform should include a mechanism for a more equitable distribution of the levy funds. An example of how this could be achieved was provided and includes creating a single fund that all levies are paid into and then distribute funds according to priorities. The priorities could be set at a regional and/or state level, with a statewide body deciding the priorities. The statewide body could comprise of the Presiding Members and General Managers with an independent Chair, or it could be an independent body.

As noted earlier in this report, in the final meeting with the NRM Partners, it was suggested that the \$2million Grassroots Grants program and Landscape Priorities Fund should come straight out of the levies collected in metropolitan Adelaide, rather than collecting levies back from the regions. It was agreed that this would be a simpler and more acceptable process that is consistent with the principles of decentralisation.

At Mawson Lakes, the suggestion by one participant of a carbon accounting debt model sparked interest amongst participants. It was proposed as a way of spreading the money to the regions, with Adelaide creating higher carbon emissions so the participant suggested that they should pay more towards the state funding pot.

In their written submission, the Native Vegetation Council expressed concern about proposals to have a central auditing body for levy expenditure noting that for this system to work, and be a true community-based system, the buck must stop with the community and its Landscape Boards.

The written submission from the SA Chamber of Mines and Energy noted concern that the current funding model in is flawed. The submission noted that it is structured in a manner that restricts funds to being spent in the region they are generated. They feel that this model is not appropriate to ensure sufficient funding to address the ongoing costs of natural resource management in regions like the SA Arid Lands. They suggested that the introduction of uniform pricing across the State may provide for a more equitable distribution of costs

5.6 Statewide coordination & Landscape Priorities Fund

Landscapes and the pressures affecting them don't stop at administrative boundaries and many issues require cross-regional and statewide coordination. Approaches proposed in the Discussion Paper included partnerships across multiple Landscape Boards and other groups, and a Landscape Priorities Fund contributed to by Landscape Boards to invest in large scale projects across landscapes.

5.6.1 Working together and statewide co-ordination

Members of the NRM Partners forum felt that there would certainly still need to be networking across boards, helping each other out. They felt that communities of interest go across boundaries. For statewide coordination, they suggested that the Presiding Members Council and NRM Partners network are still going to be needed. It was noted that these networks are currently an informal arrangement, but they could become something more statutory as both have been very useful and beneficial forums.

In Mount Barker, one participant noted that boundaries shouldn't be seen as "The Great Wall of China" with desire for cross-boundary co-ordination. In Marion, it was noted that there should be partnerships across multiple landscape boards and other groups. On Kangaroo Island it was agreed by several participants that shared projects are a good idea, but smaller regions don't have the resources to contribute.

In Leigh Creek, a Landscape Advisory Board or Council reporting to the Minister on policy and statewide issues made sense, but it was suggested that it should be a coordination, policy and administrative group and not have any control of funding.

Participants in Gawler suggested that a Landscape Advisory Group could be made up of the Chair of each Landscape Board, or a delegate from each board. In McLaren Vale it was suggested that all landscape boards meet quarterly to communicate needs and priorities within each region, including community consultation.

The South East NRM Board members noted that the membership of the concept of an advisory board presiding over the landscape fund was of interest and wondered how the members would be appointed and where they would be from.

In Yunta, it was felt that if a Landscape Priorities Advisory Board to the Minister is to be established then this board must have representatives from all nine Landscape SA Boards, or at minimum, representation from all regional areas to ensure that key regional issues are reflected in decision making. It should not just comprise representatives from peak bodies.

5.6.2 Landscape Priorities Fund feedback

Comments received were mostly in relation to the administration of the proposed Landscape Priorities Fund and based on the coordination of the fund. All input received can be found in the appendices of this report but below is a summary of some of the key points raised.

The Kangaroo Island NRM Board members thought that the initiative of a fund sounds good but were concerned that Kangaroo Island would be left out. The Eyre Peninsula NRM Board members would rather the ability to retain surplus funds or extra levy dollars in the region for uses, working directly with boards and groups as needed. At the Ceduna community forum, one participant said that the fund sounds like cost shifting and making it look more streamlined than it is. They felt that the Alinytjara Wilurara and Eyre Peninsula regions already have these 'bigger statewide things' covered.

The Northern and Yorke NRM Board members were concerned that they would only be able to access these funds by lodging an application and didn't feel the fund would achieve much. The SA Murray-Darling NRM Board were concerned that this funding wasn't in addition to levy funding and that it doesn't sound like an efficient model, noting that they already do landscape projects across boundaries and there may not need to be a formal link like this.

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board members felt that in theory there was no issue with the concept of a central fund, but concern was raised about the ability of their region to contribute relative to return, noting the expansive nature of the region, with a small and sparse population. This region needs the funding but by comparison to other regions does not have the levy raising capacity to contribute to the fund.

In relation to the Statewide Priorities Fund, the South East NRM Board members questioned how an advisory body would make decisions over where the money was spent across the State. They presumed there would be criteria set against which applications would need to be made but still questioned how applications that meet the criteria would be prioritised.

"High priority landscape projects should be identified and costed at the front end of regional NRM planning processes allowing amortisation of funds to be allocated against such projects or optional funding to be considered, for example Private Public Partnership depending on project scale."

KESAB environmental solutions, via written submission

In Leigh Creek, one participant noted that the proposal to have Landscape Priority Fund seems counter-productive if we are striving to move away from centralisation. In Marree, it was suggested that the region should be able to decide what money is put to landscape projects and grassroots community projects and that there is no need to have separate central funds administered by either Green Adelaide or a Landscape Advisory Board, again believing that this works against the key principles of the reform, especially decentralisation. They said that having central funds which Boards or communities are required to apply for via application will add to overall administration.

5.7 Grassroots Grants program

Many people who joined the conversations felt that the Grassroots Grants program is a good idea. Individual comments received can be found in the appendices within each report.

In early conversations with Presiding Members of NRM Boards, members of the group felt that this fund would give good bang for its buck! The group assumed that the Landscape SA Boards would manage this. If this is the case, they reinforced that they really support this fund being managed at regional board level. Others felt that the fund should be administered by the Landscape Priorities Advisory Body.

In Leigh Creek, it was noted that Green Adelaide must not administer the Grassroots Grants program, and this should be managed by the Landscape Advisory Board or stay with the regions.

Many people were concerned that the funds for the program will be taken out of the existing levy budget and is not additional funding being provided by the state.

Around the state, several comments were made that \$2 million too low and participants also noted that there needs to be access to longer-term funding rather than just short-term annual funding. Participants in Kingscote proposed that the Grassroots Grants Program should be doubled to \$4million, with the additional \$2million coming from state treasury. In McLaren Vale, participants said that the fund is insufficient and questioned the scope of the fund as this will impact the amount of money needed in it.

“There will need to be an independent decision maker to make sure that the Boards don’t have major disagreements about which applications get funded.” Barbara, via YourSAy

In Gawler, it was suggested that each Landscape Board manage this fund, or the Chair of each board could form a sub-committee to decide.

One participant in Berri requested that the fund not be based or allocated on a Fund My Neighbourhood model. They felt that it shouldn’t be based on popularity votes.

It was also noted in many places that the process for applying for the Grassroots Grants program must be simple and accessible. It was also noted that volunteer, community and not for profit groups will require support to access funds.

The written submissions received from individuals included support for the Grassroots Grants program and how it will help volunteers and volunteer organisations with a desire for it to be a clear and transparent process. There was a question asking what ‘community’ means in regard to the grants and one person was concerned about the grants mostly going to rural-oriented programs.

6 | Measuring Success



At every opportunity during the engagement process, the facilitation team invited participants to consider what success will look like for this reform process. Every single measure of success written down by participants can be found in the appendices of this report, at the end of each sub-report.

Below is a selection of some of the measures of success for the Minister that people identified across the state.

“Imagine it’s 2020 and you are the Minister for the Environment and Water. How do you know that this reform has been successful? What does success look like?”

Farmers are happy to engage with Landscape SA.	Boards have numerous successful partnerships and projects up and running.	Aboriginal Elders are applauding it.
Diversity of people represented in process increases	We are confident we can deal with climate change.	An engaged and environmentally vibrant community that is leading the nation.
You haven’t been removed by the Premier due to an overwhelming community backlash.	Number of people in FTE employed in on-ground actions.	Minister is re-elected to government.
Zero complaints. Less pest animals and plants. Respect for native wildlife.	Primary production is not only quantified as yield but includes a measure of land health.	Success = biodiversity.
More large shade trees – green spaces – biodiversity - less weeds and feral animals. Healthy soils and oceans. Happy customers.	That the majority of monies has been spent on ground and has had a positive impact on landscape and the businesses in our areas.	You know that this reform has been successful when community projects have been completed and you have many ‘Thank you letters’ from locals.
Imagine its 2020 and there is no need for a session like this one! i.e. the system is running well.	Indigenous Park Rangers working across the State.	Securely funded community/Landcare groups like we used to be.
Agriculture is stronger (profitable and sustainable).	A flourishing and productive Yerta.	The River Torrens has been opened for public swimming adjacent to Adelaide Oval.
Hear children telling their parents about how to look after the environment.	As minister you are re-elected to the position or advanced.	The unicorns are grazing on beautiful lush meadows...

7 | Recommendations



The facilitation team met face-to-face with over 800 people and received over 300 written and online submissions during the engagement period. This report and its appendices contain thousands of ideas and suggestions for the Minister for Environment and Water to consider during the development of the Landscape South Australia Bill.

Based on what we've heard during the engagement process we are able to make twelve key recommendations in relation to the key proposals of the reform.

It is highlighted that these recommendations are made based on what we heard during the engagement process as independent facilitators. It is essential that these recommendations are teamed with specialist expert advice, particularly regarding topics of environmental focus.

7.1 Alternatives to a community election process

The cost, effectiveness and risks of a community election process for three of the board positions was met with great concern by many people. The process of forming the Landscape Boards needs to result in a strong, equitable, skills-based board with good representation and diversity.

It is recommended that the Minister explore options alternative to community elections to form the membership of the Landscape SA boards, including the suggestions within this report.

7.2 Statewide coordination

Whilst the proposed model of decentralisation was greatly welcomed by many during the engagement process, many people raised questions or concerns regarding the overarching coordination of natural resource management across the whole state.

It is recommended that the Minister look to establish a Statewide Landscape Board that includes peak bodies, Aboriginal nations, Landscape Boards, and government agencies, including local government representation.

7.3 Evidence-based decision making

During the engagement process, whilst many people supported the concept of decentralised decision making with greater local community involvement, there was much discussion around the need for decision making to be based on scientific fact and evidence. This included having access to expertise, facts and correct information and support from experts within the Department for Environment and Water, as well as suggestions of expertise via local government and other partners.

It is recommended that the Minister consider appropriate mechanisms to provide the support required for regional communities to make good decisions that are based on scientific evidence.

7.4 Traditional Owner involvement in decision making

Much good progress has occurred to date in working together with Aboriginal communities in natural resource management in South Australia. We were told that this needs to be built upon.

It is recommended that the Minister ensures that there is required to be at least one Aboriginal person with a cultural connection to the region on each Landscape Board; and that the Statewide Aboriginal NRM Advisory Group be re-established, with the Chair of this group being a member of any statewide coordination body that is created as a result of this reform.

7.5 Community involvement in regional decision making

During the engagement process, we heard from many people who would like to see community and land owner involvement in Landscape Boards decision making processes more streamlined and formalised. In some regional areas, existing structures such as local NRM Groups or Local Action Planning Groups provide a hub and spoke type model that further supports the model of decentralised decision making, providing the regional board with regular insight and input.

It is recommended that the Minister considers ways to build on, maintain and more formally acknowledge local groups as a conduit for supporting local decision making processes.

7.6 Community involvement in Green Adelaide

There was optimism around the concept of Green Adelaide, particularly with reference to it being a world leader in linking urban life to land management. Whilst the concept of an expert board was understood, many people questioned why Green Adelaide was different to the Landscape Boards with regard to the principle of *land owners and community at the centre*.

It is recommended that the Minister consider the Green Adelaide board being made up of both experts and representatives from peak bodies, volunteer group and local government representatives operating in the metropolitan region.

7.7 Succession planning for Landscape Boards

Across the state, many people noted the importance of young people being represented on the new Landscape Boards. Many people also discussed the shortage of available people for board positions, with the right skills, knowledge and passion. Succession planning was highlighted as incredibly important for the survival of Landscape Boards in the long term.

It is recommended that the Minister consider the role of young people on Landscape Boards, including succession planning and opportunities for environmental leadership skills development.

7.8 Ways to achieve vibrant biodiversity

The concept of natural resource management going ‘back to basics’ in addressing soil quality, water management and pest plants and animals was acknowledged as necessary by many people during the engagement process. However, there was very strong concern that these three activities alone aren’t sufficient in achieving vibrant biodiversity with many suggestions contained within this report.

It is recommended that when drafting the new Landscapes Act, the Minister consider placing greater value on other stewardship priorities to achieve vibrant biodiversity, such as environmental restoration and nature conservation. This includes listing biodiversity as an object of the Act, plus clauses or schedules about the stewardship that needs to be undertaken on private land or where private land impacts.

7.9 A contemporary Act that addresses climate change

Many people who were part of the engagement process felt that we need to consider how climate change will impact natural resources as well as the contribution natural resources can make to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Many felt that the legislation and system need a stronger focus on the threat of climate change.

It is recommended that the Minister ensures that the new legislation incorporates and addresses and acknowledges the threat of climate change, including both mitigation and adaptation.

7.10 Distribution of levies

There was strong agreement that levies collected in a region should be spent in that region. The exception to this was in metropolitan Adelaide where people agreed that some of the levy income generated in that region would need to be used to ‘top up’ other regions in the state with lower levy income. However, there was concern regarding money being taken back from regions to form a statewide Landscape Priorities Fund and Grassroots Grants program, with the process feeling like clunky and complicated cost shifting.

Rather than collecting levy income back from each regional Landscape Board to form the funds, it is recommended that the Minister consider the feasibility of the Landscape Priorities Fund and Grassroots Grant program being created from levies collected within metropolitan Adelaide as one mechanism for the redistribution of funds.

7.11 Streamlined yet fair pathways to compliance

During the engagement period, compliance was widely discussed. Some people felt frustrated with a system that doesn’t act, noting the lack of streamlined processes to enforce legislation. Contrary

to this, others felt that enforcement occurred too harshly, noting the lack of opportunity to address issues where compliance was not occurring through education and working with landowners.

It is recommended that the Minister consider how the new Act can create a visible, streamlined process for compliance that includes steps for education and working with landowners, but that also commits to enforcement occurring if lack of compliance continues.

7.12 Considerations for determining boundaries

The Discussion Paper advised that the existing boundaries are proposed to be largely retained, with a suggestion that there may be some changes as an outcome of the engagement process. Conversations were held in several locations about specific options and can be found within this report. No firm consensus was reached on any of the boundaries discussed within this engagement process, though clear advice was provided by the community to not change boundaries for financial gain.

It is recommended that any boundary changes are made in consideration of social and ecological systems rather than financial gain; and that any changes are made in further consultation with local government and Aboriginal nations.