Draft Biodiversity Strategy 2027

Share your feedback

We are seeking feedback on our Draft Biodiversity Strategy 2027. This is Council's third Biodiversity Strategy.

It builds on the 2013 and 2019 Strategies and responds to habitat fragmentation, pest and invasive species, climate change and constrained resources.

During May to August 2026, we undertook preliminary consultation with biodiversity volunteers, partner organisations and Council Members to help shape the draft 2027 Biodiversity Strategy.

Participants highlighted the importance of protecting high-value biodiversity assets, restoring degraded habitats, improving habitat connections, supporting community stewardship, strengthening partnerships, and focusing resources where they can achieve the greatest impact.

The draft Biodiversity Strategy 2027 has been informed by this early engagement and provides a renewed direction for biodiversity management. It responds to increasing pressures from climate change, habitat fragmentation, pest and invasive species, ecological decline and changing volunteer participation, while recognising that biodiversity outcomes depend on collaboration between Council, landholders, volunteers, Traditional Custodians, community organisations and government agencies.



We'd like to find out what you think of the Draft Biodiversity Strategy 2027. Does it cover the biodiversity priorities that are important to the Adelaide Hills community?

Sharing your feedback

Once you have reviewed the document, you can provide your feedback in one of the following ways:

- Complete the online feedback form at engage.ahc.sa.gov.au or via the QR code.
- Email engage@ahc.sa.gov.au.
- Mail your written feedback to 63 Mount Barker Road, Stirling SA 5152.
- Collect a hardcopy feedback form from any AHC Library or Customer Service Centre and submit via any of the ways listed above or by handing into our Council Service Centres or Libraries.
- If you are part of a conservation or Landcare group invite us along to one of your regular meetings so we can discuss your ideas and feedback.

This engagement closes on Wednesday 16 December 2026.

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Frequently asked questions

Adelaide Hills COUNCIL

Why does Council need a Biodiversity Strategy?

The Adelaide Hills contains significant areas of native vegetation and important habitat for native plants and animals, but these face ongoing pressures from weeds, pest animals, vegetation clearance, habitat fragmentation and climate change. A Biodiversity Strategy provides council with a coordinated, long-term framework to protect important environmental assets, manage threats, prioritise investment and work with the community and other organisations to improve biodiversity outcomes across the district.

Why is biodiversity important to the Adelaide Hills?

Biodiversity supports healthy ecosystems and provides essential benefits, including wildlife habitat, healthy soils, clean waterways, carbon storage and natural cooling. The Adelaide Hills also contains important catchments that contribute to metropolitan Adelaide's drinking water supply. Its natural environment defines much of the region's character, supports tourism and recreation, and contributes to community health and wellbeing. Protecting biodiversity helps maintain these environmental, social and economic benefits for future generations.

What is Council responsible for protecting and managing?

Council is responsible for managing biodiversity on land it owns or manages, including public reserves, parks and roadsides. This includes protecting native vegetation, managing priority weeds and pest animals, undertaking restoration and revegetation, and considering biodiversity in council's planning and operations.

While council does not manage all biodiversity across the district, it works with State Government agencies, landholders, Traditional Owners and community groups to support conservation across the broader landscape.

How does Council prioritise Biodiversity Sites?

Council prioritises sites based on the following:

- good quality remnant vegetation
- threatened communities/species
- corridor/stepping stone value
- community priority (volunteer stewardship)
- grant opportunities (meets criteria)

Priority sites, Heritage Agreements, waterways, stepping stones, remnant vegetation and corridors are mapped in council's GIS system to guide prioritisation. Priorities are also informed by evidence and consultation with partners, and reviewed as resources, environmental disturbances, new information and sites change over time.

Why is protecting remnant native vegetation more important than revegetation?

Established native vegetation supports complex ecosystems that can take hundreds or thousands of years to develop. Mature trees, natural understorey, established soils, hollows and fallen timber provide habitat and ecological functions that cannot be quickly recreated through planting.

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While revegetation is important for restoring degraded areas and connecting habitat, it cannot immediately replace the biodiversity value of established ecosystems. Protecting what remains must therefore be the priority.

How is maintaining good vegetation more efficient than restoration?

Healthy native vegetation already contains established plant communities, functioning soils, natural regeneration processes and complex habitat features. Maintaining these values through ongoing threat management is generally more cost-effective than allowing degradation and subsequently investing in restoration. Restoration can require years of intensive weed control, soil rehabilitation, planting and maintenance, and may never fully recover the original ecological condition. Preventing ecological decline is generally easier, faster and less expensive than repairing it.

Why doesn't council manage all weeds under the Biodiversity Strategy?

Council manages an extensive network of reserves, roadsides and waterways, making comprehensive weed control across every site impractical and financially unsustainable. Instead, we prioritises weeds that pose the greatest threat to significant native vegetation, threatened species and important habitat. Management also considers the potential for weeds to spread, the feasibility of control and available resources. Some lower-priority infestations may be monitored or managed opportunistically as resources allow.

Why does council sometimes leave weeds in areas of native vegetation?

Removing all weeds immediately can sometimes cause unintended environmental harm, including soil erosion, loss of temporary wildlife habitat and further weed invasion. We may therefore use a staged approach, progressively controlling weeds while protecting native vegetation, maintaining soil stability and encouraging natural regeneration. Weed management should improve ecological condition, not simply reduce the number of introduced plants.

Why does council sometimes prioritise small weed infestations over large, heavily infested areas?

Small or emerging infestations often present opportunities for early intervention, where weeds can be more easily and cost-effectively eradicated or contained before they spread. Large, established infestations may require substantial ongoing resources with limited prospects of complete eradication. Prioritising emerging threats helps prevent future biodiversity loss and avoid more costly management.

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Why are dead trees, fallen timber and leaf litter retained in reserves?

Dead trees, fallen timber and leaf litter provide important habitat for wildlife, insects and fungi, while supporting natural nutrient cycling and soil health. Fallen timber provides food and habitat for specialised decomposer fungi, including species that fruit only after wood begins to decay. These materials also provide shelter for wildlife, protect soils and support natural regeneration. Council retains them where appropriate, balancing their ecological value with public safety, bushfire management and infrastructure requirements.

Is fallen, decaying timber especially important for fungi?

Yes, fallen timber is an especially important habitat for fungi, many of which depend on dead and decomposing wood to survive and reproduce. In South Australian woodlands, some fungi only produce their visible fruiting bodies after trees and branches have died and begun to decay. These fungi play an essential role in breaking down woody material, recycling nutrients and supporting healthy soil ecosystems. Different stages of timber decomposition can support different fungal species, contributing to overall biodiversity. Retaining fallen timber therefore helps protect these often-overlooked organisms and the ecological processes they support.

Doesn't native vegetation increase bushfire risk?

Native vegetation can contribute to bushfire fuel loads, but indiscriminate clearing does not necessarily reduce bushfire risk. Fire behaviour is influenced by fuel quantity and condition, vegetation structure, topography and weather. Council manages vegetation strategically through activities such as targeted fuel reduction, hazardous vegetation removal and maintenance of defendable space around assets. Biodiversity conservation and bushfire safety can be achieved together through appropriate, site-specific management.

Why doesn't council clear vegetation around roads and reserves?

Roadside and reserve vegetation provides important habitat, wildlife corridors and ecological connections, and some areas support threatened species and significant vegetation communities. While vegetation management is necessary to maintain road safety, visibility, access and bushfire preparedness, indiscriminate clearing can cause unnecessary biodiversity loss. We undertakes targeted vegetation management to address safety and operational requirements while minimising impacts on significant native vegetation wherever practicable.

Does council have responsibility for vegetation on private property?

Landholders are responsible for managing vegetation on their own properties, subject to relevant legislation, including South Australia's Native Vegetation Act 1991. Council does not have responsibility for undertaking weed control, vegetation maintenance or restoration on private land.

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However, we support landholders through education, partnerships and connections with conservation programs. Protecting biodiversity requires coordinated action across public and private land, as wildlife and ecological processes do not follow property boundaries.

How does council manage pest animals and their impacts on biodiversity?

Introduced pest animals such as deer, goats, foxes and rabbits can damage native vegetation, prevent natural regeneration, disturb soils and threaten native wildlife. We undertake targeted control where pest animals pose significant risks to biodiversity, particularly in high-value reserves. This includes monitoring, coordinated control programs and partnerships with neighbouring landholders and organisations such as Landscape Boards. Effective pest management requires ongoing, coordinated action across property boundaries.

How can residents help protect biodiversity?

Residents can make a valuable contribution by planting locally indigenous species, controlling environmental weeds, retaining mature native trees and habitat features, and keeping pets from disturbing native wildlife. Joining local Bushcare volunteer groups and supporting community conservation projects are also important ways to help. Properties containing high-quality remnant vegetation can be placed under a Heritage Agreement. Small actions across many properties can collectively improve habitat connectivity and landscape resilience.

What are Heritage Agreements and what are their benefits?

Heritage Agreements are voluntary, legally binding agreements between landholders and the South Australian Minister responsible for the Native Vegetation Act 1991, providing long-term protection for significant native vegetation on private land. They help conserve important habitat, threatened species and vegetation communities while recognising landholders' contributions to conservation. Eligible landholders may also access management grants, practical support and potential council rate concessions, subject to applicable eligibility requirements and Council arrangements. Heritage Agreements help establish a broader network of protected areas across the Adelaide Hills.



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