Biodiversity Strategy 2027

Draft for Consultation

November 2026



Adelaide Hills
COUNCIL

Welcome

Welcome to Adelaide Hills Council's draft Biodiversity Strategy 2027, which sets a clear direction for protecting, restoring and connecting biodiversity across our region. Building on Council's previous achievements, this Strategy focuses effort where we can make the greatest difference for the landscapes, habitats and species that shape the Adelaide Hills.

The Adelaide Hills is part of the Mount Lofty Ranges biodiversity hotspot, with native vegetation, waterways and wildlife habitats that are deeply valued by our community. These natural assets are central to our Hills identity, landscape character, community wellbeing, tourism and economic prosperity.

This is Adelaide Hills Council's third biodiversity strategy. It builds on the achievements of previous strategies while responding to increasing pressures from climate change, habitat fragmentation, pest and invasive species, land use change and constrained resources. It focuses our efforts on protecting high-value biodiversity, restoring degraded habitats where lasting benefits can be achieved, and strengthening connections across the landscape.

We know that Council cannot achieve positive biodiversity outcomes alone. Much of our region is owned or managed by landholders, other levels of government and non-government organisations. Lasting change will depend on Council working alongside volunteers, landholders, Traditional Custodians, community groups, partner organisations and government agencies.

We sincerely thank everyone who has contributed their time, knowledge and ideas to shape the draft Strategy so far. I invite all members of our community to take part in the public consultation, share what matters to you and help us strengthen the final Strategy for the future of biodiversity in the Adelaide Hills.

Mayor Nathan Daniell

Adelaide Hills Council

Through sustained commitment, shared stewardship and targeted investment, Adelaide Hills Council will work to protect the natural assets that define the region, improve the condition and resilience of its ecosystems, and support a connected and thriving landscape for future generations.

Contents

Executive Summary 1
Acknowledgement of Country 2
Introduction 3
Council's role 4
Biodiversity context 5
The broader context 15
What we heard – consultation insights 19
Vision 20
Strategic objectives 20
1: Protect high-value biodiversity assets 21
2: Restore priority degraded habitats and ecosystems 22
3: Strengthen strategic habitat and landscape connectivity 23
4: Foster community stewardship 24
5: Strengthen partnerships, knowledge and innovation 25
Implementation Plan 26
Targets and Key Performance Indicators 34
Appendix A Summary of Council's Responsibilities under relevant legislation, strategy and policy 37
Appendix B – Overview of South Australian Government of Programs in the Adelaide Hills 39

Executive Summary

Biodiversity is fundamental to the environmental health, resilience and distinctive character of the Adelaide Hills. The region sits within the Mount Lofty Ranges biodiversity hotspot, one of Australia's 15 nationally recognised hotspots. Its native vegetation, waterways, habitat corridors and threatened species are significant at regional, state and national levels. It also supports two major water catchments, a productive landscape and a nature-based tourism economy.

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. Most of the landscape is managed by others, so the Strategy focuses Council's effort where it can make the greatest difference.

Where we are now

- Council directly manages about 3,260 hectares of public and road reserves. Around 18% is managed primarily for conservation.
- Monitoring shows 92% of Biodiversity Reserves and 70% of Native Vegetation Marker System (NVMS) sites are holding steady or improving.
- Partnerships have attracted external funding, including a $1.97 million Australian Government grant for the Cox Creek restoration project.

Our approach: protect first, then restore, then connect

Protection is the most efficient use of limited resources, so the Strategy gives it first priority. Restoration is targeted at sites where improvement can be sustained. Connectivity is built where partnerships and external funding make it achievable. Five objectives put this into practice:

What we will achieve

1

Protect high-value biodiversity assets

Protect and maintain significant native vegetation, habitats and ecological values, reduce priority threats, strengthen compliance and embed biodiversity protection into Council's operations and decision-making.

2

Restore priority degraded habitats and ecosystems

Improve vegetation condition, habitat quality and ecological resilience through targeted restoration, weed management, revegetation and the management of threatening processes.

3

Strengthen strategic habitat and landscape connectivity

Expand, buffer and connect priority habitats through coordinated spatial planning, targeted revegetation and partnerships across land tenures.

How we will achieve it

4

Foster community stewardship

Support and empower volunteers, landholders, schools and community organisations to value, protect and enhance biodiversity through practical action, education and behaviour change.

5

Strengthen partnerships, knowledge and innovation

Keep building biodiversity information, monitoring and evidence-based decision-making while strengthening First Nations partnerships, regional collaboration, research, advocacy and opportunities for external investment.

What we heard

Consultation between May and August 2026 showed strong support for a focused, implementation-led approach. Participants asked Council to protect high-value assets first, target restoration carefully, coordinate spatially, strengthen compliance, partner beyond Council land and support community effort both practically and with education initiatives.

What is new in this Strategy

- A stronger focus on community stewardship and behaviour change
- Stronger partnership with First Nations organisations, including Traditional Custodians
- Greater recognition of the Mount Lofty Ranges biodiversity hotspot
- Biodiversity built into township, precinct and landscape planning

Acknowledgement of Country

Council acknowledges that we undertake our business on the traditional Country of the Peramangk and Kaurna peoples.

We pay our respects to Ancestors and Elders past and present as the Custodians of this ancient and beautiful land, for they hold the memories, traditions, spiritual relationships, culture and hopes of the First Nations of Australia.

We acknowledge the enduring relationship that First Nations peoples have with Country and recognise their continuous care, stewardship and connection to these lands, waters and skies for more than 60,000 years.

We are committed to working together to ensure that Peramangk and Kaurna culture and traditions are sustained, valued and continuing.

Together we will care for Country for the generations to come and in this context the decisions we make should be guided by the principle that nothing we do should decrease our children's ability to live on this land.

The Strategy recognises the opportunity to strengthen First Nations involvement in biodiversity management through respectful listening, knowledge sharing and partnership approaches.



Bassian Thrush
Photo: Peter Watton

Introduction

Purpose

This Strategy defines Adelaide Hills Council's direction and priorities for biodiversity management. It provides a strategic framework to guide decision-making, investment and partnerships, establishing a clear basis for our rolling implementation plans.

In the context of wide-ranging threats to biodiversity and limited resources, this Strategy aims to help us prioritise our efforts where we can have the greatest impact.

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of all life — including plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms — and the genetic, species and ecosystem diversity that supports healthy, natural systems.

Why biodiversity matters

Biodiversity underpins the ecological systems that support life in the Adelaide Hills. Healthy ecosystems provide essential services, including water filtration, soil stability, clean air and climate regulation, contributing to quality of life. These services are fundamental to agriculture, tourism, community wellbeing and the region's overall liveability.

Natural landscapes, bushland reserves and vegetated corridors are central to our region's sense of place and are highly valued by the community. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity therefore supports both environmental outcomes and broader social and economic objectives.

Council's Strategic Plan 2024 *Your Place Your Space* recognises the natural environment as the foundation of the region's landscape character, while also highlighting the importance of access to natural environments for our Hills identity, health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Council cannot deliver biodiversity outcomes alone.

Success depends on focusing effort where it matters most and working effectively with landholders, volunteers and partners.

Council's role

Council supports positive biodiversity outcomes by:

- managing biodiversity on Council-owned or managed land
- embedding biodiversity considerations into planning, infrastructure and operational decisions
- advocating and partnering for greater recognition, investment and coordinated action in the Mount Lofty Ranges biodiversity hotspot
- advocating for improved policy and outcomes at regional and state levels
- educating and supporting landholders, residents and community groups to take practical biodiversity action

The Strategy focuses on where Council can make the greatest difference, rather than attempting to do everything, everywhere.



Eastern Mantid Orchid
Photo: Renae Eden

Biodiversity context

The Adelaide Hills is characterised by diverse vegetation communities, steep topography and a mosaic of land uses. While significant areas of remnant vegetation remain, the landscape is highly fragmented and subject to ongoing pressures including land use change, pest and invasive species and the impacts of climate change.

Remnant vegetation, roadside corridors, reserves and watercourses form the backbone of biodiversity in the region. These areas provide critical habitat for native species, act as stepping stones for ecological connectivity and support ecosystem services such as water quality and community wellbeing. Maintaining and improving the condition of these assets is therefore a priority.

Council directly manages approximately 3,260 hectares of public reserves and road reserves across the district (Figure 1). These areas include native roadside vegetation, bushland reserves, recreation reserves and other community land, with around 18% managed primarily for conservation outcomes.

While representing a relatively small proportion of the broader landscape, Council land provides important, sometimes crucial, habitat and ecological connectivity. This reinforces the ongoing importance of working with landholders, volunteers, community groups and regional partners.

The Adelaide Hills' regional significance extends beyond its municipal boundaries. As a biodiversity hotspot, major water catchment, productive landscape and nature-based tourism destination, what happens in our region has wider environmental, economic and community benefits.

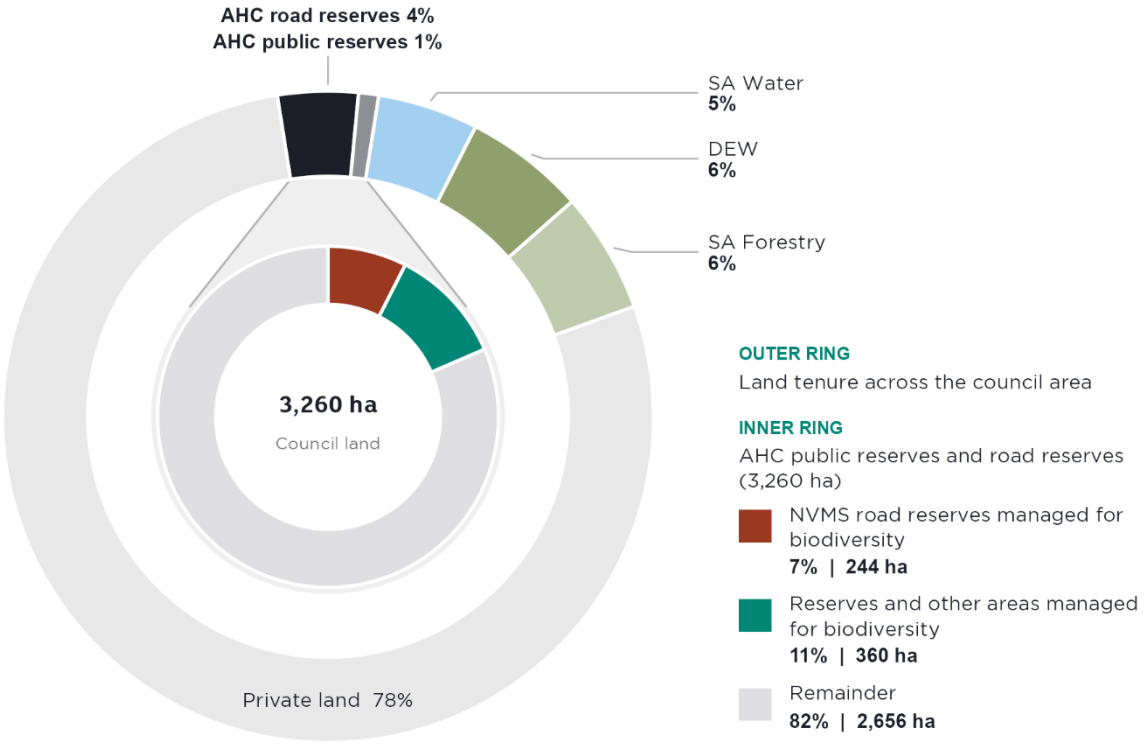


Figure 1: Adelaide Hills Council, Land Ownership Data (Source: Adelaide Hills Council, 2026).

The region is also subject to increasing climate variability. Changing temperature and rainfall patterns and the increased likelihood and impact of bushfires, floods and storms place additional stress on ecosystems over time. This reinforces the need for adaptive management, climate-resilient planting and supporting recovery following disturbance (such as bushfire or flood).Council's context

Council's Strategic Plan 2024 includes strong biodiversity commitments. The Natural Environment objectives focus on the priorities outlined in Figure 2 below, including NE3.3, which identifies development of this Biodiversity Strategy as a key priority.

Objective NE3
Protect, improve, expand and connect habitat

PRIORITIES

NE3.1
Protect remnant native vegetation from threats or threatening activities.

NE3.2
Promote the value of biodiversity protection and management on private lands.

NE3.3
Develop and implement a new Biodiversity Strategy detailing how we will protect and improve biodiversity, and expand native vegetation coverage where appropriate.

NE3.4
Nurture valuable community and stakeholder partnerships and collaborations to care for country.

NE3.5
Advocate for stronger native vegetation protection laws.

Objective NE4
Build resilience in the natural environment to adapt to climate and other environmental changes

PRIORITIES

NE4.1
Implement the opportunities identified in the Bushfire Mitigation Landscape Strategy.

NE4.2
Implement actions from the Tree Strategy.

NE4.3
Collaborate and advocate for greater investment in environmental protections and improvements.

NE4.4
Work with others toward the national '30 by 30' target to protect and conserve 30% of the land area by 2030.

NE4.5
Apply best practice approaches to protect soil and water quality and conservation.

Objective NE5
Improve landscape character and amenity value on Council managed land

PRIORITIES

NE5.1
Continue rolling out water efficiency measures for the maintenance of parks and sports fields.

NE5.2
Implement a succession planting program for street trees and other vegetation in key precincts, with a focus on sustainable species selection.

NE5.3
Maintain parks and reserves to be fit for purpose and enhance liveability.

Figure 2: Relevant objectives and priorities from Council's Strategic Plan 2024.

The Biodiversity Strategy sits alongside other Council strategies, plans and policies that collectively support the Natural Environment objectives and help translate strategic commitments into coordinated biodiversity and environmental action.

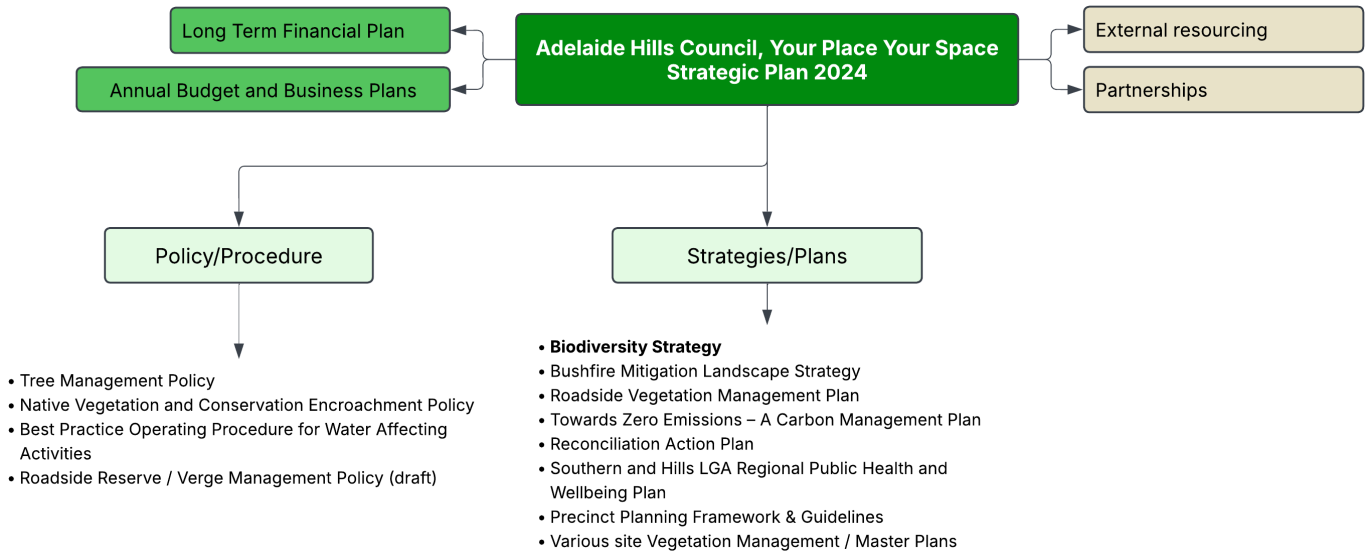


Figure 3 Adelaide Hills Council's strategic planning framework as it relates to biodiversity.

Key achievements to date

The current strategy builds on the progress of the previous Biodiversity Strategies, highlighted below.

Key achievements 2013 Biodiversity Strategy

ROADSIDES AND ROAD RESERVES

279 of 436

numbered NVMS roadside sites mapped and assessed

Native Vegetation Marker System

Award finalist

2018 LG Professionals Leadership Excellence Awards

Established and implemented program with budget, management and monitoring

Co-funded with Natural Resources AMLR (MOU and annual work plan)

Clearer signs and a new NVMS brochure

Habitat quality

79 reserve sites mapped and assessed using BushRAT

Sites prioritised, with budgets, programs and monitoring

5 new or expanded Heritage Agreements (111.35 ha)

Bushfire management

7 reserves in DEW's Burning on Private Lands Program

Attracting follow-up weed control and bird monitoring

Woody weed control program established in high-value areas, drawing extra Fire Prevention resourcing

Community capacity

28 butterfly kits for residents

4 new Bush For Life carers

Native Habitat Landscaping and Gardening Guide published. Bush For Life program expanded. Planting and education with schools and kindergartens.

Sustainable land management

Biodiversity Site Register

In GIS and hard copy. Open Space staff check it and consult Biodiversity Officers before works.

Partnerships

4 rounds of Green Army projects

2 as active partner, 2 in a supporting role

Co-funded work with Natural Resources AMLR, Bush For Life and Conservation Volunteers Australia.

Connectivity and linkages

Habitat corridors mapped

Corridors mapped in GIS to guide priorities and decisions. Draft Corridors and Linkages report.

Resources and funding

Co-funding secured

DEW co-funding for the Protea Park and Michael Moran watercourses. Several Heritage Agreement grants won.

Land use planning

Biodiversity data shared

NVMS and Phytophthora GIS layers shared with Planning, Engineering and Sustainable Assets.

Key achievements 2019 Biodiversity Strategy

More than
$2.85 million
in external funding secured

$1.85 million
FY2020/21 to FY2025/26

plus **$1.01 million**
for FY2026/27 and beyond

1 Protect

23 **new or expanded Council reserves under Heritage Agreement**

34 **Heritage Agreements in total**
245.7 hectares protected

Native Vegetation and Conservation Encroachment Policy developed

Revised Best Practice Operating Procedure for Water Affecting Activities (Landscape South Australia Act 2019)

Revised Roadside Vegetation Management Plan, approved by the Native Vegetation Council

Process for road reserve alteration requests (Local Government Act 1999)

2 Restore

About **10,790** **tube stock planted**

Pest species managed across:

53 high-value reserves

433 NVMS roadside sites

3 Link

$1.97m **Cox Creek Restoration Project**
Australian Government funding

Council leads 20 partners across public and private land:

- River areas, stream banks and aquatic habitat
- Water quality and waterway connectivity
- Urban green and blue space, access to nature

4 Support

34 **community groups supported**
including 8 new groups formed since 2018

13 local schools and kindergartens at revegetation events

2 new land management networking groups, with Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu

5 Inform

2 **Council reserves with Cryptic Sun-moth (EPBC nominated) recorded**

Virtual Wildlife Fence trial with 1300 Koalaz

Native vegetation monitoring expanded to include the NVMS

Partnerships with TAFE SA Conservation and Ecosystem Management program, Data Effects and the University of Adelaide

What is Council doing now?

Council's current biodiversity program provides a strong platform for the next phase of work. It combines on-ground management of high-priority reserves, roadsides and watercourses with community stewardship, education, partnerships and evidence-based decision-making, utilising spatial and monitoring datasets. Council's current program extends beyond direct land management by supporting the people, knowledge and systems needed to achieve biodiversity outcomes across a largely shared landscape. This includes enabling volunteer and community-led action, building awareness through education and outreach, and coordinating data collection, monitoring and analysis to guide where effort and investment should be focused.

Criteria for site prioritisation

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)

Priorities are informed by evidence and consultation with partners, and reviewed as resources, environmental disturbances, new information and sites change over time.

Overpage is a map of Council's biodiversity-focused spatial datasets, indicating habitat corridors, watercourses and high-priority biodiversity assets as they appear in our Biodiversity Register (Figure 5). These are comprised of Council reserves and Native Vegetation Marker System sites (high quality or threatened native roadside vegetation)

It's important for Council to strategically prioritise resources, focusing direct effort on Council managed land, prioritised as follows:

1. Protect. First, Council must maintain the condition of the best patches
2. Restore. Next, Council should identify the patches that are most likely to improve following targeted interventions
3. Connect. Finally, leveraging external resourcing and partnerships, Council may strategically reintroduce habitat and connectivity where opportunities exist

This is the most efficient way to manage Biodiversity Assets, as restore and connect are more resource intensive, and forms the Foundation of the Biodiversity Program's logic (Figure 4).

Biodiversity assets are monitored on a 5-year rotation for reserves, or 7-year rotation for NVMS sites. The monitoring data shows that native vegetation condition of 92% of Biodiversity Reserves (Figure 6) and 70% of NVMS sites (Figure 7) are holding steady or improving. Those that are declining reflect the level of management, or a significant disturbance, such as bushfire.

As native vegetation condition at these sites improves and gets closer to goal state, they generally become more resilient, requiring fewer resources to maintain, and move from the 'Restore' into the 'Protect' category. This then allows resources to be reallocated to the next priority sites.

A key strength of Council's current approach is its ability to bring together practical delivery and strategic influence. Partnerships with community groups, First Nations organisations (including Traditional Custodians), education providers, non-government organisations, research partners and government agencies help extend Council's reach, attract external funding, improve the evidence base and translate biodiversity priorities into action.

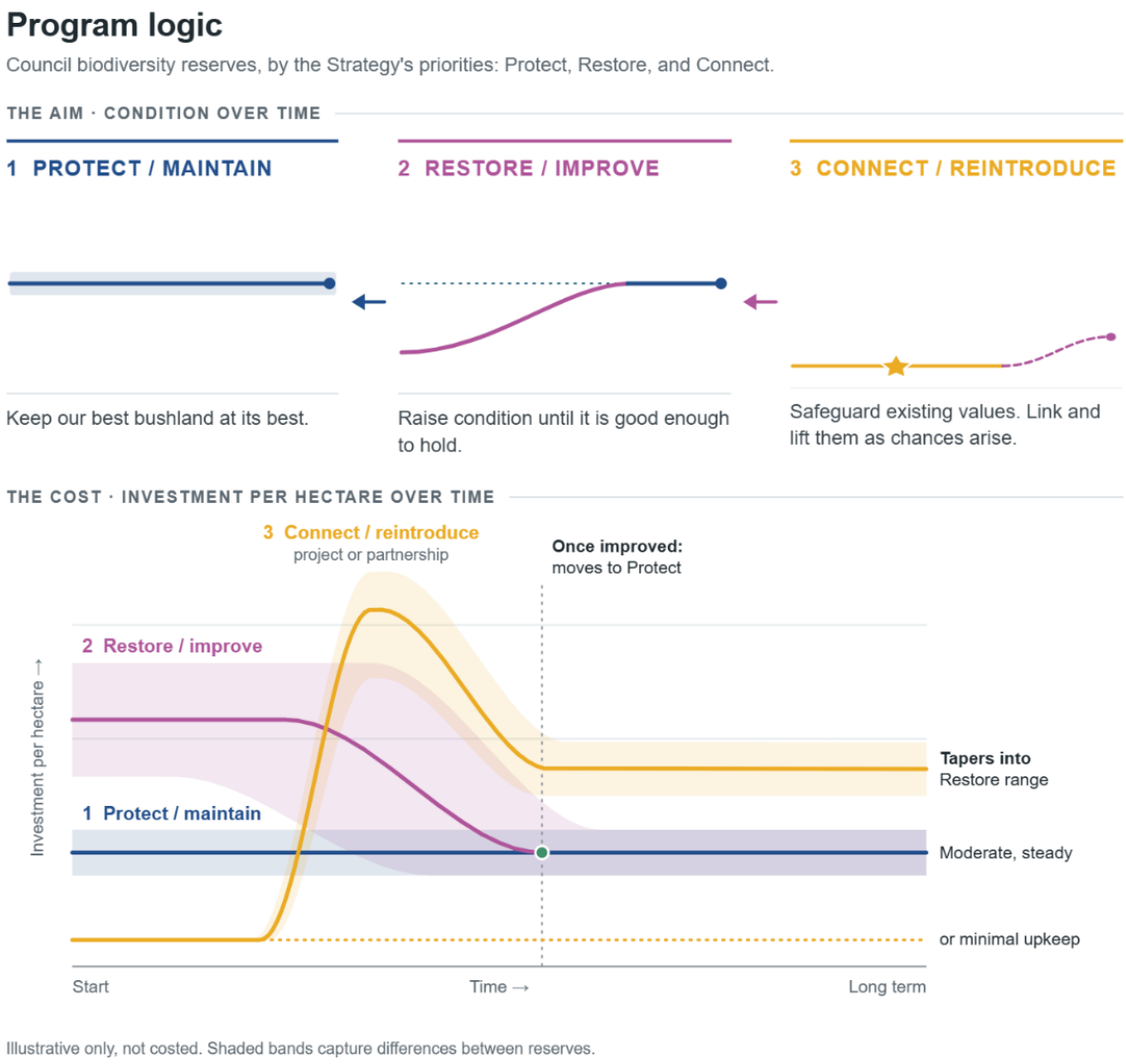


Figure 4 - Biodiversity Program Logic - Protect, Restore, Connect

Biodiversity Sites and Corridors

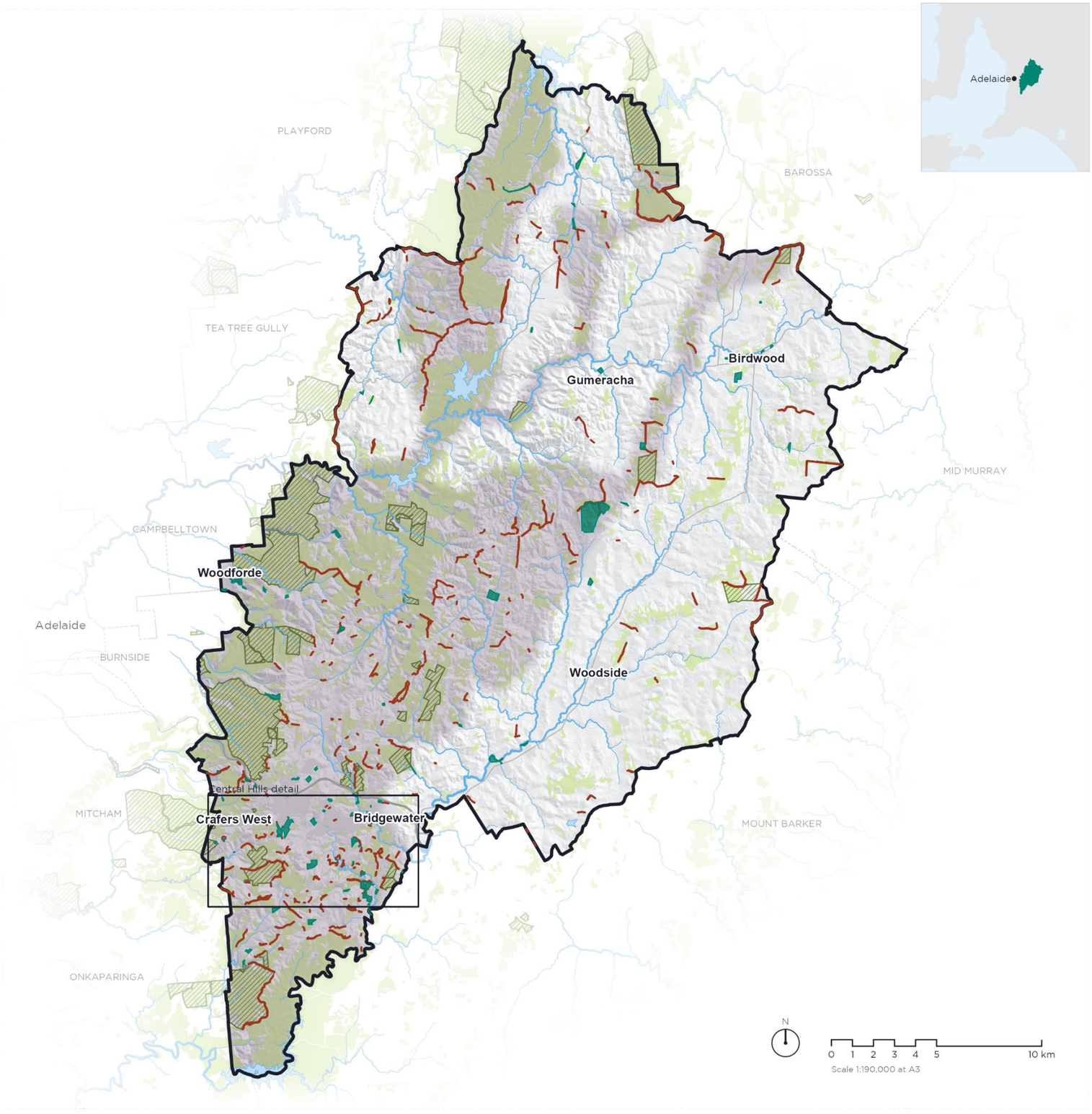
Sites managed for biodiversity and corridors linking habitat across the council area

72
biodiversity areas
360 ha

436
NVMS sites
along 178 km of road
244 ha

52%
of the council area is within a corridor

82%
of biodiversity sites fall within a corridor

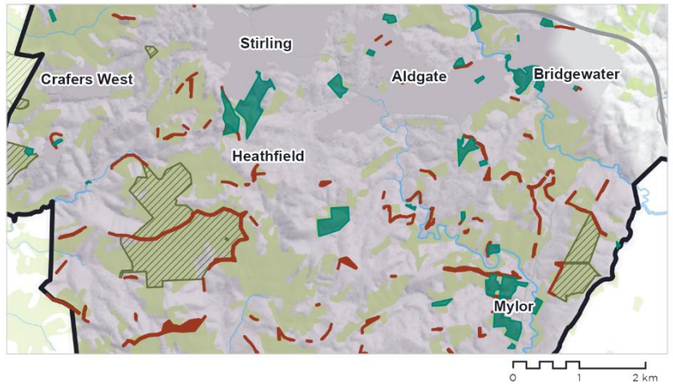


CORRIDORS
- Habitat corridor

BIODIVERSITY SITES
- Biodiversity area
- Native Vegetation Marker System (NVMS)

CONTEXT
- Native vegetation
- State conservation reserves
- Townships
- Watercourses
- Reservoirs
- Major roads
- Adelaide Hills Council boundary
- Neighbouring council boundaries

CENTRAL HILLS DETAIL



Data as at 5 November 2026. The sites Council manages for biodiversity change over time as land is added or removed, sites are reassessed and operational needs change. Boundaries are indicative only and not suitable for legal or survey use.
Data: Adelaide Hills Council; Government of South Australia; Geoscape Australia (CC BY 4.0).
GDA2020 / MGA zone 54.

Figure 5 - Adelaide Hills Council's Biodiversity Sites and Habitat Corridors

Reserve Vegetation Condition

Reserve bushland is holding or slowly improving. Each reserve's latest vegetation condition, grouped by the Strategy's three priorities.

59 of 72 reserves have a baseline assessment — **349 ha**

48 reserves re-assessed at least once — **307 ha**

521 condition assessments — **since 2010**

92% of re-assessed reserves held steady or improved — **since first assessed**

+2.1 points per decade: average condition trend — **score out of 80**

1 Protect / maintain

Highest biodiversity value: maintain the best patches

19 of 20 re-assessed reserves held steady or improved (goal: hold condition) — 20 reserves, 216 ha

2 Restore / improve

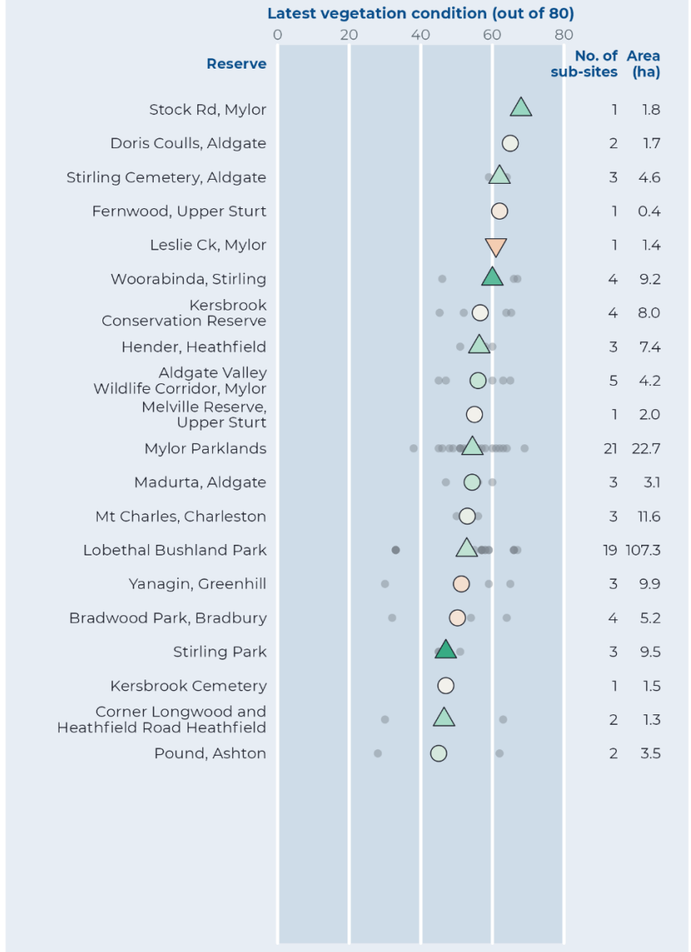
Patches most likely to improve with targeted work

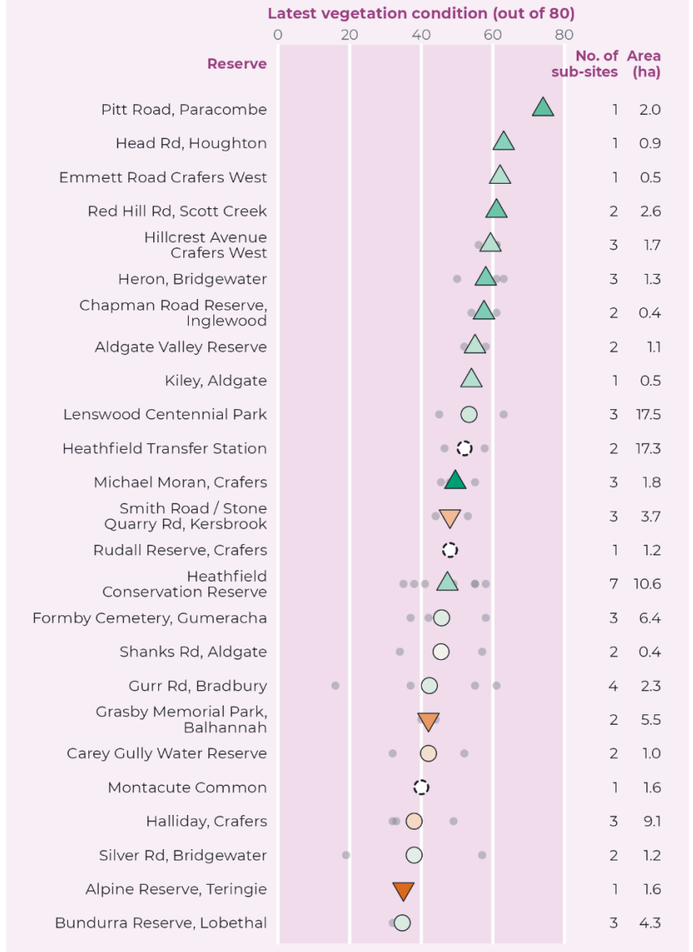
11 of 22 re-assessed reserves improved (goal: improve condition) — 25 reserves, 96 ha

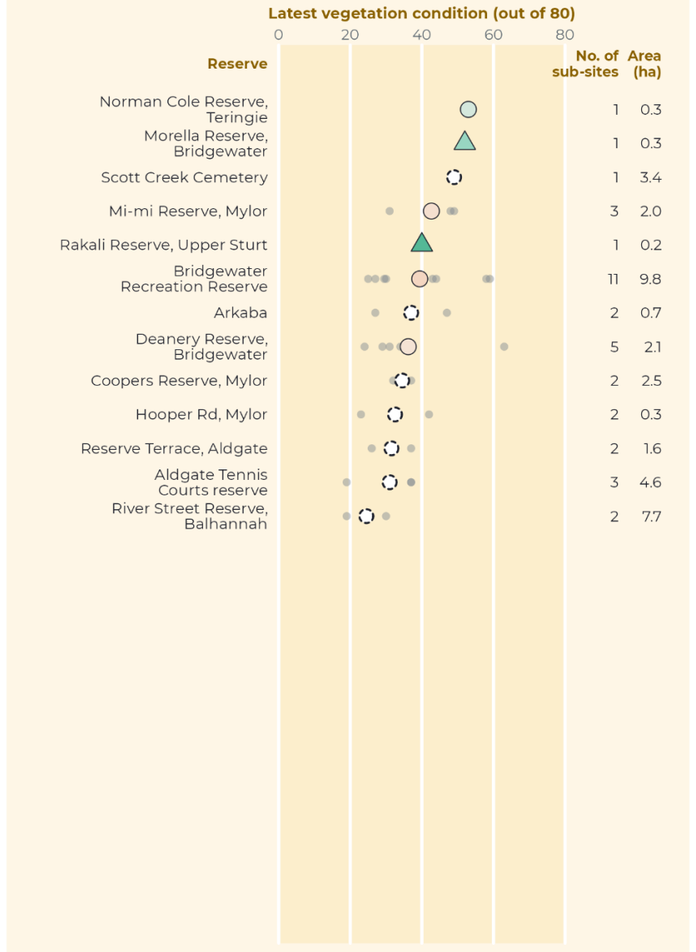
3 Connect / reintroduce

Reintroduce habitat and links with partners, or keep a special value

6 of 6 re-assessed reserves held steady or improved (no condition target) — 13 reserves, 35 ha







How to read it

Change since first assessed: Declined 15+ — No change — Improved 15+

Improved · Held steady · Declined · No follow-up yet · Each sub-site (part of a reserve assessed separately)

Large marker: the reserve's average latest condition (BushRAT vegetation condition score, theoretical maximum 80). Held steady means within 3 points of the first assessment. Priorities follow each reserve's biodiversity value (condition, landscape context and conservation significance, multiplied by area), confirmed by review. Assessments 2010 to 2025. Data as at 6 November 2026.

Figure 6 - Vegetation Condition Trend of Biodiversity Reserves

Native Vegetation Marker System (NVMS) sites

NVMS condition and management | Adelaide Hills Council

7 in 10

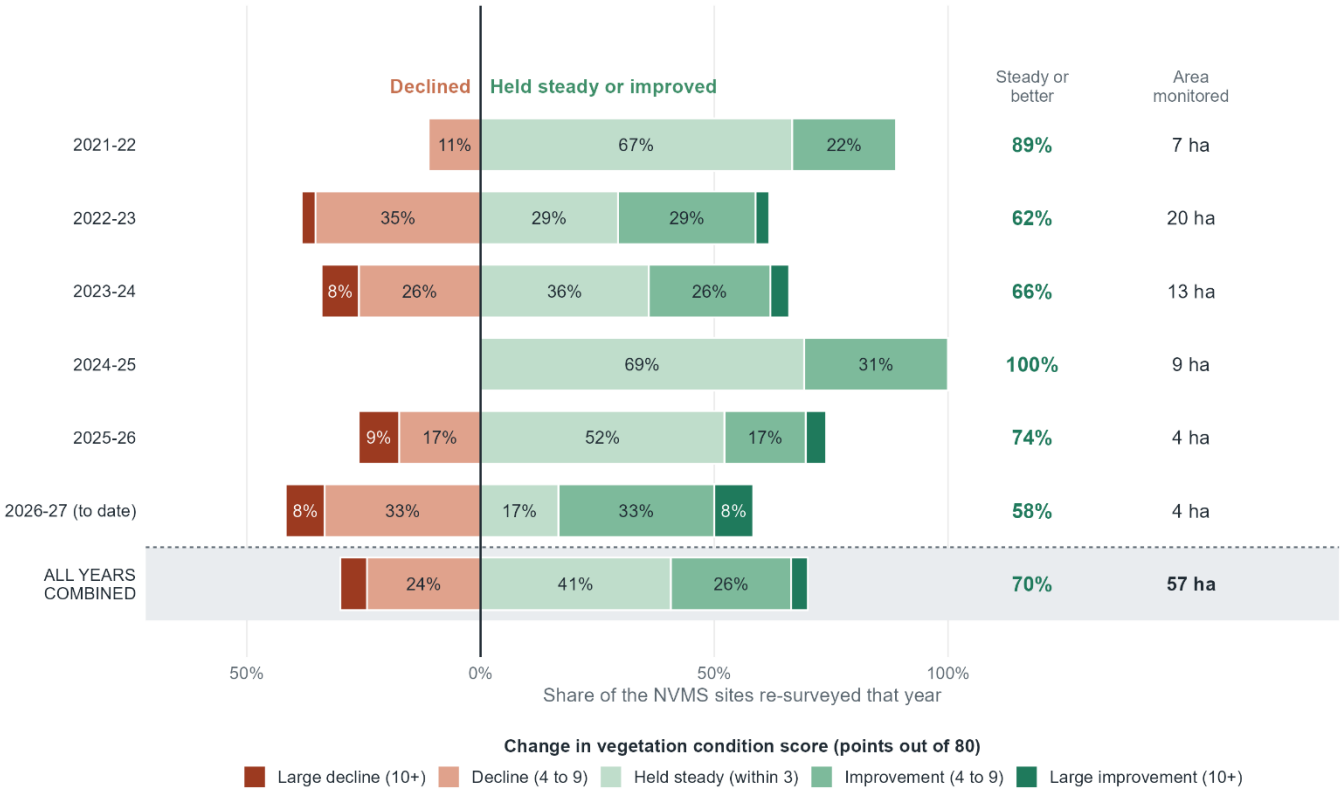
followed-up NVMS sites held steady or improved since baseline

41% held steady | 29% improved
30% declined

NVMS sites monitored at least once (% of 436)
435 sites (99.7%) | 223 ha

NVMS sites re-surveyed (% of 436)
140 sites (32%) | 57 ha

Condition KPI: NVMS sites re-surveyed each year, compared with their previous survey



Management effort (% of the 436 NVMS sites)

401 (92%)	**289 (66%)**	**145 (33%)**	**85%**	**+4 pts**
NVMS sites managed at least once since 2016-17	sites managed more than twice (194 in 5+ years)	sites managed in 2025-26	of re-surveyed sites had management between surveys	change in managed sites vs similar unmanaged sites

1. Interim: Round 2 re-surveys are under way (latest survey 2 November 2026, analysed 6 November 2026).
2. Condition = BushRAT vegetation condition score (out of 80), all surveys by Tonia Brown. Each NVMS site's change is the area-weighted average of its assessment areas. Held steady = within 3 points of the earlier survey.
3. Each year shows only the sites re-surveyed that year. Different sites are re-surveyed each year, so compare years with care.
4. Management = work recorded for a site in a financial year. By party: AHC (contractors and field staff) 399 sites; Landscape Board 150 sites; Bush for Life 3 sites. Landscape Board effort followed bushfire recovery funding after the Cherry Gardens bushfire.
5. Managed vs unmanaged: re-surveyed NVMS sites compared like for like (similar starting condition); 118 managed, 21 unmanaged; difference +3.9 points (95% CI +2.0 to +6.2). A strong link, not proof: sites were not chosen for management at random.

Figure 7 Native Vegetation Marker System Condition Trends

Challenges for the future

This Strategy has been developed with consideration of the following trends, risks and opportunities that are expected to shape biodiversity outcomes over the next decade.

Valuing biodiversity through action

Although biodiversity is highly valued by many residents, volunteers and partners, its contribution to landscape character, climate resilience, water quality, wellbeing and local identity is not always reflected in everyday decisions and actions. Valuing biodiversity in practice means making these values more visible in planning, land management, investment and on-ground action across the community, including in Council's own decisions and activities.

Pest and invasive species

Pest and invasive species remain persistent threats across reserves, roadsides, watercourses and private land, and their impacts are likely to increase as disturbance and climate pressures change ecosystem conditions. Managing this challenge requires sustained effort, coordination across land tenures and clear prioritisation of the places where Council can have the greatest influence.

Declining volunteering

Volunteer groups are central to local biodiversity outcomes, but ageing volunteer cohorts, cost-of-living pressures and changing patterns of community participation are affecting capacity. The Strategy can support future stewardship through clear priorities, practical coordination and support, and new pathways for people, schools and community groups to contribute.

Constrained resourcing

Council's biodiversity program operates within finite staffing and budget capacity while demand for protection, restoration, monitoring, compliance and community engagement continues to grow. This reinforces the need for the Strategy to focus effort, attract external investment and use partnerships to extend Council's impact.

Accelerated landscape change

Climate change is accelerating landscape change across the Adelaide Hills, with hotter, drier conditions, more extreme weather and incidents such as bushfire, flood, drought and pest outbreaks creating cascading and compounding impacts on ecosystems and communities. In this context, biodiversity management must increasingly support ecosystem resilience, disaster risk reduction and recovery following disturbance.

Elevating our standards and expectations

Activities across Council land, private land and development settings can affect biodiversity values, waterways and receiving environments, making clear environmental standards essential. The Strategy needs to support clearer expectations and more consistent application of standards through education, assessment, monitoring, compliance and enforcement where Council has responsibility or influence.

The broader context

The Biodiversity Strategy sits within a broader policy and planning framework that extends through international and national biodiversity commitments and linkages with state and regional plans.

International

Australia is a Party to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which provides a global framework for conserving biodiversity, using biodiversity sustainably and sharing benefits from genetic resources fairly and equitably.

The Convention is supported by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which sets global goals and 2030 targets for halting and reversing biodiversity loss.

These commitments reinforce the need to protect existing biodiversity values, restore degraded ecosystems, manage pest species and embed biodiversity into decision-making.

National

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* provides Australia's main environmental law for protecting nationally significant species, ecological communities, habitats and places.

The Australian Government's Nature Positive Plan is reforming national environmental law, including through National Environmental Standards, intended to provide clearer and stronger requirements for how matters of national environmental significance are protected and managed.

Australia's Strategy for Nature 2024–2030 provides a national framework for action through three goals:

- connecting all Australians with nature
- caring for nature in all its diversity, and
- sharing and building knowledge.

The National Threatened Species Action Plan 2022–2032 also identifies pathways to protect, manage and restore threatened species and important natural places.

Australia has also committed to the 30 by 30 target, which seeks to protect and conserve 30% of Australia's landmass and 30% of Australia's marine areas by 2030. This target aligns with Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and reinforces the importance of protecting and connecting high-value biodiversity areas, including through local, regional and landscape-scale action.

Together, these national frameworks reinforce Council's focus on habitat protection, threatened species values, community stewardship, knowledge-building, practical action, nature-based solutions and contribution to broader national efforts to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.

State

South Australia's new *Biodiversity Act 2025* (which will supersede the *Native Vegetation Act 1991 &* sections of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* relating to native wildlife) strengthens protections for native plants, animals and ecosystems, recognises Aboriginal knowledge and caring for Country, and introduces a general duty to protect biodiversity as implementation progresses. These reforms align with the national direction to mainstream nature into government decision-making and strengthen environmental standards, monitoring and compliance.

The Act also requires a State Biodiversity Plan, which will set principles, policies and strategic directions, identify conservation and restoration priorities, consider future climate scenarios, represent priorities spatially where practicable, and establish measurable targets, monitoring expectations and statewide biodiversity indicators.

Councils and other decision-makers will need to act consistently with the State Biodiversity Plan and contribute to its implementation through local planning, land management, regulatory functions, partnerships and reporting where relevant.

The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* establishes important responsibilities for landscape management, including statutory requirements for the control of declared pest weeds and pest animals and broader biosecurity duties, with declared species managed in line with requirements set through landscape boards.

Regional

Regionally, the Hills and Fleurieu Regional Landscape Plan 2026–2031 provides a shared roadmap for caring for land, water and nature, with priorities for resilient ecosystems, community stewardship, sustainable land management and coordinated action across partners.

Similarly, the Resilient Hills and Coasts Regional Climate Action Plan (2025–2030) contains a commitment to "Strengthen the resilience of our region's biodiversity, food systems and landscapes", and notes how a warmer and drier climate, and more frequent extreme weather and fires, have the potential to impact our region's landscapes from an ecological, food system and social perspective.



Bridgewater Reserve
Photo: Renae Eden

Summary of Council's Responsibilities

Below is a high level summary of Council's obligations under relevant Commonwealth and State legislation, as well as Council's own Policy Strategy and Policy. A more detailed overview is provided in Appendix A

Instrument	Council's key responsibility
EPBC Act 1999 (Cth)	Identify and avoid significant impacts on matters of national environmental significance and obtain Commonwealth approval where required.
Biodiversity Act 2025/Native Vegetation Act 1991 (SA)	Protect native vegetation and ensure Council works and activities comply with clearance approval requirements.
Biodiversity Act 2025/National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (SA)	Ensure Council activities protect native plants and wildlife and comply with relevant permit requirements.
Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (SA)	Manage natural resources responsibly and collaborate with Landscape Boards to address regional biodiversity and biosecurity priorities.
Council's Strategic Plan 2024	Protect, improve, expand and connect habitat, build environmental resilience and support community and stakeholder partnerships.
Council's Native Vegetation and Conservation Encroachment Policy	Prevent and manage damage and unauthorised encroachments affecting native vegetation and Council-managed conservation land.

Overview of Local Government, State Government and Private land management roles in Adelaide Hills Council

The table below provides an overview of land management roles of State Government, Local Government and Private Landholders in the Adelaide Hills. A more detailed breakdown of State Government programs is compiled in Appendix B.

Organisation	Primary role	Relationship with Council
Adelaide Hills Council Local Government	Manages biodiversity on Council land and delivers local conservation programs.	Leads this Strategy and coordinates local action.
Landscape Hills and Fleurieu (LHF) SA Government	Delivers regional biodiversity, restoration, pest management and landholder programs.	Collaborates with Council on regional priorities, joint projects and funding.
Native Vegetation Council (NVC) SA Government	Oversees native vegetation legislation, clearance approvals, Heritage Agreements and conservation incentives.	Provides the statutory framework and conservation funding opportunities.
Native Vegetation Branch (NVB) SA Government	Provides NVC administration, clearance assessments and regulatory advice.	Council's key contact for approvals, grants, SEB sites and reporting.
National Parks and Wildlife Service SA (NPWS) SA Government	Manages national parks and reserves for conservation, restoration and ecological protection.	Partners with Council on landscape-scale conservation, pest management and threatened species recovery.
Fire Management Team, NPWSA SA Government	Delivers the Burning on Private Lands Program and coordinates prescribed burning.	Works with Council and landholders on priority burns and post-burn management.
Private landholders and community groups	Undertake practical conservation and restoration across public and private land.	Work with Council through stewardship, volunteering, education and conservation programs.

What we heard – consultation insights

Between May and August 2026, preliminary consultation with biodiversity volunteers, partner organisations and Council Members identified several consistent themes for the next Biodiversity Strategy. Key themes included:

Protect first, then restore and connect

Stakeholders emphasised that protecting remnant vegetation and existing high-value areas should be the primary focus. Restoration and connectivity should be targeted and practical, building on existing ecological strengths and delivered over time through partnerships.

Strong foundations, but increasing pressure

Stakeholders recognised that Council has delivered strong biodiversity outcomes under the previous Strategy. However, they also identified increasing pressures including climate change, ecological decline, volunteer capacity constraints and the challenges associated with managing a largely privately owned landscape.

Need for strategic prioritisation

There was a clear message that Council should focus effort strategically. This includes prioritising high-value ecological assets, working in partnership with others, integrated spatial planning and avoiding overextension into too many new initiatives.

Stronger governance and compliance

Feedback highlighted the need to strengthen community compliance with biodiversity legislation, ensure Council consistently meets future policy requirements, and embed biodiversity in Council operations and decision-making.

Community engagement and behaviour change

Engagement and community education were identified as critical functions that should move beyond awareness to support practical behaviour change. This includes providing clear guidance to landholders and improving communication of expectations.

Partnerships, funding and advocacy

Given Council's scale and limited resources, stakeholders emphasised the importance of partnerships, funding opportunities and new delivery models to achieve landscape-scale outcomes.

Consultation also emphasised the importance of partnerships between SA Water, Landscape Boards, community environmental groups, industry and neighbouring councils.

Participants also identified Council's advocacy role in seeking greater recognition and investment for the Adelaide Hills' environmental services, particularly where biodiversity, water quality, primary production, tourism and catchment health are interconnected.

How the Strategy responds to feedback

There was strong support for Council to maintain the Protect, Restore, Connect approach, with strategic, spatial and evidence-based prioritisation and delivery through partnerships. Some areas which have been developed with greater focus in the 2027 Strategy include:

- A stronger focus on community stewardship and behaviour change
- Stronger partnership with First Nations organisations, including Traditional Custodians
- Greater recognition of the Mount Lofty Ranges biodiversity hotspot
- Biodiversity built into township, precinct and landscape planning

Strategic framework

This section sets out the Strategy's framework. It begins with a vision, which describes the future we are working towards. Our five strategic objectives set out where Council will focus its effort to achieve that vision. Each objective explains why it matters, the outcome Council is seeking, and the strategies we will use to get there. The actions that put these strategies into practice, including who leads them and when, are set out in the Implementation Plan.

Vision

The Adelaide Hills is a resilient and connected biodiversity hotspot, where healthy ecosystems, native vegetation, waterways and wildlife are protected, restored and valued through shared stewardship, strong partnerships and practical action across the landscape.

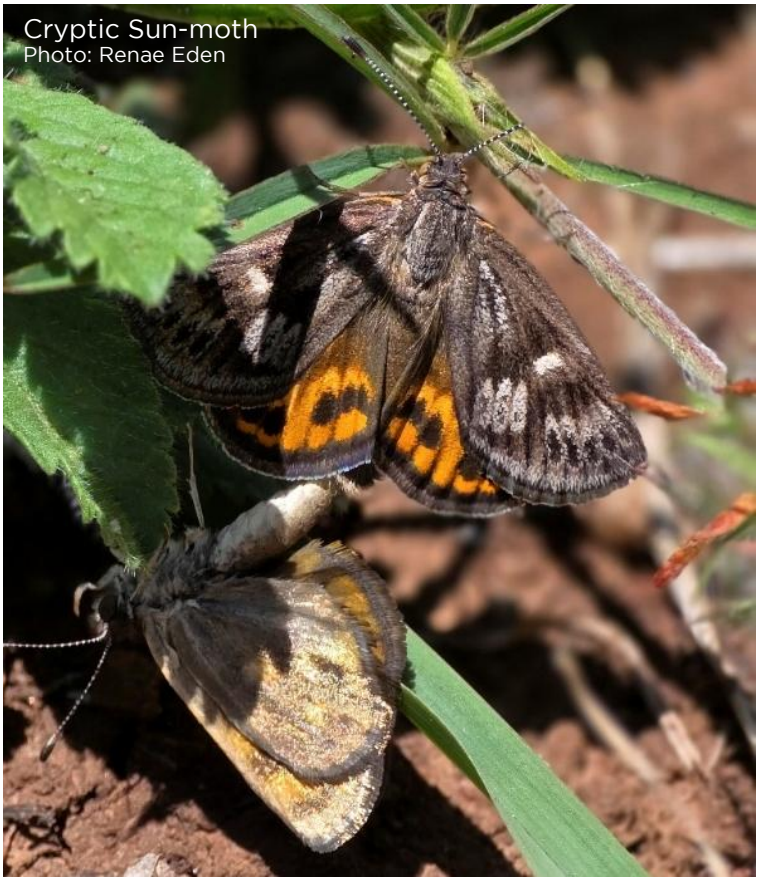
Strategic objectives

The following objectives provide the primary structure for delivering biodiversity outcomes over the life of the Strategy:

1. Protect high-value biodiversity assets
2. Restore priority degraded habitats and ecosystems
3. Strengthen strategic habitat and landscape connectivity
4. Foster community stewardship
5. Strengthen partnerships, knowledge and innovation

Each objective is supported by practical strategies and a rolling implementation plan that translate intent into program areas, priority actions, responsibilities, timeframes and progress measures.

This approach will allow Council to maintain focus on agreed priorities while adapting delivery as funding, partnerships, risks and knowledge change over time.



Cryptic Sun-moth
Photo: Renae Eden

1: Protect high-value biodiversity assets

Protecting existing biodiversity values is the cornerstone of this Strategy. Remnant vegetation, high-value reserves and roadside habitats represent irreplaceable ecological assets that underpin the region's biodiversity. Protecting these areas prevents further decline, maintains ecosystem function and provides the foundation for all other biodiversity actions.

Protecting the places and species that matter most requires Council to focus effort where it has the strongest role: reducing priority threats, supporting compliance where Council has powers, embedding biodiversity into Council decisions and working with community and partners across the landscape. This includes using evidence to focus effort on high-value assets, improving internal processes and managing threats such as pest species and unauthorised native vegetation clearance.

Many of the volunteer groups who work with Council are also deeply committed to protecting these high-value ecological assets, recognising that protection takes sustained effort over time.

Council will continue to support protection on private land through education and partnerships, recognising that long-term outcomes depend on collective action beyond Council-managed land.

Council's advocacy role is also important because biodiversity protection supports regional values that extend beyond individual sites, including catchment health, primary production, tourism, landscape character and ecological resilience. Stronger recognition of these benefits can help attract investment and policy support from other levels of government and partners.

Protection of existing assets is the highest priority and delivers the greatest long-term benefit.

Outcome: Priority habitats, species and ecological communities are protected from loss, degradation and emerging threats.

Strategies:

1.1 Council will protect high-value biodiversity assets on Council-owned and managed land through coordinated management, monitoring, long-term protection agreements and targeted investment.

1.2 Council will reduce priority threats to high-value biodiversity assets through coordinated pest plant and animal control, roadside weed management, biosecurity practices and clear land management expectations

1.3 Council will embed biodiversity protection into Council operations, planning and project delivery through practical procedures, staff guidance and early technical advice.

1.4 Council will strengthen biodiversity compliance and encroachment management through clear assessment processes, regulatory partnerships and appropriate enforcement pathways.

The implementation plan translates these strategies into practical work programs, including pest animal control, roadside weed management, biosecurity procedures, encroachment management, staff guidance, Heritage Agreements and protection on Council-managed land.

Case study: Heritage Agreements and reserve protection

Council has secured long-term protection for high-value reserves through Heritage Agreements and improved regulatory controls. These mechanisms protect priority sites, support targeted management and reduce long-term risk to biodiversity assets.



2: Restore priority degraded habitats and ecosystems

Restoration plays a critical role in improving biodiversity condition, particularly in a landscape that has been heavily modified over time. Consultation and experience both highlight that restoration is expensive relative to protection; therefore, restoration efforts must be targeted, practical and maintainable to deliver meaningful outcomes.

This objective focuses on restoring ecological condition in selected areas, supporting recovery following disturbance and enhancing habitat condition for native species and communities. It builds on Council's existing restoration programs, including works on reserves, roadsides and watercourses, and aligns future effort with landscape priorities and available resources.

Restoration will also be supported through partnerships with community groups, volunteers and regional organisations, recognising that collaboration is essential to achieving landscape-scale outcomes.

Restoration should be targeted, evidence-based and supported over the long term.

Outcome: Degraded priority habitats and ecosystems are restored to improve ecological condition, strengthen resilience and support ecosystem services.

Strategies:

2.1 Council will restore selected degraded habitats and ecosystems through targeted weed control, revegetation and site-based restoration actions where long-term maintenance is achievable.

2.2 Council will improve vegetation structure, species diversity and ecological condition through evidence-based restoration planning and adaptive management to support healthier and more resilient native vegetation communities.

2.3 Council will build ecosystem resilience to climate change, drought, fire and other disturbances through climate-adapted revegetation, post-disturbance recovery and targeted research to support long-term ecological function.

Case study: Restoring Grasby Memorial Park

Grasby Memorial Park (5.2 hectares) contains Blue Gum and Candlebark Woodland, including endangered *Eucalyptus dalrympleana* tall woodland.

Council secured $62,799 through the Native Vegetation Council Restoration Grant to undertake weed control and restore native vegetation structure over seven years and protect the area under a Heritage Agreement.

External funding like this enables targeted restoration of high-value sites beyond what Council resources alone could deliver. Monitoring will assess outcomes against baseline data.



3: Strengthen strategic habitat and landscape connectivity

Habitat connectivity supports species movement, genetic exchange and ecosystem resilience in fragmented landscapes such as the Adelaide Hills. Connectivity operates at different scales for different species, from local connections between habitat patches to broader landscape-scale networks. As climate change accelerates environmental change, stronger habitat links will help species move, adapt and persist over time.

This objective focuses on a small number of strategic, achievable connectivity projects that build from existing biodiversity assets, including Council reserves, road reserves, watercourses and other habitat patches. Rather than attempting landscape-scale corridor implementation, the Strategy prioritises practical actions that buffer high-value areas and strengthen ecological function across the landscape, including connections between habitats and the ecological processes that sustain them. It is important to limit focus to one or two connectivity projects at a time in order to do them well within available resources.

Connectivity outcomes will be delivered through coordinated spatial planning, habitat enhancement, targeted revegetation and collaboration with landholders and partners. In highly modified areas, restoration or reintroduction of native species or ecological processes may be considered where it can re-establish native habitat and contribute to strategic landscape connections.

Connectivity should be strategic, practical and focused on achievable links that build resilience across the landscape.

Outcome: Priority habitat corridors, connected landscapes and ecological linkages are strengthened to support species movement, reduce fragmentation and build landscape resilience.

Strategies:

3.1 Council will expand habitat around existing biodiversity assets through targeted revegetation, buffering and habitat enhancement to strengthen core ecological areas and reduce edge effects.

3.2 Council will deliver targeted connectivity projects through spatial prioritisation, corridor planning and practical linkage projects to achieve the greatest ecological benefit within available resources.

3.3 Council will integrate biodiversity outcomes into open space, infrastructure and landscape planning through early design advice, species palettes and project planning to create more connected and habitat-supportive public places.

3.4 Council will partner with landholders, authorities and regional initiatives through cross-tenure projects and shared investment to support habitat restoration and species movement across the broader landscape.

Case study: Cox Creek Bridgewater Restoration Project

A $1.97 million Australian Government grant is supporting restoration across 6km of Cox Creek, removing declared weeds (Willow and Desert Ash) and replanting with native riparian species.

The project spans public and private land, involves nine partner organisations and volunteer groups, and demonstrates how landscape-scale restoration and targeted reconstruction require coordinated investment and partnership.



4: Foster community stewardship

Engaging residents, volunteers and community members to champion biodiversity outcomes is central to achieving lasting change across the Adelaide Hills. With much of the landscape privately managed, Council can play an important role in promoting the value of biodiversity and encouraging landholders, residents, volunteers and partners to take practical action.

This objective shifts engagement from awareness-raising to active promotion and behaviour change. It focuses on clear communication, practical guidance, targeted education and accessible tools that help the community understand biodiversity values, adopt best-practice land management, meet compliance expectations and contribute to shared outcomes.

Council will continue to champion biodiversity through citizen science, volunteer programs, community networks and stories that showcase local action. Strong promotion will help build community pride, attract participation and make biodiversity protection a visible and valued part of living in the Adelaide Hills.

Championing biodiversity outcomes helps turn awareness into practical action and sustained behaviour change.

Outcome: Residents, volunteers, land managers and community groups are inspired to value, protect and enhance biodiversity.

Strategies:

4.1 Council will support and encourage community participation in biodiversity programs through practical volunteer support, school programs, citizen science and community planting.

4.2 Council will help residents and landholders make informed biodiversity decisions through clear guidance, workshops, signage and online resources.

4.3 Council will encourage stewardship and conservation on private land through education, facilitating Heritage Agreements and land manager partnerships.

4.4 Council will celebrate and communicate biodiversity outcomes through case studies, volunteer recognition and an increased online presence.

Case study: Volunteer and Bushcare Programs

Council's support for volunteer and bushcare programs demonstrates the value of community stewardship in protecting local biodiversity, building skills and sustaining practical action across reserves, roadsides and neighbourhood landscapes.



5: Strengthen partnerships, knowledge and innovation

Partnerships are essential to achieving biodiversity outcomes at scale. Council works within a network of organisations, agencies, community groups and landholders, all of whom contribute to landscape management across the Adelaide Hills.

This objective focuses on strengthening partnerships, improving the evidence base, leveraging funding and expertise, and exploring practical innovation to maximise Council's nature-based solutions and biodiversity outcomes. It also includes new collaborative approaches, shared investment, philanthropic opportunities and emerging funding pathways where these are practical and proportionate to Council's role and landholdings.

Strengthening partnerships with First Nations organisations, including Traditional Custodians, will support culturally informed approaches to biodiversity management, including opportunities for respectful knowledge sharing, cultural heritage awareness, caring for Country and the use of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge where it is shared through appropriate processes.

Partnerships extend Council's reach by aligning effort, attracting investment and enabling coordinated action across the broader landscape.

Outcome: Biodiversity decisions, investment and delivery are strengthened through robust evidence, spatial data, monitoring, research, innovation and coordinated partnerships.

Strategies:

5.1 Council will maintain robust biodiversity monitoring and spatial information through long-term datasets, mapping tools and condition monitoring so that data analysis drives adaptive management of our programs.

5.2 Council will collaborate with First Nations organisations, government agencies, researchers, education providers and community organisations through shared priorities and coordinated projects.

5.3 Council will pursue external funding and investment opportunities through grants, shared investment, advocacy and emerging funding pathways.

5.4 Council will support innovation, research and adaptive management through pilot projects, knowledge-sharing and applied research to improve biodiversity practice and respond to emerging risks.

Case study: TAFE SA and Conservation and Ecosystem Management students

TAFE SA has recently partnered with Adelaide Hills Council to use the Deanery as a learning site for Conservation and Ecosystem Management students. Students undertake habitat and water quality assessments, seed collection, revegetation and weed control, helping build ecological data to track changes in condition over time.



Implementation Plan

This Implementation Plan is organised by program area rather than by strategies detailed above, as one program may contribute to several strategies. Collectively, the program areas give practical effect to the Strategy's priorities for protection, restoration, connectivity, community stewardship, partnerships, evidence, investment and adaptive management. The Implementation Plan maintains this overall line of sight while allowing activities, responsibilities and timeframes to be refined through rolling delivery planning.

Strategic Objective	Program Area	Outcomes	Actions	Strategies supported	Lead Role	Timeframe
Protect high-value biodiversity assets	Threat Management	High-value reserves and NVMS sites are monitored and managed using evidence of condition and trend.	Continue implementing the ongoing monitoring and adaptive management program for high-value reserves and NVMS sites using biodiversity condition and trend data.	1.2, 5.1	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
		Remnant native roadside vegetation is managed consistently with the Roadside Vegetation Management Plan.	Undertake roadside vegetation management in accordance with the Roadside Vegetation Management Plan.	1.2	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
		Priority pest animal impacts on high-value biodiversity assets are reduced.	Deliver a pest animal control program across priority reserves coordinated with adjoining landscapes and monitor treatment outcomes.	1.1, 1.2	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
		Biosecurity and invasive species risks from Council works and land management activities are reduced.	Implement and audit biosecurity hygiene procedures, including Arrive Clean Leave Clean and Phytophthora management protocols, across Council operations.	1.2, 1.3	Biodiversity Team / Operations	Short-term

Strategic Objective	Program Area	Outcomes	Actions	Strategies supported	Lead Role	Timeframe
	Governance & Compliance	Encroachments affecting biodiversity values are identified, assessed and managed consistently.	Maintain an encroachment register and assess, prioritise and manage biodiversity-related encroachment cases.	1.4	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
		The Native Vegetation and Conservation Encroachment Policy is embedded into Council processes and procedures.	Implement the Native Vegetation and Conservation Impact Assessment Tool to guide decision-making relating to relevant Council planning, permit and encroachment management processes.	1.3, 1.4	Biodiversity Team	Short-term
	Land Protection	Priority biodiversity sites are secured through long-term protection mechanisms.	Assess priority biodiversity sites and establish long-term protection agreements where appropriate.	1.2, 4.3	Biodiversity Team / Sport & Recreation / Property team	Ongoing
Restore priority degraded habitats and ecosystems	Ecological Restoration	Priority restoration sites are restored and maintained to improve ecological condition, ecosystem resilience and support ecosystem services.	Deliver restoration projects at Grasby Memorial Park, Stirling Cemetery, Pound Reserve, Pitt Reserve, Aldgate Valley Reserve and Silver Reserve, and monitor ecological outcomes.	2.1, 2.2	Biodiversity Team	Short–medium-term
		Identified degraded habitats are improved through targeted weed control, revegetation, follow-up maintenance and monitoring.	Undertake targeted weed control, revegetation and follow-up maintenance at priority degraded habitat sites and monitor site condition over time.	2.1, 2.2	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing

Strategic Objective	Program Area	Outcomes	Actions	Strategies supported	Lead Role	Timeframe
	Habitat Enhancement	Habitat quality, structure and resources are improved for priority native species and ecological communities.	Implement habitat enhancement projects for priority native species and ecological communities, including woodland bird and rare invertebrate habitat initiatives, such as the Future Stringybark Project	2.2, 3.1	Biodiversity Team	Medium-term
	Threatened Species & Ecological Community Recovery	Threatened species and ecological communities are supported through priority habitat management, monitoring and recovery actions.	Deliver priority habitat management, monitoring and recovery actions for threatened species and ecological communities.	1.1, 2.2	Biodiversity Team	Medium-term
		Explore strategies to engage with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in planning for bushfire response and recovery.	Establish engagement pathways with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to inform bushfire response and ecological recovery planning.	2.3, 5.2	Senior Community Resilience Officer	Medium-term
	Climate Resilience	Restoration practice strengthens ecosystem resilience, climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and ecosystem services such as water quality, habitat function and soil stability.	Investigate eucalypt dieback risks and trial climate-adapted revegetation approaches to strengthen ecosystem resilience – the Future Stringybark Project	2.3, 5.4	Biodiversity Team	Medium-term

Strategic Objective	Program Area	Outcomes	Actions	Strategies supported	Lead Role	Timeframe
Strengthen strategic habitat and landscape connectivity	Ecological Asset Mapping & Spatial Prioritisation	Biodiversity spatial datasets integrate information on ecological assets, habitat condition, species, vegetation and landscape context to inform strategic habitat protection, restoration and connectivity planning.	Maintain biodiversity spatial datasets and use them to identify spatial patterns, ecological linkages and priority opportunities for biodiversity protection, restoration and connectivity.	3.2, 5.1	Biodiversity Team / GIS	Ongoing
	Connectivity Delivery	Targeted habitat linkages are delivered to reduce fragmentation, support species movement and strengthen landscape resilience.	Deliver revegetation and habitat linkage projects that improve landscape connectivity and reduce habitat fragmentation, including the Cox Creek Bridgewater Restoration Project.	3.1, 3.2	Biodiversity Team	Medium–long-term
		Strategic opportunities for watercourses, unformed roads and rail corridors are assessed and prioritised for their contribution to habitat connectivity.	Assess and prioritise watercourses, unformed roads and rail corridors for their contribution to habitat connectivity outcomes.	3.2	Biodiversity Team	Medium-term
	Connectivity Partnerships	Landscape-scale projects are coordinated with partners to extend connectivity outcomes across tenure boundaries.	Establish new and maintain existing partnerships to deliver landscape-scale biodiversity connectivity projects across tenure boundaries.	3.4, 5.2	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
	Landscape Design	Biodiversity needs are integrated into township and precinct planning to protect local ecological assets and	Integrate biodiversity objectives, ecological assets and habitat connectivity opportunities into	3.3	Region and Place	Ongoing

Strategic Objective	Program Area	Outcomes	Actions	Strategies supported	Lead Role	Timeframe
		create connected, habitat-supportive, resilient and attractive public places.	township, precinct and landscape planning processes.			
Foster community stewardship	Volunteer Support	Bushcare, Landcare and Friends Groups are supported to deliver practical biodiversity outcomes on Council-managed land and in local communities.	Provide ongoing support, resources, equipment, and recognition to volunteer groups delivering biodiversity outcomes.	4.1	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
	Volunteer & Stewardship Growth	Volunteer participation is increased and sustained through recruitment, onboarding, development, support and recognition.	Support volunteers to recruit, onboard and develop local leadership capacity to sustain community biodiversity stewardship.	4.1	Biodiversity Team / Communications	Medium-term
	Education & Communication	Residents, schools and community members increase biodiversity knowledge and take practical action through education programs, resources, workshops, events and communications that support community wellbeing and connection to nature.	Deliver biodiversity education, engagement and behaviour change activities and workshops that increase community knowledge and action.	4.2	Biodiversity Team / Communications	Ongoing
		Biodiversity values are promoted through case studies, educational campaigns and stories that showcase Council and volunteer restoration action.	Promote biodiversity values through case studies, campaigns and stories showcasing Council and community restoration efforts.	4.4	Biodiversity Team / Communications and Engagement Team	Ongoing

Strategic Objective	Program Area	Outcomes	Actions	Strategies supported	Lead Role	Timeframe
		Residents and land managers have access to locally relevant guidance that supports the selection and use of native plant species to enhance biodiversity, strengthen bushfire resilience, support wildlife habitat and food resources, and recognise native food values.	Promote Council's Habitat Landscaping and Gardening and Low Flammability Gardening Guide. Develop, publish and promote a Local Indigenous Planting Guide for residents and land managers in partnership with First Nations organisations and technical experts.	4.2, 5.2	Biodiversity Team / Communications	Short-term
	Citizen Science	Community participation in biodiversity monitoring is increased through citizen science platforms and supported observation programs.	Promote and support community participation in citizen science programs and biodiversity observation platforms.	4.1	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
Strengthen partnerships, knowledge and innovation	Monitoring & Data	Biodiversity monitoring programs are maintained to strengthen evidence, track condition and guide priorities, investment and adaptive management.	Maintain biodiversity monitoring programs and use monitoring data to inform adaptive management and investment decisions.	5.1	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
		Monitoring data is used to refine management priorities, investment decisions and delivery methods over time.	Review biodiversity monitoring results annually and update management priorities and investment decisions accordingly.	5.1	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
	Partnerships	Regional and First Nations partnerships are strengthened	Maintain and strengthen regional and First Nations	5.2	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing

Strategic Objective	Program Area	Outcomes	Actions	Strategies supported	Lead Role	Timeframe
		to align priorities, share knowledge and coordinate biodiversity delivery.	partnerships to align priorities and coordinate biodiversity delivery. Key partners include Landscape Board, DEW, KYAC and neighbouring councils.			
		Community and education partnerships are expanded to build skills, share knowledge and support coordinated biodiversity action.	Establish and maintain partnerships with schools, universities, training providers and community organisations to support biodiversity education and action.	4.1, 5.2	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
		Investigate means of incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' land management practices and bushfire prevention measures, working with Traditional Custodians.	Work with Traditional Custodians to identify, trial and document opportunities to incorporate culturally informed land management and bushfire prevention practices on Council-managed land.	2.3, 5.2	Open Space Team	Medium-term
	Funding, Investment & Advocacy	External investment is secured to increase Council's delivery capacity for priority biodiversity initiatives.	Regularly search and apply for grant funding where eligible.	5.3	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
		Emerging funding opportunities are investigated for practical application.	Investigate and where feasible pursue suitable biodiversity market, ecosystem service and Nature Repair investment opportunities.	5.3	Biodiversity Team	Medium-term

Strategic Objective	Program Area	Outcomes	Actions	Strategies supported	Lead Role	Timeframe
		The Mount Lofty Ranges biodiversity hotspot receives increased recognition and investment through evidence-based advocacy and government engagement.	Undertake evidence-based advocacy to increase recognition and investment in the Mount Lofty Ranges biodiversity hotspot.	5.3	Biodiversity Team / Executive Leadership	Ongoing
	Research & Innovation	Research partnerships are supported to test new approaches, build evidence and apply findings to biodiversity planning and management.	Establish research partnerships and apply project findings to biodiversity planning and management practices.	5.2, 5.4	Biodiversity Team	Ongoing
		Assess opportunities to generate environmental, financial and social benefits through revegetation, carbon sequestration and biodiversity enhancement on suitable Council-owned or managed land.	Undertake high-level feasibility assessment considering; suitability of council land, environmental benefits, revenue opportunities, financial implications, collaboration opportunities, potential delivery models and relevant constraints.	5.3, 5.4	Biodiversity Team	Short Term

Short-term (1–3 years) – Establish foundations, planning, policy and priority projects. **Medium-term (4–7 years)** – Expand and embed programs, partnerships and restoration outcomes. **Long-term (8–10 years)** – Deliver landscape-scale outcomes and mature initiatives. **Ongoing** – Continuing programs and services delivered throughout the life of the Strategy

Targets and Key Performance Indicators

Strategic Objective	Target	Timing	Key Performance Indicator
Protect high-value biodiversity assets	Assess 5 reserves each year against Conservation or Heritage Agreement criteria, and progress agreements for those that qualify.	Annual	Number of reserves assessed. Number of agreements progressed or executed.
	Deliver 5,200 hours of staff and contractor weed control across 400 ha of priority reserves and 60 NVMS sites.	Annual	Hours delivered against 5,200. Hectares treated against 400. NVMS sites treated against 60 (number and % of all NVMS sites).
	Monitor every site scheduled in that year's rotation (reserves every 5 years, NVMS sites every 7).	Annual	% of scheduled sites monitored.
	Maintain or improve ecological condition at 70% or more of monitored assets.	Annual	% of monitored reserves and NVMS sites stable or improving, reported separately.
	Undertake rabbit control at 6 strategic sites.	Annual	Number of sites treated. Change in rabbit activity at those sites, using the Plan's "monitor treatment outcomes" action.
	Embed the Native Vegetation and Conservation Impact Assessment Tool in Council planning, permit and encroachment processes.	Short-term	Tool adopted (yes/no). Number of relevant assessments that use it.
	Assess reported biodiversity-related encroachment cases through the encroachment register.	Annual	Cases reported, assessed and resolved.

Restore priority degraded habitats and ecosystems	Deliver each year's scheduled works at Grasby Memorial Park, Stirling Cemetery, Pound Reserve, Pitt Reserve, Aldgate Valley Reserve and Silver Reserve.	Annual	% of annual milestones delivered on time and within budget (target 100%). Site condition trend against baseline monitoring.
	Maintain the three Significant Environmental Benefit sites (Heathfield Transfer Station, Kersbrook Conservation Reserve, Smith Rd/Stone Quarry Reserve) to the conditions of their agreements.	Annual	Sites maintained (3 of 3). Annual report submitted by the due date.
	Assess and prioritise watercourses, unformed roads and rail corridors for connectivity.	Medium-term	Assessment completed (yes/no).
	Complete the Future Stringybark Project pilot	Medium term	Project complete and outcomes reported
Strengthen strategic habitat and landscape connectivity	Deliver the Cox Creek Bridgewater Restoration Project to the grant timeline and budget.	Annual milestones, over project term	% of milestones on time and within budget. Annual progress report covering km of creek treated (of 6 km), ha of weed control, metres of erosion control, and native seedlings and species planted.
	Limit active connectivity delivery to one or two projects at a time	Ongoing	Number of active connectivity projects.
Foster community stewardship	Support 25 volunteer events.	Annual	Number of events supported.
	Deliver 4 community biodiversity education and behaviour-change events.	Annual	Number of events. Number of attendees.
Strengthen partnerships,	Lodge at least one external grant application.	Annual	Applications lodged. Resources sought and resources secured. Success rate.

knowledge and innovation			
	Meet with Landscape Hills and Fleurieu at least once annually to coordinate on-ground programs.	Annual	Meetings held. Programs or projects jointly coordinated.
	Establish an engagement pathway with Traditional Custodians and First Nations organisations. Publish the Local Indigenous Planting Guide.	Medium-term	Pathway in place (yes/no). Guide published (yes/no). Number of projects co-designed or delivered with First Nations partners.

Appendix A Summary of Council's Responsibilities under relevant legislation, strategy and policy

Instrument & scope	Council responsibilities in practice
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act) Protects matters of national environmental significance, including nationally listed threatened species and ecological communities, migratory species, Ramsar wetlands and nationally significant heritage places. Actions likely to have a significant impact on protected matters may require Commonwealth approval.	• Consider potential impacts on matters of national environmental significance when planning and delivering Council projects and activities. • Assess whether proposed works, infrastructure projects, vegetation clearance or restoration activities could have a significant impact on nationally protected matters. • Refer a proposed action to the Australian Government where it may have a significant impact and obtain approval if required before proceeding. • Incorporate relevant EPBC requirements into project planning, environmental assessments, procurement and contractor management. • Ensure Council does not assume that State approvals automatically satisfy Commonwealth requirements.
Biodiversity Act 2025/Native Vegetation Act 1991 (SA) Protects native vegetation and regulates its clearance. Clearance generally requires approval from the Native Vegetation Council (NVC), unless an exemption or approved pathway applies. The Act also provides for Heritage Agreements, revegetation and Significant Environmental Benefits (SEBs).	• Protect native vegetation on Council-managed land and roads from unauthorised clearance or damage. • Ensure Council works, maintenance, infrastructure and contractors comply with clearance requirements and relevant approvals. • Obtain the necessary NVC approval before undertaking activities that involve native vegetation clearance, unless an exemption applies. • Manage roadside vegetation in accordance with applicable NVC guidelines and approved Roadside Vegetation Management Plan. • Support Heritage Agreements and other formal protection mechanisms on suitable Council land. • Refer suspected breaches to the relevant statutory authority and cooperate with investigations.
Biodiversity Act 2025/National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (SA) Protects native plants and protected animals, including threatened species. It regulates activities such as taking native plants, capturing, relocating or destroying protected animals, and collecting native plant material in circumstances requiring a permit.	• Ensure Council activities and contractors do not unlawfully take, damage or interfere with protected native plants or animals. • Obtain relevant permits where Council projects involve activities such as capturing, relocating or destroying protected wildlife, or collecting protected plant material. • Consider the presence of protected and threatened species when planning works, reserve management, vegetation maintenance and restoration projects. • Obtain landholder consent where required for research or wildlife activities on Council land.

	• Refer relevant wildlife offences and permit matters to the Department for Environment and Water (DEW), which administers the Act.
Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (SA) Establishes the framework for sustainable and integrated management of South Australia's landscapes, including biodiversity, water, soil and pest plants and animals. It establishes general statutory duties requiring people to act reasonably in managing natural resources.	• Manage Council land and natural resources responsibly, taking biodiversity protection and potential environmental impacts into account. • Manage declared plants and animals in accordance with relevant statutory requirements and regional priorities. • Work collaboratively with Landscape Boards, particularly Landscape Hills and Fleurieu, to deliver regional landscape management priorities. • Contribute to coordinated pest plant and animal management, watercourse protection, revegetation and landscape restoration. • Support regional landscape planning, partnerships and opportunities for shared investment. • Meet Council's applicable obligations relating to landscape levies and contributions.
Adelaide Hills Council Strategic Plan 2024 – Your Place, Your Space Establishes Council's strategic commitments for the natural environment, including protecting, improving, expanding and connecting habitat, building environmental resilience and improving landscape character and amenity.	• Protect remnant native vegetation from threats and threatening activities (NE3.1). • Promote biodiversity protection and management on private land (NE3.2). • Develop and implement the Biodiversity Strategy (NE3.3). • Nurture community and stakeholder partnerships and collaborations to care for Country (NE3.4). • Advocate for stronger native vegetation protection laws (NE3.5). • Build resilience to climate and environmental change, implement relevant bushfire and tree strategy actions, work towards the 30 by 30 target, and protect soil and water quality (NE4). • Improve landscape character and amenity on Council-managed land (NE5).
AHC Native Vegetation and Conservation Encroachment Policy (2025) Establishes Council's framework for protecting native vegetation and land or roads managed for conservation purposes from damaging activities and encroachments. It applies to Council land and roads with native vegetation or conservation value and does not replace other legislative requirements.	• Proactively prevent damage to native vegetation and encroachment onto Council land and roads of conservation value. • Assess relevant development, permit, lease and access applications using the Policy's Impact Assessment Tool. • Apply appropriate conditions to permits and leases to prevent or minimise impacts. • Educate residents, landholders and the community about responsible use of Council land. • Maintain an Encroachment Register and monitor reported incidents. • Respond to unauthorised activities, seek voluntary compliance where appropriate, and take regulatory action where necessary. • Require remediation and, where appropriate, recover costs from those responsible for damage. • Embed the Policy into Council procedures, development assessment, S221 applications, reserve access permits, leases and operational processes.

Appendix B – Overview of South Australian Government of Programs in the Adelaide Hills

Landscape Hills and Fleurieu, SA Government

Landscape Hills and Fleurieu (LHF) is the regional natural resources management body responsible for supporting sustainable management of land, water and biodiversity across the Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula. Its work is delivered through partnerships with local government, private landholders, Traditional Owners, community groups, primary producers, industry and other government agencies.

A central focus is to improve the health and resilience of the region's landscapes by supporting practical land management, protecting native biodiversity, restoring degraded ecosystems and building community capacity.

For the Adelaide Hills, LHF's programs can broadly be grouped into the following areas.

1. Land stewardship and property management Provides practical advice, technical support, property planning and resources to private landholders to improve land management, protect native vegetation, manage soils and enhance biodiversity. Delivered through dedicated Stewardship Officers, workshops and landholder partnerships.
2. Pest plant and animal management Coordinates regional programs to manage priority weeds and pest animals, including feral deer, goats, pigs and rabbits. Works with councils, landholders, government agencies and other partners to coordinate control programs and reduce impacts on agriculture, native vegetation and wildlife.
3. Native vegetation and biodiversity conservation Supports the protection, restoration and expansion of native vegetation and wildlife habitat. Includes threatened species recovery, habitat restoration, woodland bird conservation, revegetation and initiatives to improve landscape connectivity.
4. Watercourse and catchment management Supports sustainable management of waterways, wetlands, dams and catchments through technical advice, water planning, restoration initiatives and improved water management practices. Includes water allocation planning and regulatory oversight of activities affecting water resources.
5. Sustainable and regenerative agriculture Supports primary producers to improve soil health, manage grazing pressure, adopt regenerative farming practices and improve the long-term sustainability of agricultural landscapes.
6. Climate resilience and carbon farming Helps landholders and primary producers prepare for climate change through climate adaptation, emissions reduction, carbon farming advice and improved landscape resilience.
7. Community grants and environmental volunteering Provides funding, training, resources and practical support to community groups, schools, volunteers and landholders undertaking environmental projects. Encourages community-led conservation, citizen science and collaborative restoration.
8. First Nations partnerships and community engagement Works with Traditional Owners and First Nations knowledge-holders to incorporate cultural knowledge, strengthen Caring for Country partnerships and support community involvement in landscape management.

Some particularly relevant initiatives to the Adelaide Hills include:

- Feral Deer and Goat Eradication - coordinated regional control programs to reduce feral deer and goat populations and their impacts on native vegetation, agricultural land and biodiversity.
- ReBird the Ranges - a regional partnership working to reverse declines in woodland birds across the Mount Lofty Ranges through habitat protection, restoration and landscape-scale revegetation.
- Back from the Brink - supports recovery of threatened species and ecological communities through targeted conservation and restoration projects.

- Grassroots Grants - provides grants to community groups, schools, environmental organisations and landholders for local biodiversity, restoration and sustainable land management projects.
- Landholder Stewardship Program - provides direct advice and assistance to landholders on native vegetation management, revegetation, watercourses, weeds, pest animals, soils and property planning.

Native Vegetation Council, Department for Environment and Water,

The Native Vegetation Council (NVC) plays a central role in the protection, conservation and sustainable management of South Australia's native vegetation, including the significant remnant vegetation communities found throughout the Adelaide Hills.

Established under the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* (SA), the NVC provides strategic oversight, regulatory decision-making, policy direction and funding support to help prevent the unnecessary clearance of native vegetation and encourage its conservation, restoration and sustainable management.

In the Adelaide Hills, its role is particularly important given the region's high biodiversity values, fragmented native vegetation, threatened ecological communities, significant wildlife habitat and ongoing pressures from development, agriculture, bushfire management and rural land use.

Key roles and responsibilities include:

- Regulatory protection - administering the statutory framework for controlling native vegetation clearance, assessing applications and determining whether proposed clearance is appropriate under the Act and Regulations.
- Heritage Agreements - overseeing the Native Vegetation Heritage Agreement Scheme, providing a mechanism for private landholders to permanently protect significant native vegetation on their properties.
- Conservation funding - providing grants and financial incentives to support landholders and conservation organisations undertaking weed control, pest animal management, fencing, revegetation and ecological restoration.
- Significant Environmental Benefits (SEB) - ensuring that approved native vegetation clearance is accompanied by appropriate environmental offsets, with the aim of achieving a significant environmental benefit.
- Strategic conservation and restoration - encouraging the protection, enhancement and re-establishment of native vegetation, particularly in areas where vegetation has been extensively cleared or fragmented.
- Monitoring and compliance - monitoring changes in native vegetation across South Australia, overseeing compliance with native vegetation legislation and providing mechanisms for reporting unauthorised clearance.
- Research and policy - supporting research, technical guidance and policy development to improve native vegetation conservation and management across the state.

The Native Vegetation Branch, Department for Environment and Water

The Native Vegetation Branch (NVB) is part of the South Australian Government's Department for Environment and Water (DEW). Its primary role is to administer and support the protection, conservation and sustainable management of South Australia's native vegetation under the *Native Vegetation Act 1991*.

In the Adelaide Hills, the Branch plays an important regulatory and advisory role in protecting remnant native vegetation, managing vegetation clearance and supporting landholders, councils and other organisations to achieve positive biodiversity outcomes.

Its key responsibilities include:

- Regulation of native vegetation clearance – Assessing applications to clear native vegetation and determining whether proposed clearance is permitted under the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* and associated regulations.
- Protection of native vegetation – Administering legislative controls to prevent inappropriate clearance and degradation of native vegetation, including remnant woodland, grassland, shrubland and riparian vegetation.
- Assessment and approval processes – Providing technical assessments and advice to the Native Vegetation Council (NVC) to inform decisions about vegetation clearance applications, exemptions and associated conditions.
- Landholder support and advice – Providing information and guidance to landholders, councils, developers and other stakeholders about their responsibilities under native vegetation legislation and opportunities for vegetation protection and management.
- Biodiversity conservation and restoration – Supporting programs and initiatives that encourage the retention, restoration and sustainable management of native vegetation across private and public land.
- Compliance and enforcement – Supporting the investigation of alleged unlawful native vegetation clearance and ensuring compliance with legislative requirements, including rehabilitation or other remedial measures where appropriate.
- Heritage Agreements and incentives – Administering the Heritage Agreement Scheme, which provides opportunities for landholders to formally protect areas of high conservation value on private land, often in perpetuity.
- Significant Environmental Benefit (SEB) – Administering the SEB framework, which requires environmental benefits to compensate for approved native vegetation clearance, supporting protection and restoration elsewhere.

Fire Management Team, Department for Environment and Water

The Fire Management Team within the Department for Environment and Water (DEW), through the National Parks and Wildlife Service of South Australia (NPWSSA), plays a key role in delivering the Burning on Private Lands Program, working with private landholders and local government to undertake strategic prescribed burning in areas identified as having high bushfire risk.

The program aims to reduce bushfire fuel loads across the landscape, particularly in high-risk areas where fuel reduction on public land alone is insufficient to manage broader community risk.
The team's key responsibilities include:

- Strategic risk identification: Working with Bushfire Management Committees and partner agencies to identify priority locations where prescribed burning could reduce bushfire risk to communities, infrastructure and surrounding assets.
- Landholder engagement: Working directly with private landholders to explain the program, assess their willingness to participate and obtain consent to undertake prescribed burning on their properties.
- Site assessment and planning: Assessing the feasibility of burns, including fuel loads, vegetation characteristics, environmental values, threatened species habitat, cultural heritage and other site-specific considerations.
- Prescribed burn delivery: Coordinating and deploying suitably qualified fire practitioners to plan, prepare and safely conduct prescribed burns under appropriate weather and operational conditions.
- Partnership and coordination: Working with councils, the Country Fire Service (CFS), landholders and other land management agencies to coordinate fuel reduction activities across property boundaries and achieve landscape-scale bushfire mitigation outcomes.
- Environmental considerations: Incorporating ecological assessments and management controls to minimise impacts on native vegetation and wildlife, while identifying opportunities for complementary ecological outcomes where appropriate.

National Parks and Wildlife Service of South Australia, Department for Environment and Water

The National Parks and Wildlife Service of South Australia (NPWSSA), which forms part of the Department for Environment and Water (DEW), is responsible for managing South Australia's State Government national parks, conservation parks, recreation parks and other protected areas, more specifically:

- Belair National Park
- Cleland National Park
- Morialta Conservation Park
- Black Hill Conservation Park
- Scott Creek Conservation Park
- Para Wirra Conservation Park
- Mount George Conservation Park

These parks form an important component of the region's biodiversity conservation network, protecting significant areas of native vegetation and habitat. NPWSSA's work focuses on conserving native plants and animals, maintaining healthy ecosystems, managing threats to biodiversity and providing opportunities for the community to enjoy and connect with nature.

Key roles and responsibilities include:

Protected area management

- Manage and maintain national parks, conservation parks and recreation parks throughout the Adelaide Hills.
- Protect areas of high conservation value, including significant remnant vegetation, wildlife habitat and threatened ecological communities.
- Develop and implement park management plans and conservation priorities.
- Maintain park infrastructure, visitor facilities and recreational trails.

Biodiversity conservation and wildlife management

- Protect threatened native plants, animals and ecological communities.
- Undertake ecological monitoring, research and targeted species recovery programs.
- Manage threatening processes, including pest plants, feral animals and habitat degradation.
- Implement habitat restoration and conservation initiatives within the protected area network.

Bushfire management

- Plan and undertake prescribed burns to reduce bushfire risk and achieve ecological outcomes.
- Manage fuel loads and undertake other bushfire mitigation activities on public land.
- Support bushfire suppression and emergency response in collaboration with the Country Fire Service (CFS).
- Consider the ecological requirements of native vegetation and wildlife when planning fire management.

Cultural heritage and Traditional Owner partnerships

- Work with Traditional Owners to recognise, protect and manage Aboriginal cultural heritage and connections to Country.
- Support Aboriginal participation in park management, including co-management arrangements.
- Incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into conservation and land management practices.

Community engagement and partnerships

- Support Friends of Parks groups, volunteers and community conservation initiatives.
- Work with local councils, Landscape Boards, conservation organisations, researchers and landholders.
- Provide opportunities for environmental education, interpretation and community participation in conservation.

Visitor access and nature-based recreation

- Provide and maintain walking trails, picnic areas, visitor facilities and nature-based tourism opportunities.
- Balance public access and recreational use with the protection of sensitive ecological and cultural values.
- Promote responsible visitation and appreciation of South Australia's natural heritage.



08 8408 0400
mail@ahc.sa.gov.au

ahc.sa.gov.au

Adelaide Hills
COUNCIL