Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board

Annual Business Plan

2026-27

LANDSCAPE SOUTH AUSTRALIA MURRAYLANDS AND RIVERLAND

Foreword

A Message from Frances Simes Presiding Member

On behalf of the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, I am pleased to present our 2026–27 Annual Business Plan.

This year marks an important milestone for our region with the development and launch of the 2026-31 Regional Landscape Plan. While the overarching priorities remain consistent with the previous plan, the new plan sharpens our focus and reflects what we have learned through delivery, partnership and community engagement over the past 5 years. It sets a clear and steady course for the next phase of work across our diverse and productive landscapes.

This 2026–27 Annual Business Plan outlines how we will translate that regional direction into practical, on-ground action over the coming financial year. It details the programs, partnerships and investments that will deliver measurable outcomes for landholders, communities and the environment.

As in previous years, most of our funding is derived from land and water levies. We are committed to ensuring these funds are invested wisely and transparently and used to leverage additional support from state and Australian Government programs. This co-investment model enables us to extend the scale and longevity of our projects, supporting enduring improvements across the Murraylands and Riverland.

Community partnership remains central to our approach. In 2026–27, we will continue to support locally led initiatives through our Grassroots Grants program, empowering schools, farming systems groups, Landcare organisations and volunteer groups to deliver projects that respond directly to local priorities. These investments build capability, strengthen networks and contribute to the long-term resilience of our region.

As you read this plan, I encourage you to consider how you, your organisation or your community might be part of this work. The success of our regional landscape plan depends on strong partnerships and shared responsibility.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to our staff, board members, volunteers and partners. Your expertise, commitment and collaboration underpin everything we achieve. Together, we will continue to care for and improve the landscapes that sustain our communities and industries, now and into the future.

Frances Simes
Presiding Member
Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board

xx June 2026

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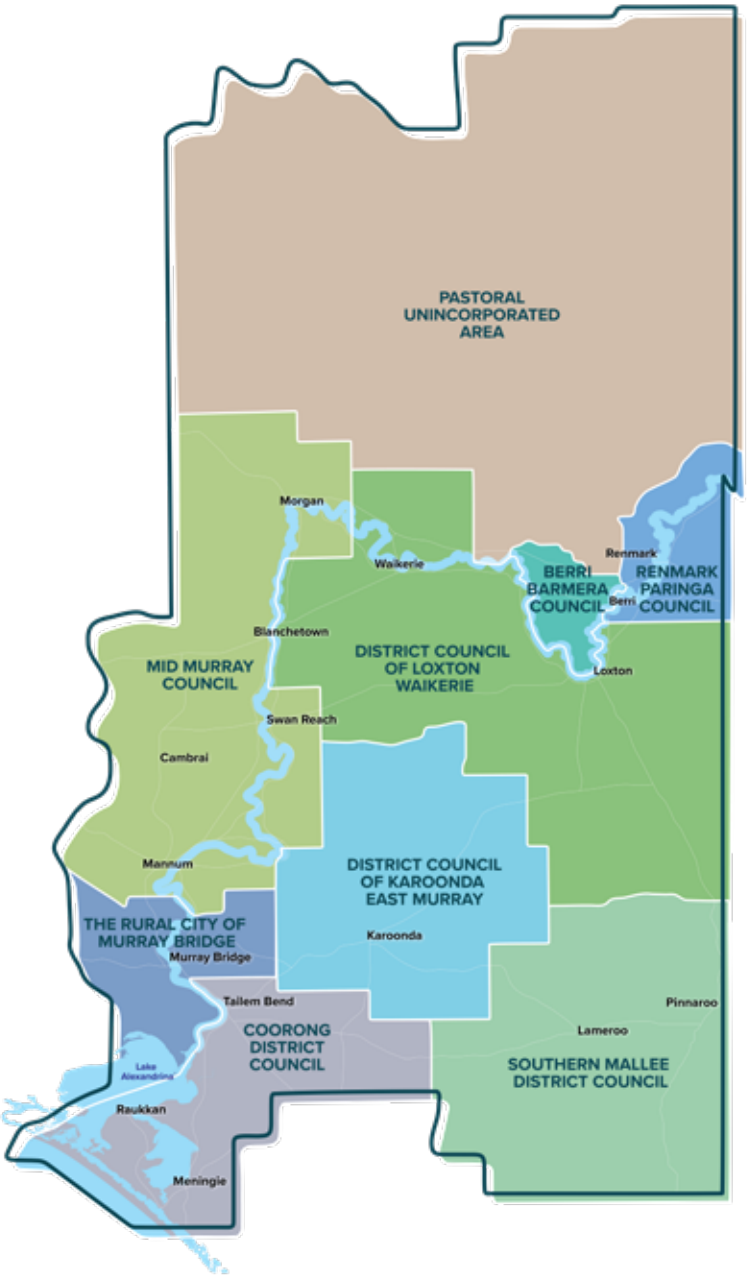
Acknowledgement of Country

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and water that we live and work upon, and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country.

The region

Covering approximately 53,780 square kilometres, the Murraylands and Riverland region is one of South Australia's most productive and diverse regions, stretching from north of the River Murray to the Murray Mouth.

The region includes the lands and waters of First Nations groups including Ngarrindjeri, the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee Region, Peramangk, Ngadjuri, and Wilyakali. First Nations maintain their strong cultural and spiritual connection to Country and continue to play a critical role in managing its cultural and environmental values.



The region includes the following council areas:

- Southern Mallee District Council
- Renmark Paringa Council
- Coorong District Council
- District Council of Loxton Waikerie
- The Rural City of Murray Bridge
- Berri Barmera Council
- District Council of Karoonda East Murray
- Mid Murray Council

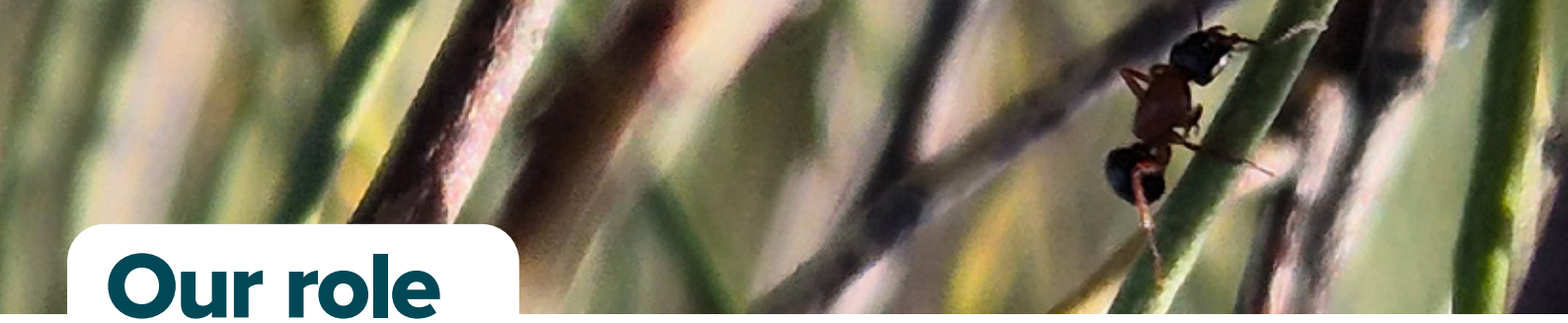
The region also comprises of unincorporated land around the Riverland and pastoral zones. It is home to approximately 74,000 people with tourism contributing to $473 million annually.

As part of the Murray-Darling Basin, the River Murray supports highly productive horticultural industries and supplies much of South Australia's water – including Adelaide. The natural resources of the Murraylands and Riverland region support tourism, recreation and manufacturing and one of the most productive agricultural areas in South Australia.

Land use is made up of about 75% agricultural production, 21% conservation and natural environments, and 4% other uses including residential, manufacturing and industrial, mining, and water bodies. Much of the land in the region is used for primary production including pastoral lands, dryland cropping, grazing, horticulture, irrigation and dairy farming.

The region contains ecosystems of state, national and international significance. These include the Ramsar-listed Chowilla Floodplain and Banrock Station wetland, and parts of the Coorong and Lower Lakes. In January 2026, the lower River Murray – about 830 km of river from the Darling River junction to the sea – was listed as critically endangered ecological community under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. In total, the region encompasses 46 conservation parks, national parks and reserves, 3 Ramsar-listed wetlands, and 888 heritage agreements on private land.

Volunteering is at the heart of landscape management, with a vast number of people actively involved in numerous volunteer groups. These include Landcare, land management, wetland, farming systems organisations and catchment groups, all working to protect and enhance their local landscapes.



Our role

As a statutory body, The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board is required to produce an annual business plan and operate as an instrument of the Crown, accountable to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, and subject to any direction made by the Minister.

We seek to undertake an active role in landscape management in the region, serving as the conduit and connector, bringing together the efforts of all levels of government, industry, stakeholders, First Nations, and communities. Our objective is to provide strategic leadership to enhance community-led delivery of environmental outcomes at a whole-of-landscape scale.

Funding for our programs and projects comes from various sources, including landscape and water levies, as well as from the Australian and South Australian Governments

Additionally, we actively pursue opportunities to leverage additional funding through grants and industry partnerships. Together with our skilled and supportive staff, as a landscape board, we are committed to fulfilling the vision of this plan by delivering on-ground action, providing advocacy, facilitation, education, and funding for grassroots projects with stakeholders in the region.

Guiding principles

Respectful and inclusive engagement

We approach our engagement in a manner that is respectful, inclusive, credible and builds trust.

Resilience and preparedness

We work to strengthen the region's resilience and support preparedness for future challenges.

Community-centred innovation

We seek innovative ways to connect with and listen to the community, meeting people where they are.

Strong governance and integrity

We have strong governance and operate in an honest, transparent and trustworthy manner.

Collaborative partnerships

We build and nurture meaningful partnerships across communities, First Nations, industries and government to enhance our impact.

Continuous improvement

We innovate and seek continuous improvement in all areas of our work.

Climate-informed action

We integrate climate change risks and opportunities into our planning, decision making and project delivery.

Knowledge-driven practice

We value and are guided by scientific, community and First Nations' knowledge.

Implementing our work

The annual business plan sets out the landscape board's plan to deliver outcomes that contribute to the priorities in the 2026-2031 Murraylands and Riverland Regional Landscape Plan .

In addition to water and landscape levies, the landscape board attracts investment through government grants and industry partnerships, reinvesting these funds to support the health of ecosystems in the region. Our investments in the region include community grants, contracts for works and services as well as direct investment.

The following table and pie chart summarises the landscape board's expenditure for 2026-27 for each strategic priority, as well as our foundational programs.

Investment by priority	Levies ($)	External ($)	Total ($)
Sustainable agricultural and pastoral landscapes	1,490,177	1,365,773	2,855,950
Sustainable water use	4,505,951	304,426	4,810,376
Healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands	1,408,614	1,595,962	3,004,576
Healthy natural landscapes	984,043	729,141	1,713,184
People at the heart of landscape management	2,004,565	1,232,774	3,237,340
Foundational programs	3,710,776	208,789	3,919,565
Total expenditure	**14,104,126**	**5,436,864**	**19,540,990**

Table 1: *Expenditure by priorities and funding source in 2026-27*

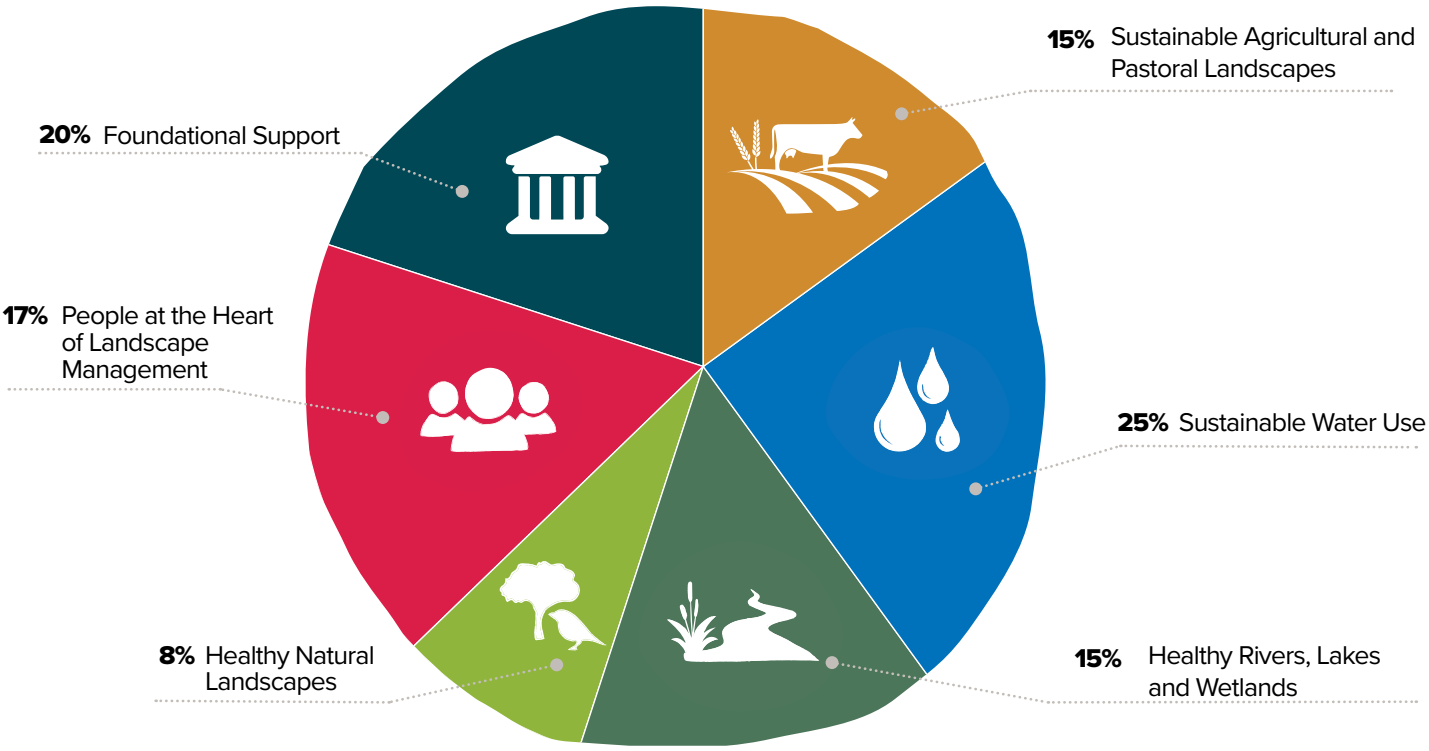


Figure 1: *Expenditure across priorities and foundational support*

Sustainable agricultural landscapes

Program	Levies ($)	External ($)	Total ($)
Sustainable agriculture	295,957	991,630	1,287,587
Pest plant and animal management	883,697	184,000	1,067,697
Program support	310,523	190,142	500,666
Total expenditure	**1,490,177**	**1,365,773**	**2,855,950**

Focus areas

- Support the adoption of land use and management practices that protect and improve soil health
- Support integrated management of prioritised declared pest plants and animals in agricultural landscapes
- Support early detection and intervention of alert pest species for improved biosecurity in agricultural landscapes
- Increase agricultural land managers' capacity to adapt to climate change
- Promote and support the protection and enhancement of on-farm biodiversity and native vegetation as part of a productive system

Sustainable water use

Program	Levies ($)	External ($)	Total ($)
Sustainable irrigation	218,195	-	218,195
Water planning and management[1]	2,219,062	-	2,219,062
Water allocation planning[2]	832,971	2,340	835,311
Pest plant and animal management	392,212	-	392,212
Program support	843,511	302,086	1,145,597
Total expenditure	**4,505,951**	**304,426**	**4,810,376**

Focus areas

- Work in partnership with the irrigation industry and other water users to optimise the efficiency and productivity of water use
- Water allocation planning to balance the use of prescribed surface water and groundwater resources for environmental, economic, social and cultural outcomes
- Protecting water resources through water affecting activity rules and development planning
- Improve community understanding of water resources and their management for environmental, economic, social and cultural outcomes
- Support water users to build resilience through monitoring and managing climate risks and extreme events

[1] State water planning and management contributions include water licensing and assessment, water resource monitoring, state and condition reporting for water recourses, compliance activities and water planning advice to support the management of water resources. These services are provided by the Department of Environment and Water, including departmental staff based regionally.

[2] The Murraylands and Riverland region shares three prescribed water resources areas with neighbouring regions. The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board is responsible for water planning for the River Murray and Marne and Saunders catchments because most of the resource areas fall within the Murraylands and Riverland region. A small portion of the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges catchment falls within the Murraylands and Riverland region, and therefore Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu is responsible for water planning and implementation.

Healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands

Program	Levies ($)	External ($)	Total ($)
Wetlands and floodplain restoration	958,573	1,120,171	2,078,745
Pest plant and animal management	260,019	407,738	667,757
Program support	190,022	68,052	258,074
Total expenditure	**1,408,614**	**1,595,962**	**3,004,576**

Focus areas

- Improve the health of the River Murray system through delivery and management of environmental water to targeted wetlands and floodplains
- Manage watercourses and tributaries for improved health in a changing climate
- Deliver initiatives that improve conditions for threatened and culturally significant species
- Support integrated management of prioritised declared pest plants and animals in rivers, lakes and wetlands
- Support early detection and intervention of alert pest species for improved biosecurity in rivers, lakes and wetlands

Healthy natural landscapes

Program	Levies ($)	External ($)	Total ($)
Landscape scale restoration	492,811	666,068	1,158,879
Pest plant and animal management	315,114	-	315,114
Program support	176,118	63,073	239,191
Total expenditure	**984,043**	**729,141**	**1,713,184**

Focus areas

- Large-scale habitat restoration to improve the quality, functionality and resilience of native ecosystems
- Increase habitat extent and ecological function through revegetation and enhancing future native seed availability
- Support the community to preserve and manage native vegetation and habitats
- Improve protection for threatened and culturally significant species and ecological communities
- Support integrated management of prioritised declared pest plants and animals and early detection of alert pest species to protect high conservation value assets

People at the heart of landscape management

Program	Levies ($)	External ($)	Total ($)
Grassroots Grants	409,020	-	409,020
Education program	422,397	-	422,397
First Nations partnership program	400,377	800,933	1,201,310
Community partnerships and engagement	274,783	20,000	294,783
Citizen Science	122,580	277,397	399,976
Program support	375,409	134,445	509,854
Total expenditure	**2,004,565**	**1,232,774**	**3,237,340**

Focus areas

- Build and maintain strategic partnerships with, and between, stakeholders for mutually beneficial outcomes
- Work in partnership with First Nations to manage the region's landscapes, protect and restore cultural values and assets, and build capacity
- Increase the knowledge, participation and leadership of young people
- Strengthen capacity through increased awareness, knowledge, skills and participation
- Support community-led landscape management by providing resources to support community projects and practical action
- Encourage and support volunteer participation in landscape management

Foundational programs

Program	Levies ($)	External ($)	Total ($)
Board leadership and governance	266,117	22,969	289,086
Planning and evaluation	913,687	34,777	948,464
Customer and business services	1,556,823	-	1,556,823
Council levy collection fees	42,986	-	42,986
Communications	509,408	-	509,408
Program support	421,756	151,043	572,799
Total expenditure	**3,710,776**	**208,789**	**3,919,565**

Focus areas

- Develop the regional landscape plan and associated business plans
- Implement an effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework
- Ensure contractual obligations with external funding are delivered
- Ensure the systems that support evidence-based decision making are in place and maintained
- Regular communication of landscape board business to stakeholders and community
- Accurate and timely financial management and procurement support services which are compliant with Australian accounting standards and government policies and procedures
- Effective and efficient administrative services providing support to staff, the landscape board, and its committees
- Implement strategic people management systems to enable effective and accurate delivery of human resources policies and programs that ensure compliance. Enhance staff satisfaction, and drive organisational improvement

Funding sources

Table 2 shows the forecasted income for the 2026-27 financial year, by source. Additional funds may be secured during the financial year.

Income source	Budget 2026-27 ($)
Levies	**14,104,127**
Regional Landscape Levy	3,637,308
Water Levy	10,466,819
Other income	**184,000**
Animal and plant control contracts	184,000
Revenue – State government	**1,153,662**
Landscape Priority Fund	474,683
Shorebirds and wetlands habitat	485,841
Rural resilience coordinator	20,000
Other	173,138
Revenue – Australian government	**2,505,697**
Regional Delivery Partnership	1,766,933
Riverland Indigenous Ranger - NIAA	738,764
Revenue – other	**499,993**
Total income	**18,447,479**

Table 2: *2026-27 income*

Landscape and water levies

Our primary source of funding is the landscape and water levies paid by the region's landholders and water licence holders. It is these contributions that allow the organisation to carry out the work required to protect the unique and productive landscapes across the region.

To increase the scale at which we work, we also leverage levy funds to access additional funding from state and federal government departments.

Landscape levy

The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* outlines several different ways to calculate the landscape levy. We use the value of rateable land to determine this approach and landscape levies are collected by councils through the rate notice provided to rate payers in the region.

The following table outlines each council's share of the total landscape levy (number of rateable properties), the total charge per council, and the amount that each council can claim to offset the costs of collecting the levy.

Council	# of Rateable Properties	Indicative share ($)	Collection fee ($)
Berri Barmera Council	6,787	349,203	5,362
Coorong District Council	3,929	329,529	4,447
District Council of Karoonda East Murray	1,517	91,449	3,675
District Council of Loxton Waikerie	9,158	546,031	6,121
Mid Murray Council	11,860	712,981	6,985
Rural City of Murray Bridge	13,047	988,155	7,365
Renmark Paringa Council	6,254	391,208	5,191
Southern Mallee District Council	2,028	228,752	3,839
Total	**54,580**	**3,637,308**	**42,985**

Table 3: *Levy share per council, 2026-27*

Water levy

The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* provides a range of options for calculating the water levy. For the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse:

- Water levies are calculated in accordance with section 76(1)(g) of the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (SA), based on the share of the water that makes up the relevant water resource
- For all other prescribed water resources within the Murraylands and Riverland region, option 'b' (the quantity of water allocated) will be applied as the basis for calculating the water levy.

Water levies are collected by Department for Environment and Water and are charged to water licence holders to take water from the prescribed resources identified in the table below:

- At the rate indicated in the table (below) or
- A levy of $200, whichever is the greater.

The levy does not apply where the water is taken for domestic purposes or for the watering of stock not subject to intensive farming.

Prescribed resource	2026-27 Rate - $/ML
River Murray – Metropolitan Adelaide Consumptive Pool (Class 6)	26.35
River Murray – All Purpose Consumptive Pool (Class 2)	26.35
River Murray - All Purpose Consumptive Pool (Class 3 (3a, 4, 5,7))	8.49
River Murray - All Purpose Consumptive Pool (Class 3 (3b))	8.05
Mallee – reticulated	26.35
Mallee	8.49
Peake, Sherlock & Roby	8.49
Marne Saunders	8.49
Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges	8.49

Table 4: *Water levy rates by prescribed resource, 2026-27*

Other income

Cost recovery

We will continue to implement a cost recovery program to offset the costs of pest plant and animal program throughout the region. It is estimated that the organisation will recover approximately $184,000.

Evaluating our work

Significant public funds are invested into the Murraylands and Riverland region through the landscape board. The organisation is committed to ensuring that these funds are well managed, deliver good value for money and achieve significant landscape outcomes. Assessing the performance of the annual business plan and the regional landscape plan, ensuring improvements in delivery and governance requires a multi-layered approach that recognises the timeframes, audiences and the varying levels of monitoring and evaluation across the organisation.

5-10 years (Regional Landscape Plan)

Priority

Focus Area

1. Evaluating our impact

- Evaluating program progress towards focus areas
- How successful has the implementation of the regional landscape plan been?
- Are programs and projects helping to making a difference (broader-scale)?

Annual (Annual Business Plan)

Programs

Strategies

2. Evaluating our actions

- Incremental improvements to programs and delivery
- How successful has the implementation of the annual business plan been?
- Are programs and projects helping to making a difference (finer scale)?

Delivery (program plans)

Projects

Actions

3. Evaluating short-term performance

- Managing project delivery and risk
- How successful has the implementation of the annual business plan been?
- Are programs and projects helping to making a difference (finer scale)?

The landscape board and committees

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board is a statutory regional board formed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*. The landscape board consists of 9 community members, appointed by the Minister for Environment and Water based on their skills and knowledge. The landscape board may also form committees and other bodies to enable stakeholders to be involved in planning and provide advice on specific natural resource management issues. The proposed fees for the landscape board and its committees come to a total of $110,453 for 2026-27 which includes the sitting fees, training development, and travel and meeting costs.

Staff and physical resources

Under the Act, the landscape board is overseen by a General Manager with staff working to deliver its programs and services. In 2026-27, it is anticipated that there will be 78.36 full-time equivalent positions employed by the General Manager on behalf of the landscape board. These staff are public sector employees.

The landscape board will continue to receive corporate support through the Department of Environment and Water in 2026-27 via a corporate fee. The landscape board owns and leases buildings and sheds in various locations across the Murraylands and Riverland region.

More information

landscape.sa.gov.au/mr

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