



DEW F0003233402

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Dr Susan Close MP  
State Member for Port Adelaide  
Unit 1/111 Lipson Street  
PORT ADELAIDE SA 5015  
[ptadelaide@parliament.sa.gov.au](mailto:ptadelaide@parliament.sa.gov.au)

Dear Dr Close

**RE: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION INTERNAL REVIEW APPLICATION**

I refer to your internal review application received by Department for Environment and Water (DEW) on 28 September 2021, pursuant to Section 29 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* (the Act), which requested a review of the FOI application determination (application number F0003233402) seeking access to:

*“Any briefings to the Minister for Environment and Water relating to the Simpson Desert”. Timeline: between 19/03/2018 to 22/03/2021*

Your application for review of the initial determination indicates that you are aggrieved by the determination because the agency failed to determine the application within 30 days after receiving the application and the agency is taken to have determined the application by refusing access to documents.

**DETERMINATION**

An internal review has been undertaken and I wish to advise that as Principal Officer I have determined to vary the original determination. As the department had not made a determination by the due date of the original Freedom of Information application, it was necessary to assess all documentation and make a determination on each document in scope of the application.

Searches of the department's records have found seven (7) documents held by this agency within scope of your request. I have determined to grant you partial access to five (5) documents and refuse access to two (2) documents.

## Document numbers 1 and 2

Schedule 1, Clause 1(1) of the Act states:

### **1—Cabinet documents**

- (1) *A document is an exempt document—*
- (a) *if it is a document that has been specifically prepared for submission to Cabinet (whether or not it has been so submitted); or*
  - ...
  - (f) *if it is a briefing paper specifically prepared for the use of a Minister in relation to a matter submitted, or proposed to be submitted to Cabinet.*

**Documents 1 and 2** are a briefing paper and associated Cabinet submission attachments specifically prepared for the use of the Minister in a matter submitted to Cabinet, thus these documents are exempt pursuant to Clause 1(1)(a) and 1(1)(f) of the Act.

## Document number 3

Schedule 1, Clause 9(1) of the Act states:

### **9—Internal working documents**

- (1) *A document is an exempt document if it contains matter—*
- (a) *that relates to—*
    - (i) *any opinion, advice or recommendation that has been obtained, prepared or recorded; or*
    - ...
    - in the course of, or for the purpose of, the decision-making functions of the Government, a Minister or an agency; and*
  - (b) *the disclosure of which would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest.*

The content of this documents satisfies an exemption claim for this clause. The public interest test in relation to the application of Clause 9(1)(a)(i) is explained below which provides context as to why full disclosure of this document has not be granted.

## Document number 3

Schedule 1, Clause 17(c) of the Act states:

### **17—Documents subject to contempt etc**

*A document is an exempt document if it contains matter the public disclosure of which would, but for any immunity of the Crown—*

- ...
- (c) *infringe the privilege of Parliament.*

The full disclosure of document **3** would divulge information prepared for use in Parliament and therefore parts of the document is considered exempt from release under clause 17(c) of Schedule 1 of the Act.

## Document numbers 4 to 7

Schedule 1, Clause 6(1) of the Act states:

### **6—Documents affecting personal affairs**

- (1) *A document is an exempt document if it contains matter the disclosure of which would involve the unreasonable disclosure of information concerning the personal affairs of any person (living or dead).*

Third-party consultation was not undertaken, and as such full release of documents **4, 5, 6 and 7** would involve the disclosure of certificate recipients names and addresses and would unreasonably disclosure information concerning their personal affairs, thus those parts are exempt pursuant to Clause 6(1) of the Act.

## Public Interest Test

Clause 9(1)(a)(i) of Schedule 1 of the Act requires weighing up the public interest when determining whether to allow access to the above information.

Factors I have considered in favour of the public interest from any such release are:

- The importance of transparency and openness and the interest the public has in the operations of agencies and government.
- It would support the object and intent of the Act which promotes public access to documents and facilitation of more effective participation in law and policy making processes and administration.
- Members of the public may have an interest in this project.

Factors I have considered contrary to the public interest for any such release are:

- Satisfying the elements of an exemption clause.
- Disclosure of information indicates an opinion that has been obtained in the course of the decision making process and its release would likely compromise the ability for Government to procure industry partnerships into the future.
- Disclosure of third party business/land management practices would likely have an adverse effect on the Agency's future business opportunities and impact existing relationships with the general public.
- Disclosure of information would adversely affect the continued level of trust and co-operation in existing inter-governmental Departmental relationships, impair the flow of information and advice from the other Agencies and affect the administration of the DEW and other state Departments' management functions.

In making my determination, I have considered the public interest factors in favour of disclosure, particularly the objects of the Act which promote full disclosure of documents. I have considered whether the public interest would be served by the full disclosure of document **3**.

Based on the above considerations, I have determined on balance that the factors against disclosure weigh more heavily than those in favour of disclosure therefore parts of the document is exempt pursuant to clause 9(1)(a)(i) of the Act.

The department will provide the determination electronically.

In accordance with [PC045 – Disclosure logs for Non-personal information](#) once a determination has been provided, the agency is required to make available on our website information and documents that have been disclosed. Information will be publicised online at <http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/about-us/freedom-of-information/foi-disclosure-log>.

## **FEES AND CHARGES**

There is no charge for processing this application.

## **YOUR APPEAL RIGHTS**

As outlined in the attached documentation, if you are dissatisfied with this determination you are entitled to exercise your rights of review with the Ombudsman or appeal to the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT). An application for an external review or an appeal to SACAT must be lodged within 30 (calendar) days after you are notified of this determination.

Should an FOI applicant believe an agency has failed to identify all of the documents within the scope of their FOI application, they can make a complaint to the Ombudsman under the Ombudsman Act 1972. Attachment four of this determination outlines this process. You can also visit: [www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au)

For more information about making a complaint or seeking a review you can contact the Ombudsman SA on telephone 8226 8699. Information about making an application to SACAT can be obtained at [www.sacat.sa.gov.au](http://www.sacat.sa.gov.au) on telephone 1800 723 767.

For further information on this matter please contact a FOI Officer, on telephone 8463 6625 or via email at [dew.foi@sa.gov.au](mailto:dew.foi@sa.gov.au)

Yours sincerely



**JOHN SCHUTZ**

Principal Officer and Chief Executive, Department for Environment and Water

12/10/2021

- Encl: 1. Document Schedule and Released Documents  
2. FOI Fact Sheet - Your Rights to Review and Appeal  
3. Sufficiency of Search – Factsheet – Ombudsman SA





**Freedom of Information application: F0003233402 - Dr Susan Close MP**

*Any briefings to the Minister for Environment and Water relating to the Simpson Desert  
Timeline: between 19/03/2018 to 22/03/2021*

No	Date	Author	Document Description	Determination	Clause	Reason
1	1/06/2018	M Ward, DEW	DEWNRD-00014717 - [REDACTED]	Exempt	1(1)(b) 1(1)(f)	Cabinet documents
2	1/06/2018	M Ward, DEW	DEWNRD-00014717 [REDACTED]	Exempt	1(1)(a) 1(1)(f)	Cabinet documents
3	18/08/2018	M Ward, DEW	DEW-D0000479 - Simpson Desert Wilderness Protection	Release in Part	9(1)(i) 17(1)	Internal working documents Documents subject to contempt etc
4	5/09/2018	M Ward, DEW	DEW-D0000531 - Munga-Thirri-Simson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Management Plan	Release in Part	6(1)	Documents affecting personal affairs
5	23/10/2018	S Paul, DEW	DEW-D0001090 Briefing to Minister - Friends of Simpson Desert Parks- Member Recognition for Length of Service - Letters and Certificates for signing.	Release in Part	6(1)	Documents affecting personal affairs
6	1/10/2019	G Pelton, DEW	DEW-D0005272 Briefing to Minister - Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks- Member Recognition for Length of Service - Letters and Certificates for signing.	Release in Part	6(1)	Documents affecting personal affairs
7	8/10/2020	G Pelton, DEW	DEW-D0010265 - Friends of Simpson Desert Parks, Letter and Certificates to recognise length of service	Release in Part	6(1)	Documents affecting personal affairs

Rec'd	26 OCT 2018
Reg. No.	18FW0002780
File No.	
Ack.	
Action Officers	/
Response due	



Government of South Australia

Department for Environment  
and Water

Document No. DEW-D0000479

TO MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

FOR APPROVAL

RE: SIMPSON DESERT AND WILDERNESS PROTECTION

THROUGH: A/CHIEF EXECUTIVE *[Signature]* 28.8.18  
A/GROUP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PARKS AND REGIONS *[Signature]* 23/8/18

Priority: Routine

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That you:

1. Note advice in relation to wilderness protection, and current mining interest, in the Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert Regional Reserve. **NOTED**
2. Note that Tri-Star Petroleum Company may seek to meet with you to discuss its proposed exploration program. **NOTED**
3. Approve a future meeting with the Minister for Energy and Mining and relevant staff from both departments to discuss this issue and potential ways forward in meeting the government's election commitment.

**APPROVED/NOT APPROVED**

Comments

DAVID SPEIRS MP

Minister for Environment and Water

29 / 11 / 2018

## PRIORITY

Routine.

## BACKGROUND

The Simpson Desert covers more than 17 million hectares of central Australia. Within South Australia, it encompasses a vast area of the State's north. The ecological and wilderness values of the Simpson Desert have long been recognised – as has its iconic status as an Outback tourism challenge. The Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park (690,000 hectares) was established in 1967 and the Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve (2.9 million hectares) was constituted in 1988 under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (Attachment 1).

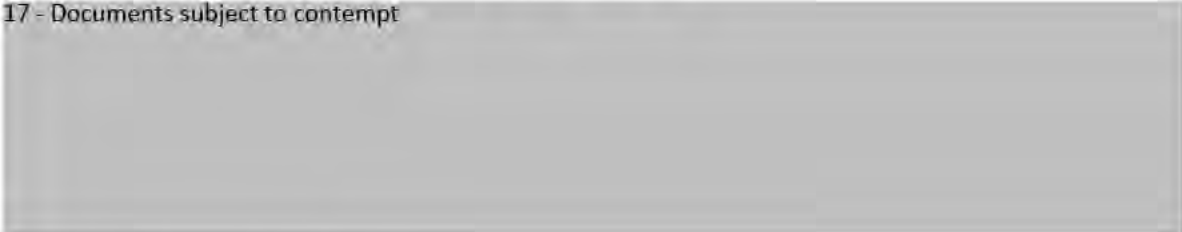
Native title rights and interests were recognised over the reserves in 2014 with a Parks Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) entered into with the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation. While native title is extinguished over the conservation park and is limited over the regional reserve, the ILUA recognises traditional rights over the reserves.

While there is potential for mining in the Regional Reserve, little on-ground work has been conducted to date. Prior to the Regional Reserve's constitution in 1988, nine exploratory petroleum wells were drilled, however no exploration or drilling activity has occurred since then.

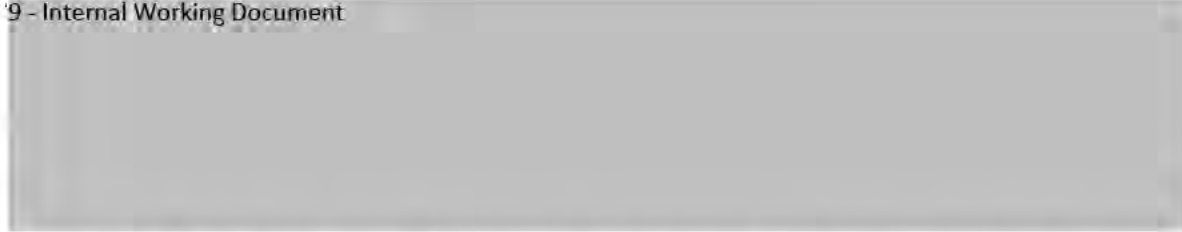
The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* prohibits exploration and mining within the Conservation Park.

Mining is not permitted in wilderness protection areas. There are 14 wilderness protection areas covering 1.8 million hectares. The Act does have a second category – wilderness protection zone – which allows mining rights to continue but effectively sunsets them. No wilderness protection zones have been created as the sunset provision effectively means that by creating a zone, mining is being banned.

17 - Documents subject to contempt



9 - Internal Working Document



In 2010, the former government honoured a pre-election policy commitment and referred the Conservation Park and Regional Reserve to the former Wilderness Advisory Committee,

Contact Jason Irving on 0401 120 880 or [jason.irving@sa.gov.au](mailto:jason.irving@sa.gov.au)  
Date: 18 August 2018



pursuant to the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*, to assess its wilderness values. The report (Attachment 2) identified that both the Regional Reserve and Conservation Park were of sufficient quality to become a wilderness protection area. That report did not propose a wilderness protection area but in recognition of the mining interest, instead referred it to the Minister to determine an area for protection.

In response, the Department for Energy and Mining (DEM) undertook an assessment of the prospectivity of the region. The resulting DEM report concluded that the Regional Reserve is highly prospective for petroleum, geothermal and mineral exploration.

Government, at the time, was not able to reconcile wilderness protection and mining interests and the matter was not progressed.

## DISCUSSION

By letter dated 28 February 2018, the Premier wrote to a number of environmental organisations to outline the Liberal Party's commitments in response to *South Australia: Our Future – Actions to Protect People, Places and Wildlife*. Commitment 19 is to "Protect the iconic Kalakoopah Creek wilderness in the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve via a proclamation under the Wilderness Protection Act."

The *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* provides a clear process for creating wilderness protection areas. Firstly, a wilderness protection area must meet two criteria in the Act: to be free of pest plants and animals, and to be free from the influence of modern technology. The Act requires that before creating a wilderness protection area, the Minister must first obtain a report from the Parks and Wilderness on the proposed area for protection (i.e. boundaries must be identified). This report is then released for consultation and the Minister must then consider the submissions before determining whether to proceed with the proposal.

The Parks and Wilderness Council has already assessed the Simpson Desert by virtue of the former Wilderness Advisory Committee's 2010 report.

As noted above, government has not previously reconciled wilderness protection and mining interests in the Regional Reserve. Wilderness protection has therefore not progressed to the stage of identifying boundaries of a wilderness protection area which could form the basis of a report to release for consultation.

The Regional Reserve is covered by petroleum exploration licences and applications (Attachment 1). The Tri-Star Petroleum Company (Tri-Star) holds several Petroleum Exploration Licences and intends to drill one or two exploration wells in an area near the southern boundary of the Conservation Park and Regional Reserve. This may require access tracks to be improved to access target locations. Before it drills, the company will need to prepare an Environmental Impact Report and Statement of Environmental Objectives, which will be referred to you for your views (as noted above, you do not have an approval role for exploration in regional reserves).

9 - Internal Working Document

On 8 August 2018, Tri-Star met with representatives from DEM, the Environment and

Protection Authority and the Department for Environment and Water to discuss what environmental sensitivities might need to be addressed in its documentation. Tri-Star specifically mentioned the government's election commitment and indicated that it will in all likelihood seek a meeting with you to better understand the government's position on wilderness and exploration in this area. 9 - Internal Working Document

Directly meeting the government's election commitment would require the Kalakooah Creek to be included within a wilderness protection area. A wilderness protection area that focussed on the corner of the Regional Reserve containing the Kalakooah Creek could, in the context of the size of the Regional Reserve, be a large area of up to 500,000 hectares.

9 - Internal Working Document

Given the complexity of this issue, it is recommended that there be a meeting with the Minister for Energy and Mining, and relevant staff from both departments, to discuss this issue and potential ways forward in meeting the government's election commitment.

#### CONSULTATION

None required for this briefing.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Are there financial implications?

No

#### ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Map of Simpson Desert parks showing mining tenements, Tri-Star interest, and Kalakooah Creek

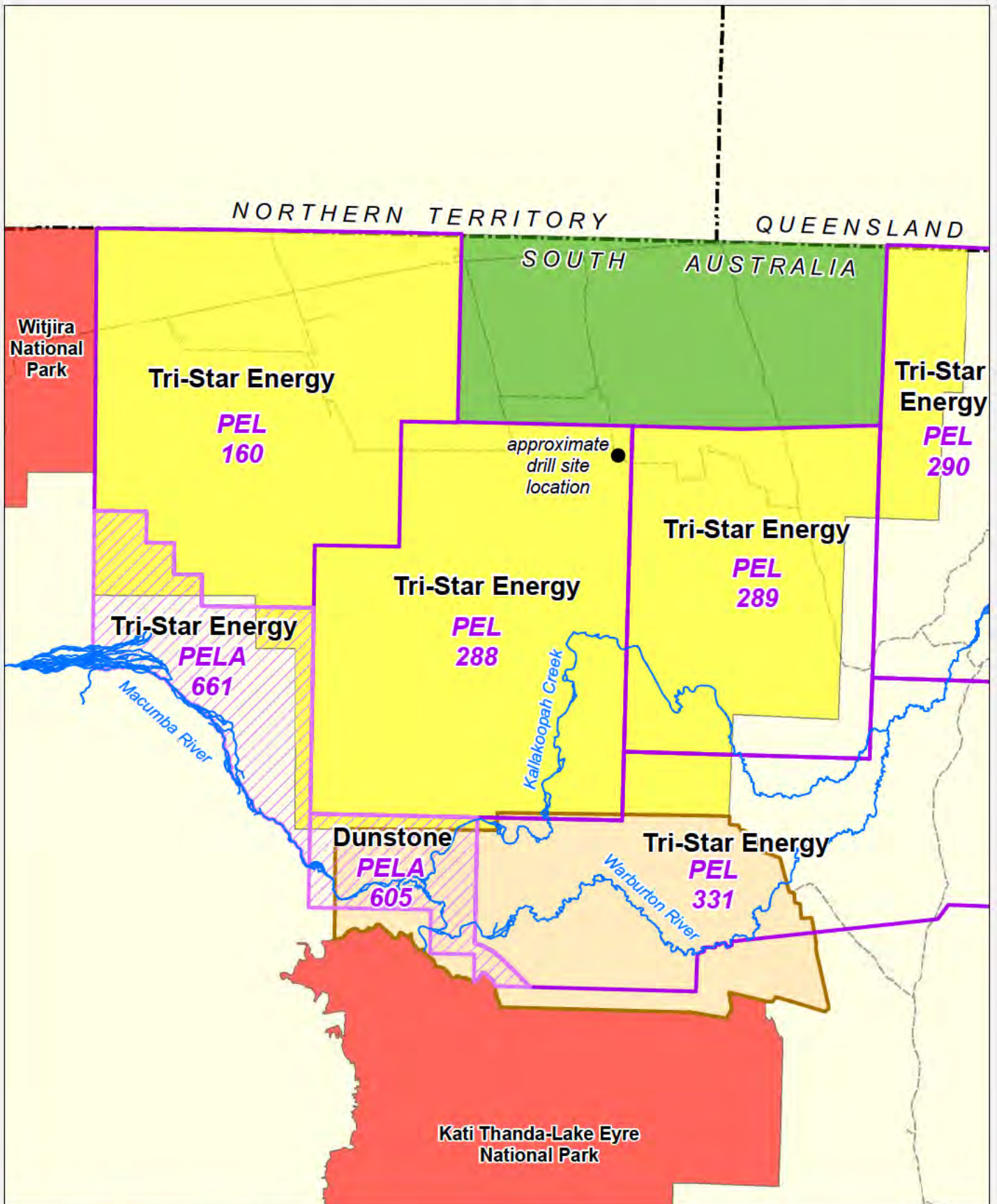
Attachment 2 – Wilderness Advisory Committee report of 2010

Dr Matthew Ward  
Director, Conservation, NRM and Protected Area Policy  
Department for Environment and Water  
DEW-D0000479

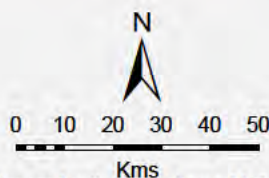
Date:

Contact Jason Irving on 0401 120 880 or [jason.irving@sa.gov.au](mailto:jason.irving@sa.gov.au)  
Date: 18 August 2018





- Rivers and Creeks
- Petroleum Applications
- Petroleum Licences
- Kalamurina Pastoral Lease
- Simpson Desert Regional Reserve
- Simpson Desert Conservation Park
- National Parks



Produced by  
Protected Areas Unit  
Department of Environment, Water  
and Natural Resources  
GPO Box 1047 Adelaide SA 5001  
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Monday, 13 August, 2018  
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**Wilderness Advisory Committee**  
**Wilderness Assessment Report**



**Simpson Desert Conservation Park  
and Regional Reserve**

2011



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**Government  
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Department of Environment  
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Front Cover: Annual Yellow-top (*Senecio gregonii*) and Poached-egg Daisy  
(*Polycalymma stuatii*), Simpson Desert. (A. Magor, DENR)

This document may be cited as 'Wilderness Advisory Committee (2011)  
Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve Wilderness  
Assessment Report, Adelaide, South Australia.'



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Wilderness Advisory Committee wishes to thank staff of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for their assistance in the preparation of this report. Responsibility for the contents of the report remains with the Committee.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* (the Act) provides for the protection of wilderness and the restoration of land to its condition before European colonisation. The Wilderness Advisory Committee (the Committee) is established under this Act.

In 2010, the Minister for Environment and Conservation (the Minister) referred the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve to the Committee to assess the area for wilderness quality. This report has been prepared to assess the land specified in the referral.

The Simpson Desert wilderness study area includes the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve.

The purpose of this report is to:

- a) establish the wilderness quality of the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve; and
- b) make recommendations on the future protection of wilderness.

### **How wilderness is assessed**

The Act describes the following attributes for land to be considered as wilderness.

- Land and its ecosystems that have not been affected, or have been affected only to a minor extent, by modern technology; and
- Land and its ecosystems that have not been seriously affected by exotic animals or plants or other exotic organisms.

The Committee determined to assess the wilderness quality of the land in a two stage process:

In Stage 1 the Committee would evaluate the referred area to determine if it meets the Act criteria to a sufficient extent to justify protection under the Act.

The Committee recognises that the majority of the study area is subject to rights of entry and mining under State mining legislation. It therefore recommends that the Minister enter discussions to negotiate possible boundaries for wilderness protection areas and zones based on the principles contained in this report. The Committee recommends that once these discussions have concluded it commences the second stage of the process.

In Stage 2 the Committee would review the outcomes of the discussions and make recommendations as to which land should be constituted as wilderness protection areas and zones. These recommendations would then be set out in a report for public consultation.

In addition to wilderness quality data, the natural and cultural values, land uses and management issues are considered so that wilderness-related values and non-wilderness issues can be identified. Consideration of all these factors provides a broad context in which to make recommendations for protecting land under the Act.

### **Land that meets the Wilderness Protection Act 1992 criteria**

The Committee has confirmed the data of the National Wilderness Inventory which shows an area of high quality wilderness in the study region.

The Committee found that this land meets the wilderness criteria of the Act to a sufficient extent to justify protection under the Act.

The Committee notes that the land could be protected, as permitted under the Act, to:

- enable it to be restored to a condition that justifies protection under the Act;
- provide a buffer zone to protect lands of a kind referred to above; or to
- enable the adoption of convenient boundaries for a wilderness protection area or zone.

The extent of land that could be protected under the Act is shown in Figure 1.

## **Principles for Locating Wilderness Protection Areas and Zones**

The principal objective in delineating the boundary of a wilderness protection area or zone is to ensure the environmental attributes upon which wilderness quality depends may be effectively managed and protected. It is not necessary for all areas within the wilderness protection area or zone to have high levels of wilderness quality. Areas in which wilderness quality is compromised by accessibility or other disturbances may be included in a wilderness protection area or zone provided the management is designed to protect the integrity of key areas of significant wilderness quality.

Boundaries are generally physical boundaries, such as roads and cleared land; forming a tangible and practical divide between areas that will be managed to protect remote and natural qualities, and external areas where development may take place.

The Committee recognises that the study area (Figure 2) is subject to rights of entry and mining under State mining legislation. It therefore recommends the Minister enters discussions to negotiate possible boundaries for wilderness protection areas and zones based on the principles contained in this report.

The Committee recommends that once these discussions have concluded it reviews the outcomes and make recommendations as to which land should be constituted as wilderness protection areas and zones. These recommendations will be set out in a report for public consultation.

The Committee recommends that the following principles be used in locating the wilderness protection areas and zones within the study area.

The area protected should:

- a) Encompass the highest quality wilderness;
- b) If practicable, be in one continuous area, located adjacent to the existing area of strictly protected reserve;
- c) Be of such a shape to encompass the full range of biological diversity present, to mitigate against climate change impacts; east to west gradients, but particularly north to south gradients will achieve this;
- d) Be as large as possible to maximise the benefits of protection;
- e) Preserve existing linkages with adjacent areas of high quality wilderness (such as Kalamurina and Lake Eyre National Park to the south, Witjira National Park to the west and to wilderness areas in the Northern Territory and Queensland), and contribute to the *Trans-Australia Eco-Link*;
- f) Protect biologically significant sites including the Kallakoopah Creek and adjacent lands;
- g) Take account of Aboriginal association with the land, Aboriginal heritage and practices; and
- h) Avoid, where practicable, areas of high prospectivity in establishing wilderness protection areas.

## **Benefits of Protection under the Wilderness Protection Act 1992**

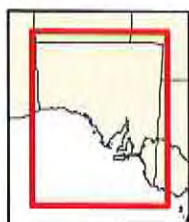
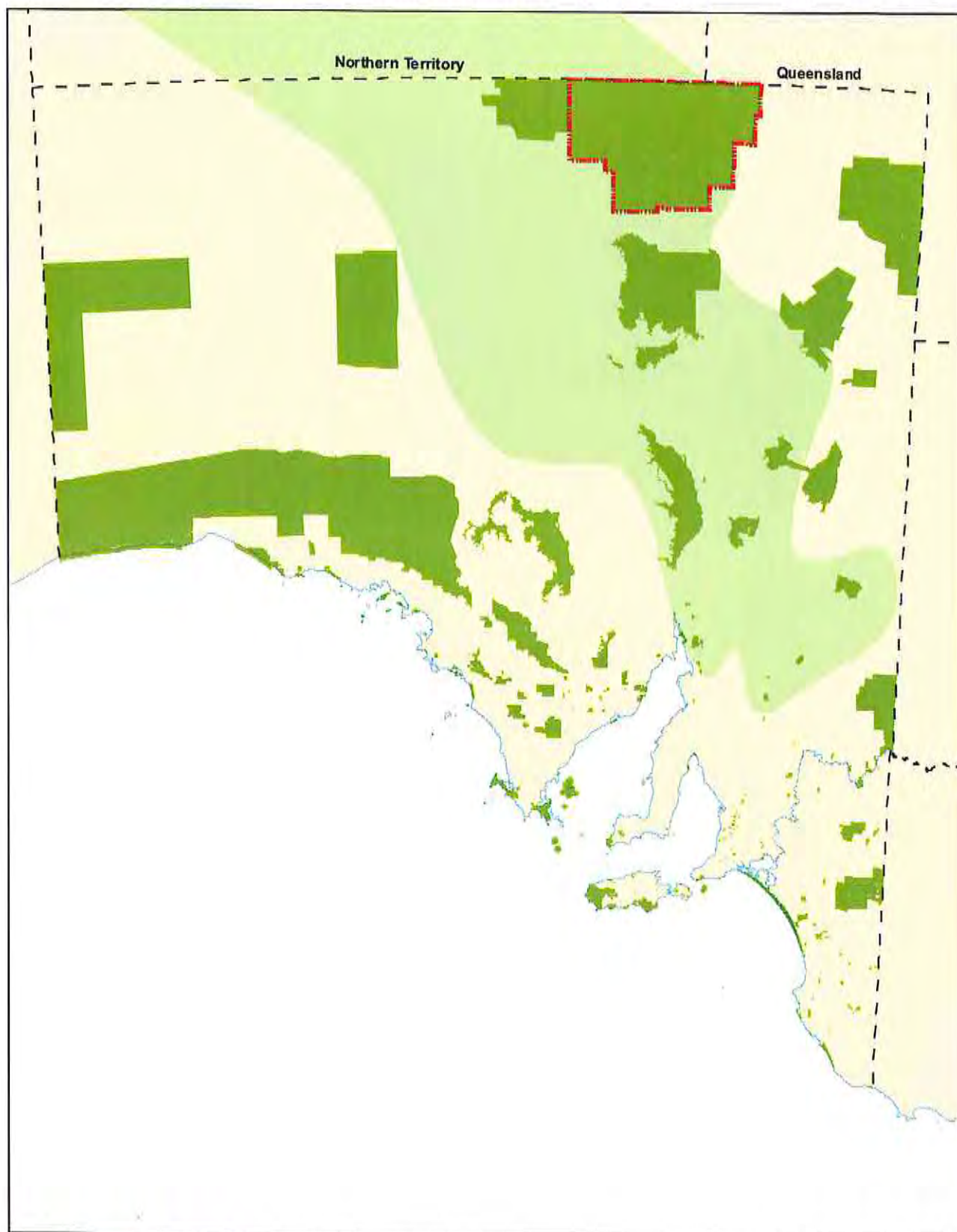
Protection of the wilderness values identified under the Act will:

- Protect part of a wilderness area identified as being of potential national significance;
- Improve the adequacy of South Australia's reserve system by establishing a substantial strictly protected reserve in the Simpson Strzelecki Dunefields Bioregion;
- Make a significant contribution to the Government's *Trans-Australia Eco-Link* initiative by protecting an outstanding natural area within the corridor; and
- Benefit the tourist industry by confirming the unique natural and cultural values of the region and providing a level of protection appropriate to an iconic and internationally recognised sandy desert landscape.

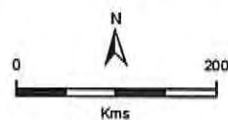




Figure 1. Land that could be protected under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*



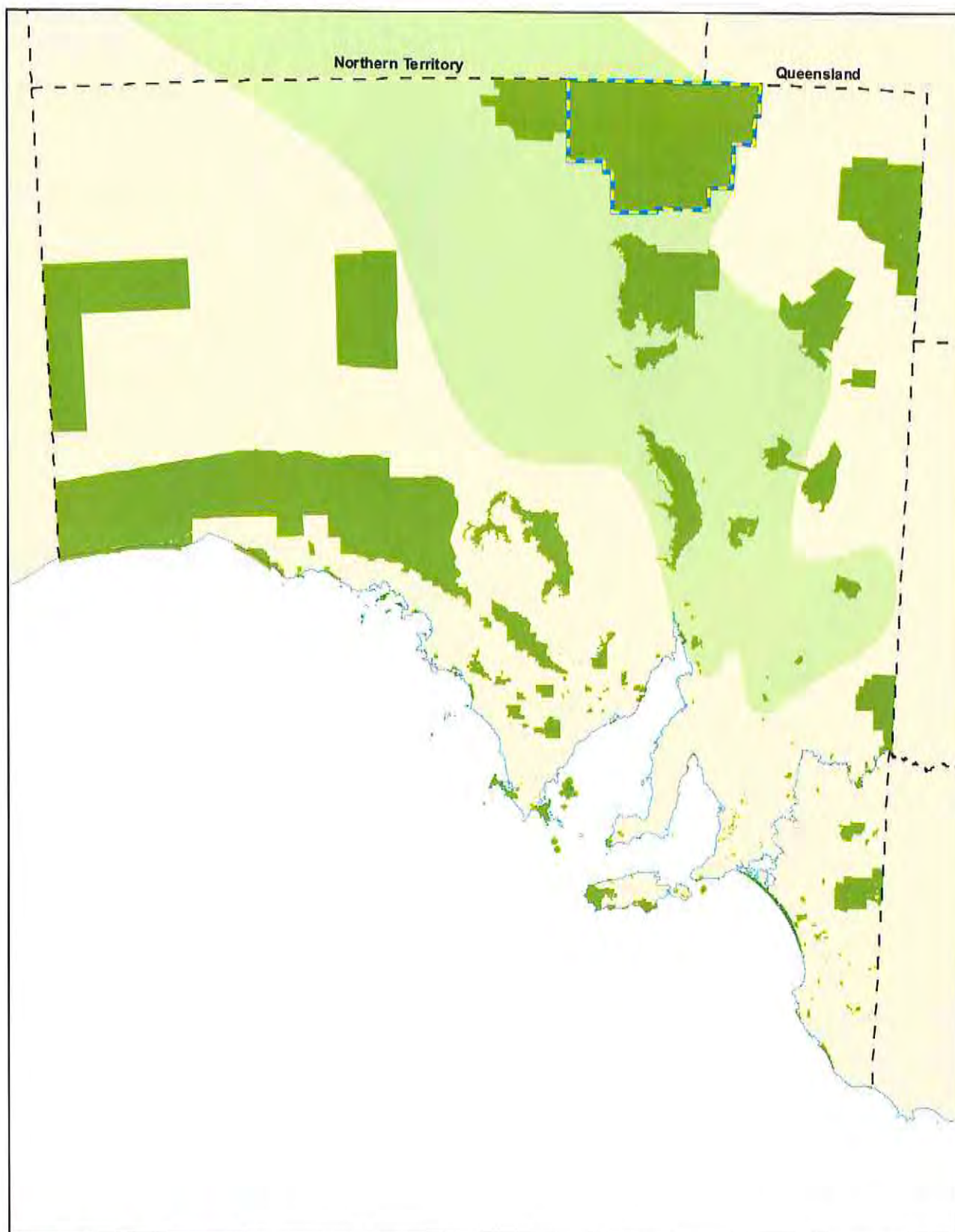
- Reserves
- Considered Land
- Trans Australian EcoLink



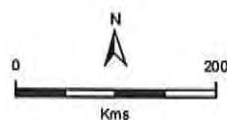
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**Figure 2. Location of Study Area**



- Reserves
- Study Area
- Trans Australian EcoLink

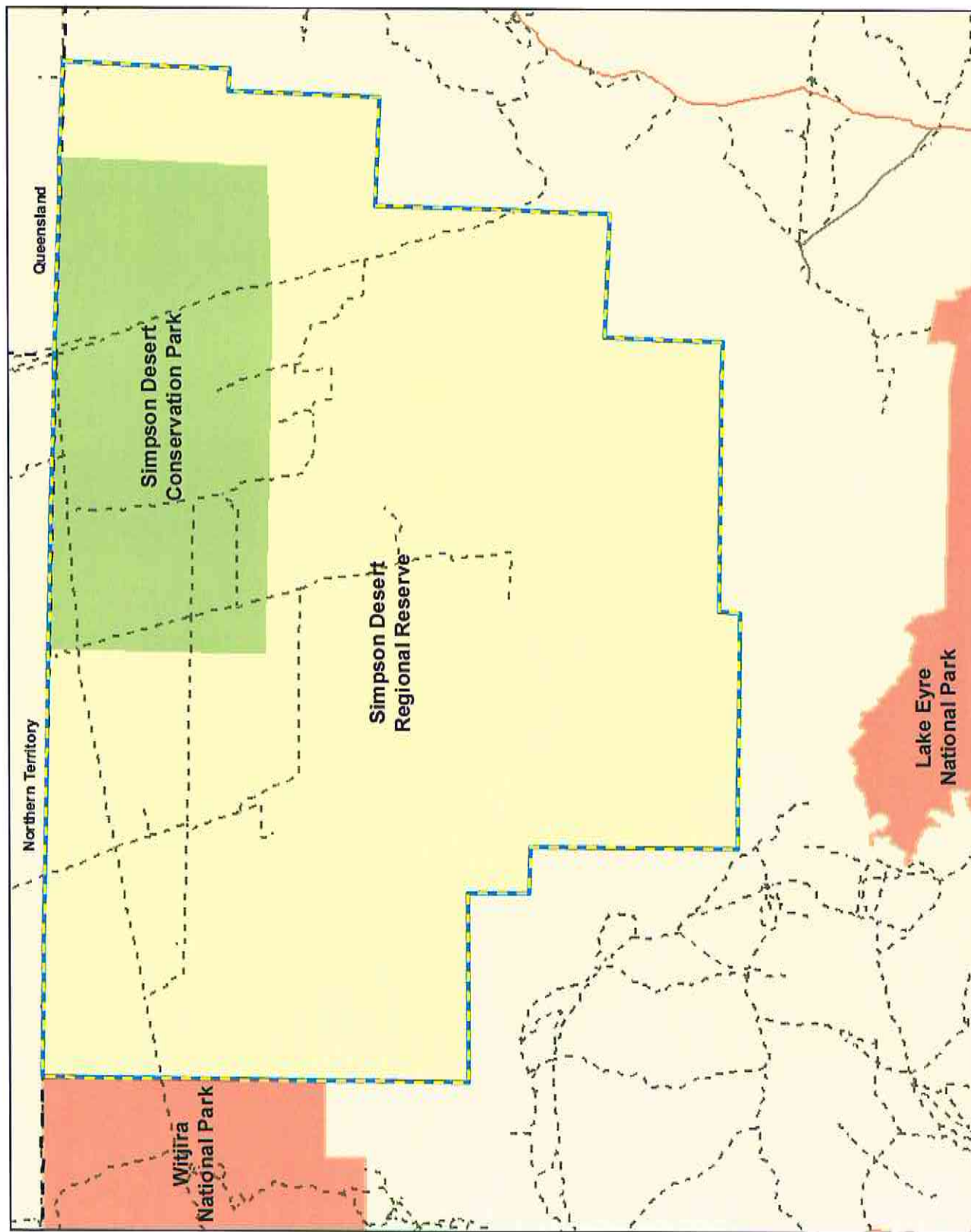


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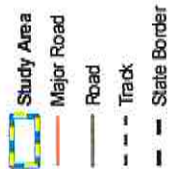
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**Figure 3. Study Area and existing protected areas**



### Legend



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Government of South Australia  
Department of Environment  
and Natural Resources





## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Act requires the Committee to assess all land in the State and identify those parts of the State that meet the wilderness criteria to a sufficient extent to justify protection under the Act or that warrant restoration to a condition that justifies such protection.

The Committee is required to report to the Minister making recommendations regarding:

- What land in the State should be constituted as wilderness protection areas and wilderness protection zones; and
- Matters which require special management in relation to wilderness protection areas or zones generally, or in relation to a particular wilderness protection area or zone.

In 2010, the Minister referred the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve to the Committee to assess the area for wilderness quality. This report has been prepared to assess the land specified in the referral.

The Committee determined to assess the wilderness quality of land in a two stage process:

1. A desktop study of the referred area would be undertaken, using data such as the National Wilderness Inventory and Wilderness Areas of National Significance, to determine the quality of wilderness and the principles to be followed in designing a wilderness, which would be forwarded to the Minister.
2. If the Minister determines to continue with the assessment, boundaries would be identified by DENR and PIRSA for the Minister's consideration. At this time the Committee would develop a report to be released for public consultation. A field inspection could be conducted once the boundaries have been negotiated, if the Committee felt this was an appropriate process to inform the report.

The availability of comprehensive wilderness survey data, collected state-wide and presented in a regional context, provides a systematic and practical means of approaching the wilderness investigation program. The wilderness quality values recorded in the National Wilderness Inventory are used as a focus for delineating study areas.

This approach readily identifies areas which have relatively high levels of wilderness quality and are worthy of protection for that reason alone. The procedure may identify other areas which have lesser measures of total wilderness quality but are worthy of consideration when other environmental and wilderness-related values (such as rarity, diversity, and special wilderness recreation demands for which there are few other substitutes) are taken into account.

In addition to wilderness quality data, the natural and cultural values, land uses and management issues of the study area were considered so that wilderness-related values and non-wilderness issues could be identified.

## 2 WILDERNESS PROTECTION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Wilderness Protection Act 1992 is:

- An Act to provide for the protection of wilderness and the restoration of land to its condition before European colonisation.

The Act describes the following attributes for land to be considered as wilderness:

- land and its ecosystems that have not been affected, or have been affected to only a minor extent, by modern technology; and
- land and its ecosystems that have not been seriously affected by exotic animals or plants or other exotic organisms.

Wilderness protection areas may be constituted over all or part of a reserve constituted under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*, Crown Land, or over any other land with the owner's consent. Wilderness protection areas will receive the highest protection offered by the Act. Wilderness protection zones are a secondary category, established to provide a wilderness management framework over land in which there is an existing mining tenement.

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* has no specific provisions for wilderness management. The Act was specifically drafted for wilderness protection, and the Wilderness Code of Management provides for public use and enjoyment only where compatible with maximising wilderness quality.

Wilderness protection areas or wilderness protection zones can be constituted over land and water bodies:

- which meet the wilderness criteria of the Act;
- to provide a buffer zone;
- to enable restoration; or
- to enable the adoption of convenient boundaries.

All wilderness protection areas and zones are under the control of the Minister administering the Act. Management of proclaimed areas is the responsibility of the Director of National Parks and Wildlife, while day to day management is undertaken by regional staff from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. There are currently thirteen wilderness protection areas across the state. At 500,000 hectares, the Yellabinnia Wilderness Protection Area is the largest and possibly most important contribution to South Australia's wilderness protection system thus far.

In March 2011 the Premier announced the decision to proceed with the Nullarbor Wilderness Protection Area, which will increase the area protected at the strongest level to 1.8 million hectares.

Land that meets the criteria of the Act and is protected in a wilderness protection area under the Act meets the requirements of the IUCN Protected Area Management Category Ib Wilderness Area. Land which is protected as a wilderness protection zone under the Act meets the requirements of the IUCN Protected Area Management Category VI Multiple Use Reserve.

### 2.1 Concept of Wilderness

The concept of wilderness was part of the modern Australian culture for over a hundred years. The concept has evolved over time but retains the essential themes of perceptions of remoteness, minimal disturbance by modern technological society, and self-reliant recreation.

Initially applied in the context of the forests and ranges of Tasmania and the east coast of Australia, the concept of wilderness in arid and semi-arid regions is now recognised, and such areas are highly valued by the community.

## 2.2 Benefits of Protecting Wilderness

South Australia is fortunate in having substantial areas of internationally significant wilderness.

The protection of this resource benefits the whole community for the following reasons:

### Biological Values

Wilderness areas provide the best possible circumstances for species to flourish and evolve. Ecosystems in wilderness areas have a greater capacity to cope with large-scale disturbances, such as bushfires and accelerated climate change. Accelerated climate change now threatens the survival of many species of plants and animals and makes the protection of wilderness ecosystems increasingly urgent.

Maintaining the ecological integrity of large areas of high quality wilderness through the exclusion of threatening processes should be a key component of the State's response to the threat of climate change. Such areas provide valuable cores for the *NatureLinks* and *Trans-Australia Eco-Link* programs which promote biological connectivity at landscape scales and protect the evolutionary capacity of species and ecosystems in times of environmental change.

### Scientific Values

Wilderness areas are valuable for research into ecological and physical processes, evolutionary development, and long term climatic trends. Such areas provide a scientific benchmark with which modified environments can be compared, and from which appropriate management and rehabilitation strategies for modified environments can be derived. Wilderness areas provide a genetic 'library' which can contribute to improvements in medicine and agriculture.

### Recreational Values

The special recreational opportunities to be found in wilderness areas have become important as the pressures of urban living have grown. Wilderness areas are being increasingly used for eco-tourism. There is also a growing interest in Outback Australia as a travel destination. Wilderness areas are an important resource for the development and promotion of regional tourism.

### Cultural Values

Wilderness areas can provide indigenous people with the opportunity to maintain traditional cultural practices and linkages with the land. Wilderness areas are of historic interest as they provide an insight into South Australian landscapes before the introduction of agriculture, industry and urbanisation.

## 2.3 Wilderness management

Wilderness areas in South Australia are managed in accordance with the Wilderness Code of Management (the Code), which is adopted by the Minister under Section 12 of the Act.

The Code establishes principles for the protection of:

- wilderness values;
- ecosystems;
- flora and fauna; and
- Aboriginal and non Aboriginal cultural Heritage.

The Code also establishes principles for the management of visitors, scientific research and fires in wilderness protection areas and zones.

The Minimum Impact Visitor Code encourages a 'tread lightly' ethic.

Management priorities include the maintenance of the wilderness quality and the removal or rationalisation of any existing incompatible uses or structures. Management of wilderness protection zones accommodates existing mining operations.

The principles the Code underpin the development and implementation of management plans for wilderness protection areas and zones.

## 2.4 Wilderness protection and the Government's commitment to the *Trans-Australia Eco-Link*

A significant degree of climate change across South Australia now seems inevitable. Changes are expected in both the average values and in the magnitude and frequency of extremes. This means that long term planning should not assume that future climate statistics and resources will be as they were over the last century. Significant adaptation to a changing climate will be necessary. Decadal scale climate change is expected to affect the present functional capacity of ecosystems in South Australia. Some animal and plant species are likely to come under increasing stress, causing long-term changes in species composition. Coastal ecosystems will be affected by sea level rise and changes in runoff, and higher temperatures and lower rainfall will lead to an increase in drought and fire that could have increasing impacts on biodiversity. Species most at risk from climate change will be those marooned within isolated patches of habitat and those already at the extremes of their geographic ranges. The need for connected areas has been recognised in conservation practices for decades. Predicted changes to climatic conditions now amplify this need.

There is increasing recognition that biodiversity conservation requires strategic planning and actions at large scales over extended timeframes. The South Australian and Northern Territory Governments developed the *Trans-Australia Eco-Link* initiative with the objective of creating a wildlife corridor extending from Arnhem Land to Port Augusta (DENR 2011a).

The *Trans-Australia Eco-Link* stretches over 3 500 kilometres and provides opportunities for wide scale conservation cooperation across public and private lands. The landscape scale project will assist in connecting native habitat, maintaining natural systems and processes and conserving entire plant and animal communities.

The *Trans-Australia Eco-Link* will provide increased resilience of natural systems to climate change, options for sustainable land management across the outback, opportunities for landholders to diversify their business, opportunities for Aboriginal communities in decision-making, improved conservation outcomes and increased community involvement in nature conservation (DENR2011a).

Wilderness protection for the Simpson Desert region will forge connections between the Northern Territory to the north, Kalamurina and Lake Eyre National Park to the south and Witjira National Park to the west. Wilderness landscapes allow native species to flourish, relatively free from the pressures of introduced plants and animals and disturbances caused by infrastructure. Ecological sustainability that is developed through the creation of wilderness protection areas is a highly valued component of a responsible society.



### 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

This section describes the values, features, and existing uses of the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve. Consideration of both wilderness-related values and non-wilderness issues provides a broad context in which to make recommendations for protecting land under the Act.

The study area is in the far north of the state (Figure 2) on the South Australian, Northern Territory and Queensland border and encompasses the entire Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve as detailed in Table 1. The extensive dunal systems that traverse the area contain a network of long, straight, parallel sand dunes with extensive playa lakes in the interdunal corridor. These dunes make up the longest longitudinal dune system in the world.

Table 1: Protected areas within the study area

Name	Act	Area (Ha)	First Proclaimed	Exploration Access
Simpson Desert Conservation Park	NPW Act	690,388	27 April 1972	No Mining Access
Simpson Desert Regional Reserve	NPW Act	2,923,953	22 Dec 1988	MEC approval

NPW Act – National Parks and Wildlife Act (1972)

MEC – Minister for Environment and Conservation

The study area is bounded by Witjira National Park (771 113 ha) to the west, the private reserve Kalamurina Sanctuary to the south, and the Northern Territory and Queensland border to the north. Access to the area is restricted with the 'French Track' and the 'Rig Road' being the two most accepted routes across the desert. Other key points of visitor access to the identified area include two routes to Lake Eyre through Muloorina and Anna Creek Pastoral Leases and access to the Simpson Desert through Dalhousie Springs/Mount Dare. The only services available between Oodnadatta and Birdsville, are at Mount Dare in Witjira National Park.

The three environmental associations within the study area are the Simpson, the Tirari and the Jeljendi Land Systems. The Simpson Land System is described as an area of linear sandridges with sandy interdunal zones and an absence of playa lakes. Sandridges are soft red siliceous sands with mobile crests and stable slopes. The sandhills are adorned with sparse Sandhill Canegrass and lobed Spinifex cover with patches of Sandhill Wattle. Firm red siliceous sand interdunal zones are dominated by Lobed Spinifex. Larger interdunal zones reveal reddish sandy clay and are often sparsely covered in grasses and wattle species. It occurs on the western and north-eastern side of the study area.

The Tirari Land System stretches through the centre of the identified area and is described as being dominated by longitudinal northerly trending sand dunes with dune spacing of between 150m and 1km. The 10m to 20m high dunes consist of pale reddish or brownish quartz sands with carbonate nodules at depth with clay in their lower profiles. The main vegetation is open hummock grassland of Sandhill Canegrass with sparse Sandhill Wattle and Needlebush.

A small portion in the east of the study area is made up of the Jeljendi Land System. Very long, high and widely spaced north north-westerly trending dunes are typical of this sand region. The dunes overlie the ancient floodplain of Lake Eyre and the brown clays of the floodplain are often seen between dunes. The crests and upper slopes are populated by hummock grassland of Sandhill Canegrass whilst lower slopes are dominated by Lobed Spinifex.

#### 3.1 Biological and Geological Values

The study area includes extensive dunal systems with an ephemeral lake system in the dune corridors. Generally the desert is dotted with sparse low vegetation amid occasional tall shrubs. The only watercourse to run through the Simpson Desert is the Kallakoopah Creek. The Kallakoopah Creek is

an ana-branch of the Warburton River, and only flows when the monsoonal water from Queensland penetrates the expansive Goyders Lagoon and continues onto Lake Eyre.

### Flora and Fauna

The Simpson Desert and its dunal systems are home to numerous flora and fauna species of conservation importance at a state level and national level. The dune crests are typically adorned with Sandhill cane-grass as well as herbs and other small grasses whilst the more stable sands typically support *Triodia* species such as Lobbed Spinifex. Swales between dunes are capable of maintaining larger *Eremophila*, *Grevillea* and *Acacias*. Playa lakes in the Simpson Desert hold populations of salt tolerant Samphire and herbaceous plants.

Over 190 bird species have been observed in the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve (EQUEST 2011). The nationally endangered Ampurta (*Dasycercus cristicauda*) and nationally vulnerable Plains Mouse (*Pseudomys australis*) as well as the state rare Woma (*Aspidites ramsayi*) constitute some of the other fauna species found within the study area.

Table 2: Flora species of conservation significance recorded within the study area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Conservation Status	
		AUS	SA
<i>Sauropus ramosissimus</i>			V
<i>Malacocera gracilis</i>	Slender Soft-horns		V
<i>Tecticornia cupuliformis</i>			V
<i>Acacia jennerae</i>	Coonavittira Wattle		R
<i>Lobelia heterophylla</i> (NC)			R
<i>Zygophyllum humillimum</i>	Small-fruit Twinleaf		R
<i>Eragrostis lacunaria</i>	Purple Love-grass		R
<i>Frankenia cinerea</i>			R
<i>Frankenia cupularis</i>			R
<i>Maireana pentagona</i>	Slender Fissure-plant		R
<i>Pimelea penicillaris</i>	Sandhill Riceflower		R
<i>Sclerolaena fontinalis</i>	Mound Spring Bindyi		R
<i>Pycnosorus chrysanthes</i>			E
<i>Acacia georginae</i>	Georgina Gidgee		R

E=Endangered, R=Rare, V=Vulnerable

Table 3: Fauna species of conservation significance recorded within the study area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Conservation Status	
		AUS	SA
<i>Epthianura crocea</i>	Yellow Chat		E
	Chestnut-breasted		
<i>Aphelocephala pectoralis</i>	Whiteface		R
<i>Falco hypoleucos</i>	Grey Falcon		R
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine Falcon		R
<i>Hamirostra melanosternon</i>	Black-breasted Buzzard		R
<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	Darter		R
<i>Hamirostra melanosternon</i>	Black-breasted Buzzard		R
<i>Myiagra inquieta</i>	Restless Flycatcher		R
<i>Neophema splendida</i>	Scarlet-chested Parrot		R
<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Glossy Ibis		R
<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Great Crested Grebe		R
<i>Porzana tabuensis</i>	Spotless Crake		R
<i>Stipiturus ruficeps</i>	Rufous-crowned Emu-wren		R
<i>Tyto capensis</i>	Grass Owl		R
<i>Notoscincus ornatus</i>	Desert Glossy Skink		R

<i>Aspidites ramsayi</i>	Woma		R
<i>Melanodryas cucullata</i>	Hooded Robin		ssp
<i>Microeca fascians</i>	Jacky Winter		ssp
<i>Northiella haematogaster</i>	Blue Bonnet		ssp
<i>Ardeotis australis</i>	Australian Bustard		V
<i>Cladorhynchus leucocephalus</i>	Banded Stilt		V
<i>Grus rubicunda</i>	Brolga		V
<i>Ardeotis australis</i>	Australian Bustard		V
<i>Neophema chrysostoma</i>	Blue-winged Parrot		V
<i>Dasycercus cristicauda</i>	Ampurta	E	
<i>Amytornis textilis</i>	Thick-billed Grasswren	ssp	
<i>Manorina flavigula</i>	Yellow-throated Miner	ssp	ssp
<i>Pseudomys australis</i>	Plains Mouse	V	V

E=Endangered, R=Rare, V=Vulnerable, ssp=Rated at subspecies level

## 3.2 Cultural features

### *Indigenous heritage*

Aboriginal people have occupied the South Australian landscape for thousands of generations. The evidence of this occupation is present throughout the landscape, as well as in the memories, stories and associations of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal heritage includes landscapes, places and objects that are of importance to Aboriginal people.

There are over 100 sites and objects recorded on the State Central Archive including sites of ceremonial significance as well as archaeological and historical value. A large number of these sites are around permanent and semi-permanent water sources including the Aboriginal wells of the desert.

A number of Aboriginal groups included part of the Simpson Desert within their tribal boundaries. The Eastern Arrente and Lower Southern Arrente occupied the western fringes whilst the Karangaru and Ngamini occupied the eastern fringe. The Wangkangurru people are known to have lived in the desert itself and occupied most of the study area.

## 3.3 Current Management Framework

Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve are managed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

Currently there are no management plans for the Simpson Desert Conservation Park or Regional Reserve.

## 3.4 Resource Utilisation

### *Exploration and Mining*

The first petroleum exploration in the Simpson Desert in South Australia was in 1963. *Mokari 1* was the only drillhole during this exploration period that was inside what is now the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve. The surveys of the 1960's were unable to find substantial petroleum reservoirs. In 1977 oil flow was produced from the *Poolowanna 1* drill hole, located within the Simpson Desert Conservation Park. Drilling was allowed here because of the pre-existing rights of the Petroleum Exploration Leases. Further exploration drillholes were created but all eleven were eventually plugged and abandoned prior to the proclamation of the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve.

Currently the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve is available for exploration and mining under State mining legislation with geothermal exploration licences held and current petroleum exploration licence applications. The Simpson Desert Conservation Park however excludes all mining and exploration (Figure 5). There are a number of geothermal exploration licences held for the western side of the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve though currently there is no activity within the reserve. There are also five petroleum exploration licence applications that together cover the entire Simpson Desert Regional Reserve.

### **Visitor Use**

Regular visitor use only began through the desert in the mid 1980's but has steadily increased. Tourism within the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve is limited to self-sufficient travellers and tour groups. It is compulsory for tourists to purchase a Desert Parks Pass if they wish to cross the desert. Increasing parks pass sales indicate an increasing number of tourists visiting the area.

Damage from tourists is likely to be localised along the main tracks rather than widespread across the proposed area. In the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve visitors may only camp within 50 metres of public access tracks. The best places to camp are mostly located towards the swales in the central region where gidgee woodlands provide shade, shelter and soft ground for camping.

Travellers to the area need to be totally self-sufficient as there are no amenities available within the reserves. The only services available between Oodnadatta and Birdsville, are at Mount Dare in Witjira National Park.



### Figure 5. Mining Licences and Applications in the Study Area

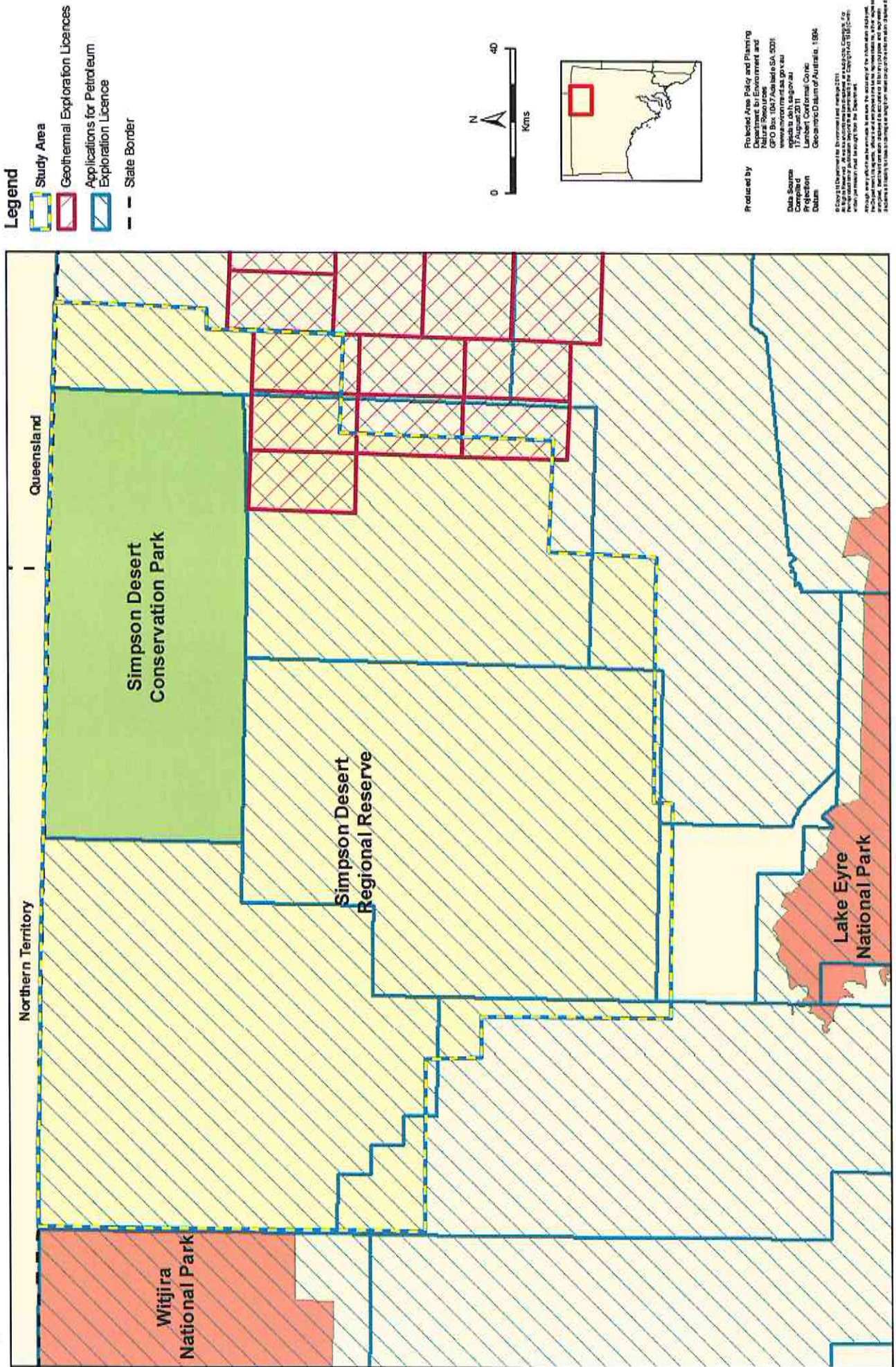
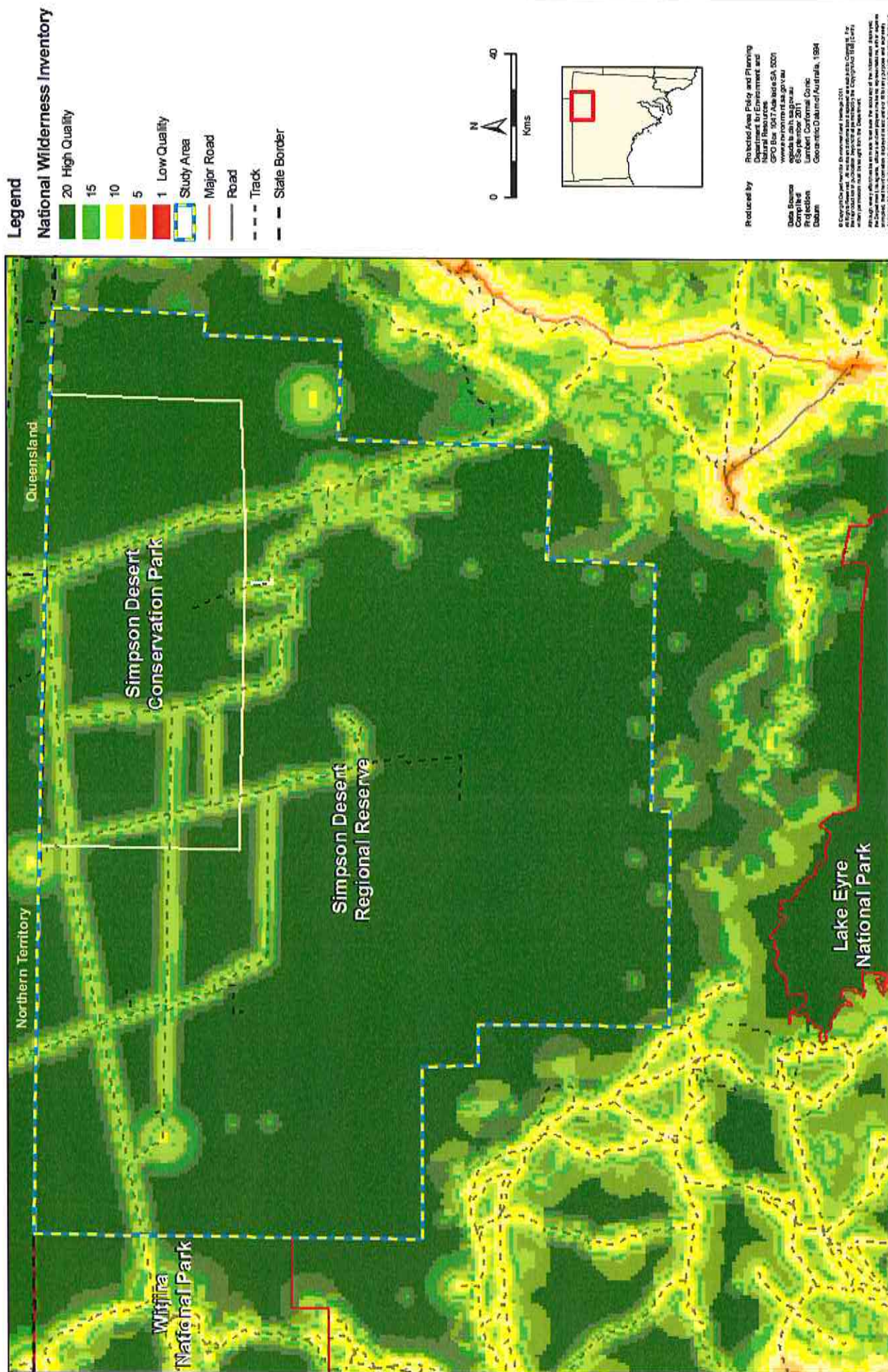


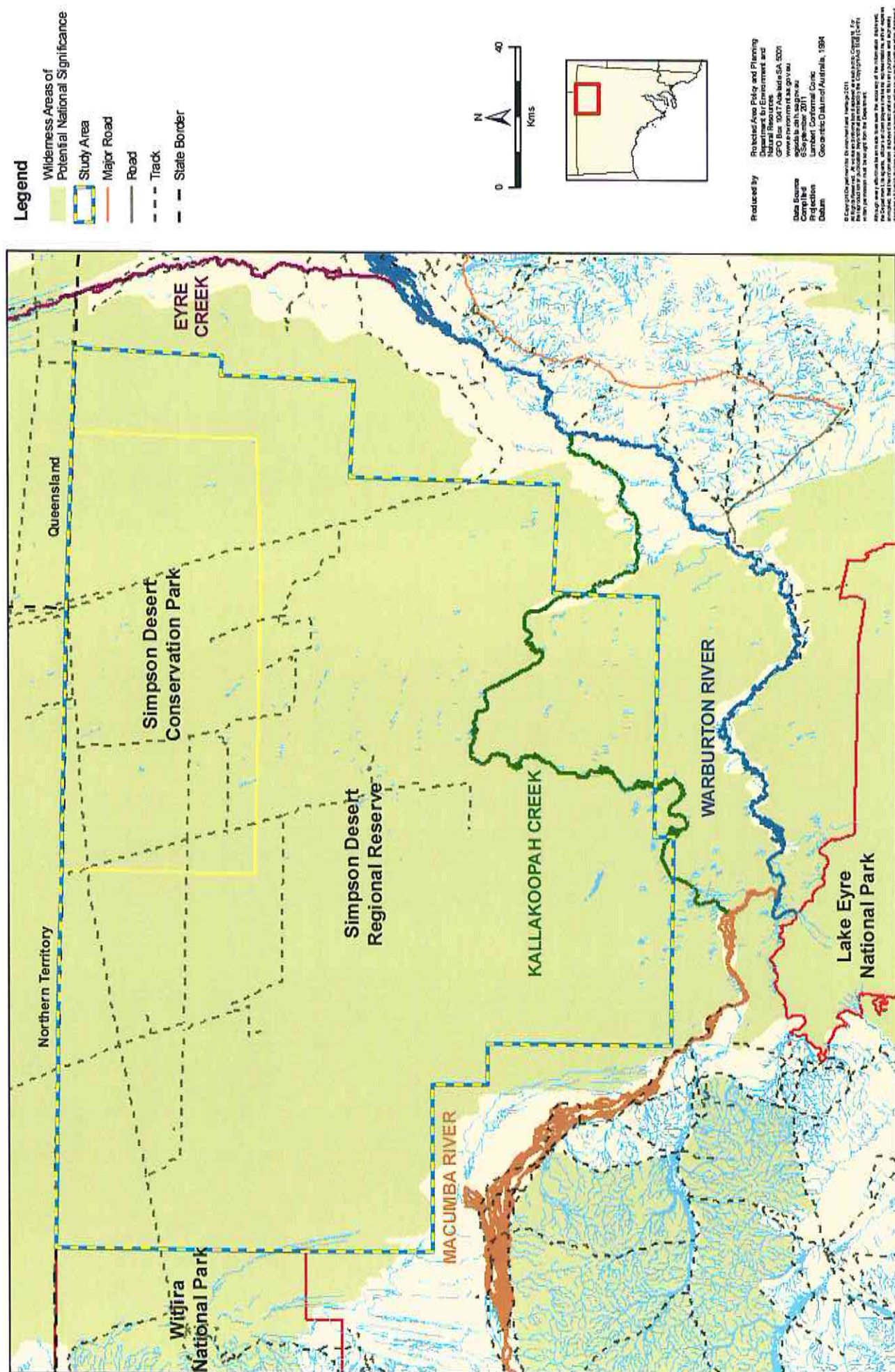


Figure 6. Wilderness Quality of the Study Area





**Figure 7. Wilderness Areas of Potential National Significance**



## 4 WILDERNESS ASSESSMENT

The Simpson Desert region is identified in the Australian Government's National Wilderness Inventory (NWI) as an area of high wilderness quality in central Australia. A lack of accessibility and limited post-settlement land use has left the area with high wilderness value. It contains the longest system of longitudinal dunes in the world and is home to a number of unique flora and fauna species. The desert was first successfully crossed by Europeans in 1936 and limited water supply has prevented any long lasting settlement in the desert region. Mining exploration in the park has had the highest impact through the development of vehicle access routes and drillholes.

The distribution of wilderness quality and identified wilderness is shown in Figure 6. The NWI uses the criteria of remoteness and naturalness and four indicators (Remoteness from Access, Remoteness from Settlement, Apparent Naturalness and Biophysical Naturalness) to measure wilderness quality. The inventory represents wilderness quality on a map with 20 gradations of colour. Deep green is the highest quality (20) and deep red (1) the lowest. Land below the threshold of (1) is represented by the colour white. Note that some information relevant to wilderness quality is not included in the NWI, such as the effect of unmapped tracks on remoteness from access.

### 4.1 The Wilderness Protection Act 1992 criteria

There are two wilderness criteria set out in the Act. The first of the criteria states that:

- The land and its ecosystems must not have been affected, or must have been affected to only a minor extent, by modern technology.

The National Wilderness Inventory assesses this criterion using three parameters which are remoteness from access, remoteness from settlement and apparent naturalness.

The second criterion set out in the Act states that:

- The land and its ecosystems must not have been seriously affected by exotic animals or plants or other exotic organisms.

The National Wilderness Inventory assesses this criterion using the parameter of biophysical naturalness.

#### **Remoteness from access and settlement**

The northern side of the study area abuts the Northern Territory border and adjoins the Queensland Simpson Desert National Park at the Queensland state border. The access points for the park are through Dalhousie Springs in Witjira National Park or from the east through Birdsville.

The 'French Track' and the 'Rig Road' are the two most accepted routes across the desert. The latter is easier to traverse requiring less use of four wheel drive than the more direct 'French Track'. Tourists are encouraged to use one or the other of these tracks and to avoid the diverging seismic tracks which lead nowhere and are currently under rehabilitation. Other key points of visitor access include two routes to Lake Eyre through Muloorina and Anna Creek stations and access to the Simpson Desert region through Dalhousie Springs/Mount Dare.

The only services available between Oodnadatta and Birdsville are at Mount Dare in Witjira National Park.

#### **Apparent Naturalness**

There are relatively few structures representing physical evidence of modern technological society. There are no visitor facilities in the Simpson Desert Conservation Park or Regional Reserve however visitors may camp within 50 metres of public access tracks.

The tracks are visible indicators of the previous petroleum exploration and current tourist use of the reserves. As there have been no significant reservoirs discovered within the study area, production mining has had minimal to no impact on the natural features of the region. The impacts associated with mining and tourism are all relatively recent when compared with almost any other region in Australia.

Increasing tourist numbers within the study area has led to an increase in the amount of litter. As there are no rubbish disposal facilities, visitors are required to take all rubbish with them. Some visitors



however bury their rubbish; this is discouraged as foxes dig up and spread the litter. In recent times litter has become less of an issue as community groups and DENR have undertaken cleanups and concurrently park users have become more environmentally aware.

Firewood collection from trees and fallen timber is also a potential issue with increasing tourist numbers. It is illegal to cut or remove wood from within the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve and Simpson Desert Conservation Park. The removal of tree limbs and fallen wood can be considered removing habitat and cover for a variety of wildlife. This is most likely to be limited to within 50 metres of the tracks and would not have widespread impacts in the reserves.

### **Biophysical Naturalness**

There has been no pastoral use within the study area and there has been no widespread clearing or cropping. Tracks in the desert are prone to degradation from floods and four wheel drive use, however the impact of such degradation on the general area is minimal. The movement of tourists across the desert provides a means for the spread of weeds.

Degradation of the main tracks within the reserves increases the risk of tourists creating or using illegal tracks. This has the potential to damage significant Aboriginal sites as well as native vegetation. As the desert ecosystem is slow to recover from damage prolonged use of an illegal track would be difficult to repair. Illegal track use also has the potential to further spread weeds away from the side of the legal tracks into areas previously undisturbed.

Flora species diversity is restricted in the Simpson Desert region by the aridity, soils and landforms. The surviving species are either long-live perennial plants (drought tolerant) or short-lived opportunistic ephemerals that take advantage of unpredictable rain events. Of the more than 180 species identified within the Simpson Desert region, 14 are listed as significant at a state level. The arid nature of the area makes it difficult for many invasive plant species to establish large populations, however the influx of tourists has led to the introduction some notable weed species including *Neurada procumbens*.

Eight introduced mammal species have been identified within the study area. They are the rabbit, fox, cat, camel, house mouse, donkey, horse and cattle. These introduced species have the potential to cause immense damage to the native vegetation and other animal species through competition and predation. Fluctuations in population numbers of these species correlate with the fluctuating conditions of the Simpson Desert region.

Preservation prospects for the area are promising as any damage within the Conservation Park and Regional Reserve is relatively recent.

## 5 FINDINGS

### 5.1 Land that meets the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* criteria

The Committee found that this land meets the wilderness criteria of the Act to a sufficient extent to justify protection under the Act.

The Committee notes that the land could be protected, as permitted under the Act, to:

- enable it to be restored to a condition that justifies protection under the Act;
- provide a buffer zone to protect lands of a kind referred to above; or to
- enable the adoption of convenient boundaries for a wilderness protection area or zone.

The extent of land which could be protected under the Act is shown in Figure 1.

### 5.2 Principles for Locating Wilderness Protection Areas and Zones

The principal objective in delineating the boundary of a wilderness protection area or zone is to ensure the environmental attributes upon which wilderness quality depends may be effectively managed and protected. It is not necessary for all areas within the wilderness protection area or zone to have high levels of wilderness quality. Areas in which wilderness quality is compromised by accessibility or other disturbances may be included in a wilderness protection area or zone provided the management is designed to protect the integrity of key areas of significant wilderness quality.

Boundaries are generally physical boundaries, such as roads and cleared land; forming a tangible and practical divide between areas that will be managed to protect remote and natural qualities, and external areas where development may take place.

The Wilderness Advisory Committee recognises that the study area is subject to rights of entry and mining under State mining legislation. It therefore recommends the Minister enters discussions to negotiate possible boundaries for wilderness protection areas and zones based on the principles contained in this report.

The Committee recommends that once these discussions have concluded it reviews the outcomes and make recommendations as to which land should be constituted as wilderness protection areas and zones. These recommendations will be set out in a report for public consultation.

The Committee recommends that the following principles be used in locating the wilderness protection areas and zones within the study area.

The area protected should:

- a) Encompass the highest quality wilderness;
- b) If practicable, be in one continuous area, located adjacent to the existing area of strictly protected reserve;
- c) Be of such a shape to encompass the full range of biological diversity present, to mitigate against climate change impacts; east to west gradients, but particularly north to south gradients will achieve this;
- d) Be as large as possible to maximise the benefits of protection;
- e) Preserve existing linkages with adjacent areas of high quality wilderness (such as Kalamurina and Lake Eyre National Park to the south, Witjira National Park to the west and to wilderness areas in the Northern Territory and Queensland), and contribute to the *Trans-Australia Eco-Link*;
- f) Protect biologically significant sites including the Kallakoopah Creek and adjacent lands;
- g) Take account of Aboriginal association with the land, Aboriginal heritage and practices; and
- h) Avoid, where practicable, areas of high prospectivity in establishing wilderness protection areas.

### 5.3 Benefits of Protection under the *Wilderness Protection Act* 1992

Protection of the wilderness values identified under the Act will:

- Protect part of a wilderness area identified as being of potential national significance;
- Improve the adequacy of South Australia's reserve system by establishing a substantial strictly protected reserve in the Simpson Strzelecki Dunefields Bioregion;
- Contribute to the Government's *Trans-Australia Eco-Link* initiative by protecting one of a number of natural areas which extend from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory to Port Augusta; and
- Benefit the tourist industry by confirming the unique natural and cultural values of the region and providing a level of protection appropriate to an iconic and internationally recognised sandy desert landscape.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The necessity for long term strategic planning in areas of high quality wilderness has become recognised as an imperative part of biodiversity conservation. Initiatives such as *NatureLinks* and the *Trans-Australia Eco-Link* help to build an extensive network of protected areas linking habitat across the South Australia and its adjoining states. Connectivity of vast landscapes provides ecosystems and species greater ability to respond to changes in the environment.

The Simpson Desert is recognised as a significant environment within central Australia and provides an opportunity to create a wildlife corridor stretching north - south across Australia. In combination with Witjira National Park, Kalamurina, Lake Eyre National Park and national parks across the Queensland and Northern Territory borders there is an opportunity to protect high value wilderness under the Act.

The proclamation of wilderness protection areas or zones under the Act would put in place a management framework in which the protection of the area's very high wilderness values is the primary objective.



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Rec'd	18 SEP 2018
Reg. No.	18EW0002362
File No.	
Ack.	
Action Officers	/
Response due	



Government of South Australia  
Department for Environment  
and Water

Document No. DEW-D0000531

TO MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

FOR APPROVAL

RE: MUNGA-THIRRI-SIMPSON DESERT CONSERVATION PARK AND MUNGA-THIRRI-SIMPSON DESERT REGIONAL RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

THROUGH: A/CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A/GROUP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PARKS AND REGIONS

Priority: Routine

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

That you:

1. Adopt the Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Management Plan (Attachment 1) pursuant to section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (the Act), by signing the attached declaration (Attachment 4).

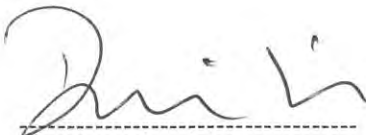
~~APPROVED~~ / NOT APPROVED

2. Approve the attached draft foreword for incorporation into the final plan (Attachment 5).

~~APPROVED~~ / NOT APPROVED

3. Note that following adoption of this plan, a media release announcing the adoption of this plan and the re-naming of these parks will be forwarded for your approval.

~~NOTED~~

Comments	 DAVID SPEIRS MP Minister for Environment and Water 25/11/2018
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## **PRIORITY**

Routine.

## **BACKGROUND**

Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park (688,142ha) and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve (2,919,123ha) are located in the far north-east of South Australia, approximately 957 kilometres north of Port Augusta.

The Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people are the Native Title holders over land encompassing Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve. As a result, the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people have specific rights in regard to these parks.

These parks were previously called Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve. After consultation with the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation (WYAC), they were re-named Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park, and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve on August 2, 2018. Munga-Thirri means Big Sandhill Country in Wangkangurru language.

A co-management agreement has not yet been established for these parks, however they are managed in partnership with the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation (WYAC), and are managed in accordance with an Indigenous Land Use Agreement.

These parks do not yet have management plans. Park management plans are required to establish and articulate Government's policies for the management of each park. In addition, the Act requires the Minister to prepare a park management plan as soon as practicable after a park has been constituted. This plan aims to support the aspirations of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people for their Country. Park management plans establish a contemporary and strategic management framework that supports the adaptive management of each park. They are intended to communicate to a broad audience through an interesting and engaging style.

Government has committed to pursuing a wilderness declaration for part of the Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve. The adoption of this plan will not impact on this commitment. A separate briefing has been forwarded to you on this matter (DEWD 0000479).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Draft Management Plan**

As required under the Act, a draft management plan for the parks was released for public consultation from 8 August 2017 to 10 November 2017 (Attachment 2).

Ten submissions were received. Submissions received on all draft management plans are carefully analysed using set criteria. An analysis of submissions document has been prepared (Attachment 3). This document outlines all points raised in each submission, and explains how relevant points are proposed to be addressed in the final plan. The majority of submissions were supportive of the draft plan and all have assisted in the preparation of a final plan.



Several submissions expressed the view that the prohibition of firewood collection, as proposed in the draft plan, was not warranted. Due to the scarcity of fallen timber and its importance for ground-dwelling mammals and reptiles, visitors have been encouraged to bring their own firewood for many years. In these parks, there is very little suitable firewood and most visitors abide by recommendations to bring their own firewood. The collection of firewood is not likely to have a widespread ecological impact. Therefore the final plan has been revised to enable the continued collection of firewood within the park while providing scope for restrictions to be introduced in the future, should impacts become apparent. Visitors will continue to be encouraged to bring their own firewood.

#### **Advice of the Parks and Wilderness Council**

As required under the Act, the Parks and Wilderness Council considered the draft plan, the public submissions, the Analysis of Public Submissions and the proposed final plan at their meeting of 16 August 2018.

Council commended the plan, recommended that the final plan give greater prominence to the future role of cultural tourism, and recommended that it be adopted.

As a result of Council's recommendations, Theme 3: Providing a unique cultural and nature-based experience for visitors (Page 15) has been revised to highlight opportunities to provide employment, raise awareness about Wangkangurru Yarluyandi culture and add value to the visitor experience through the development of cultural tourism enterprises.

#### **Adoption of the final plan**

The adoption of this plan will fulfil your requirement under section 38 of the Act for the development of a park management plan. Its adoption is given effect by signing the attached declaration (Attachment 4). A draft foreword is attached for your consideration (Attachment 5). Subject to your approval, this foreword will be inserted into the final plan prior to publication.

#### **CONSULTATION**

This plan was developed in consultation with the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation. All cultural content has been endorsed by the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation. The A/Regional Director, SA Arid Lands has endorsed the submission of this final plan for adoption.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Are there financial implications?

No

## ATTACHMENTS


Attachment 1 – Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Management Plan 2018

Attachment 2 – Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Draft Management Plan 2017

Attachment 3 – Analysis of Public Submissions

Attachment 4 – Minister's Declaration

Attachment 5 – Draft Minister's Foreword



Dr Matthew Ward  
Director Conservation, NRM and Protected Area Policy  
Department for Environment and Water  
DEW-D0000531

Date: 5/9/18

# Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve

Management Plan 2018

*'Ularaka-purru, thamuna-purru, wadlhu ngurku arla. malyka madla-marna. Walyparara yukamda'.*

Full of our history and sacred traditions, it is a most beautiful Country. Do not spoil it, and travel carefully.



**National  
Parks  
South  
Australia**



# Minister's foreword

## **Cultural Sensitivity Warning**

Aboriginal people are warned that this publication may contain culturally sensitive material.







# Developing this plan

The Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Management Plan has been developed by the Department for Environment and Water with advice from representatives of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation.

This is the first management plan for the conservation park and regional reserve. Through the process of developing the plan, current management practices have been reviewed, and emerging management issues have been considered.

The Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people know this area as Munga-Thirri, meaning Big Sandhill Country. The parks were re-named ‘Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve’ in 2018. The new names recognise that the conservation park and regional reserve have always been, and will continue to be, the Country of the Wankanguru Yarluyandi people.

Members of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation and the South Australian Government wish to thank those who provided comment on the draft plan and on the proposed name change.

***This is where the old people lived. The landscape unites people and there is a sense of connection to Country.***

Wangkangurru Yarluyandi community workshop,  
Birdsville, March 2016

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# Directions for management

***The Munga-Thirri Parks are the traditional lands of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people.***

***This iconic Australian landscape is diverse and changeable. It is fragile but can also be unforgiving.***

***We will care for and respect our Country to maintain its cultural and natural values.***

Wangkangurru Yarluyandi (*Won-kun-gu-ru*) (*Yar-loo-yan-dee*) people are the native title holders over their Country which encompasses Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve. As traditional owners they set directions for management in partnership with the South Australian Government.

Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park is proclaimed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. As a result it is protected and managed to achieve conservation goals. It is also managed to foster the use, enjoyment and appreciation of the park.

Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve is also proclaimed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. Regional reserves are managed to achieve the same objectives as conservation parks but are also available for the utilisation of natural resources. As such, appropriate resource utilisation may be authorised in the regional reserve under the *Mining Act 1971* and the *Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act 2000*.

Together with South Australia's Witjira National Park and Munga-Thirri National Park in Queensland, the Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve form the central part of an enormous multistate landscape that is focused on broad scale conservation. The effective management of threats such as pest plant and pest animals across this landscape is a primary focus and requires a coordinated approach with land managers in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. In South Australia, this integrated approach is guided by natural resources management plans. It is also supported by ongoing liaison between each state and territory.





## Significance and purpose

The Simpson Desert is the world's largest sand dune desert, with the world's longest parallel dunes. South Australia's Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park (688,142 ha) and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve (2,919,123 ha) sit just within the South Australian border, abutting south-western Queensland and south-eastern Northern Territory (Figure 1).

The Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people have lived with this Country for tens of thousands of years. Their intimate knowledge of the natural environment enables them to perform many rituals for continued existence. This includes long-established customs such as 'rain making' ceremonies. The Munga-Thirri landscape is an integral part of their creation stories, with each prominent feature being associated with a story or being celebrated in song cycles.

***I was born in Munga-Thirri where I learned the beliefs, traditions and cultures of the Wangkangurru from my elders. I learned how to track, hunt and find bush tucker from my grandmother, who also taught me how to understand the dreamtime and how these narratives spiritually bonded the Wangkangurru people to the Munga-Thirri.***

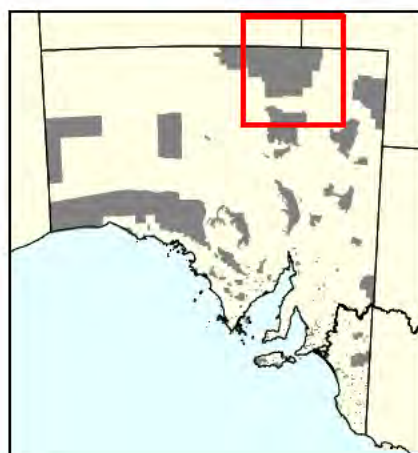
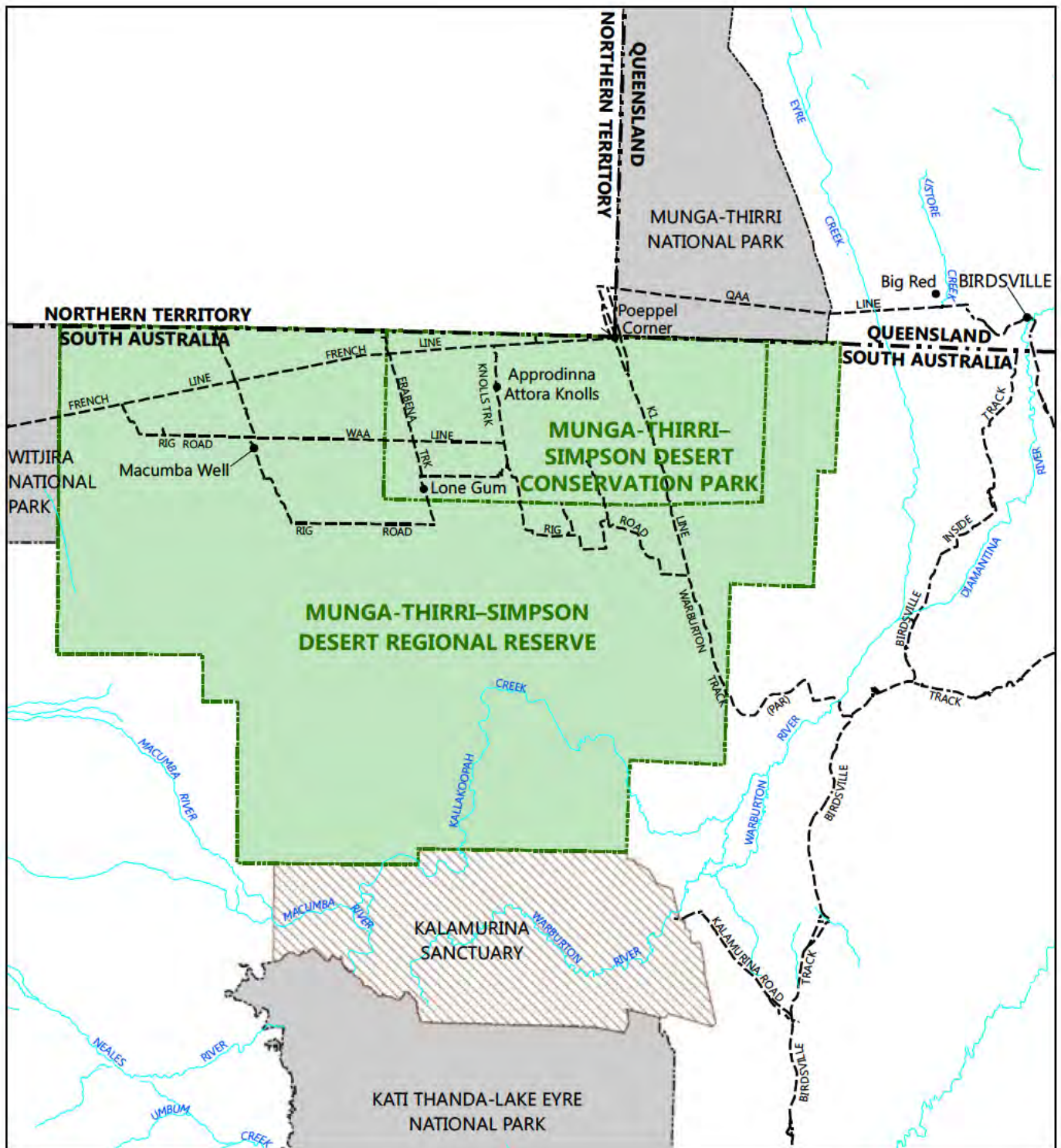
***I believe that all Australians can benefit enormously from developing an understanding of their Country by appreciating the ways of the old people; the culture and beliefs that sustained the indigenous people of Australia for thousands of years. By sharing the knowledge of survival and the benefits of coexisting with the land, we can promote attention to the positive aspects of respecting and nurturing the ancient cultures of Wangkangurru/Yarluyandi people, and develop a deeper understanding between all Australians.***

*Don Rowlands, Wangkangurru elder*

The conservation park and regional reserve are part of an interconnected desert ecosystem and support a diverse range of plants and animals adapted to living in the harsh desert environment. Given the geographical size of the conservation park and regional reserve and the seasonal boom and bust climate cycles, species vary both spatially and temporally. Grasses dominate the desert, but there are also a number of tree species. The desert supports a number of small mammals and reptiles, even frog species, and migratory birds visit the conservation park and regional reserve in wetter years. Many of these species are of state or national conservation significance (Appendices 1 & 2).

Crossing the Simpson Desert is considered the trip of a lifetime for many travellers, enticing visitors from near and far to experience the true Australian outback. At times the desert is hot, dry and seemingly lifeless. Following rain, the desert greens up dramatically, hosting displays of wildflowers in some years. With such great seasonal variation, one can visit the conservation park and regional reserve many times and never see them the same. Regardless of the season, the Simpson Desert is also variable travelling from one side to the other – the height, spacing and colour of the dunes changes noticeably and the swales are more diverse than expected.





**Figure 1**

Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert Conservation Park & Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert Regional Reserve



0 km 20 40 60

**Legend**

- Road/track
- Watercourse
- State or territory border
- Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert Conservation Park & Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert Regional Reserve
- Other park
- ▨ Kalamurina Sanctuary (privately owned)





## What are we looking after?

The Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve help protect:

- Culturally significant sites and landscapes, including rare gypsum outcrops, known as the Approdimna Attora Knolls (the Knolls). These rare and extremely fragile land formations were formed by the gypsum swept off local salt lakes to create high dunes. These later produced a hard outer crust, creating the Knolls.
- Ancient song lines that reflect the creation of desert landforms and provide a geographical reference, enabling Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people to navigate their way across the desert.
- Bush tucker species such as Pitcheri (*Duboisia hopwoodii*), Wadnangkani (woma python), and Ngardu (Nardoo) (*Marsilea drummondii*).
- The world's largest system of parallel sand dunes. The primary characteristic of the Simpson Desert is the extensive system of long, straight and evenly spaced parallel dunes that vary in colour from vibrant red to white. Individual dunes commonly extend continuously for over 150km, with some as long as 200km.
- One of the largest areas of high quality wilderness left in Australia (Australian Heritage Commission 2003).
- Fossil sites of extinct megafauna that once roamed the area, providing opportunities for scientific research.
- A variety of plants including ten that are listed as vulnerable or rare in South Australia under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (Appendix 1). Sea heath (*Frankenia plicata*), a small dense shrub, is also listed as endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
- Important fauna including 16 species listed as rare or vulnerable in South Australia. Three of these species are also listed as nationally endangered or vulnerable under the EPBC Act - Ampurta (crest-tailed mulgara *Dasycercus cristicauda*), Itjaritjara (Southern Marsupial Mole *Notoryctes typhlops*) and the plains mouse *Pseudomys australis* (Appendix 2).
- Suitable habitat for the Night Parrot (*Pezoporus occidentalis*), one of the most elusive and mysterious bird in the world and known to occur in the arid grasslands of South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.
- One of the greatest 4WD trips in the world and a true Australian outback experience.



## What are the challenges and opportunities?

The Conservation Park and Regional Reserve face a number of challenges, but with these challenges are also opportunities:

- Enhancing the tourist experience through the establishment of cultural tourism experiences that share the stories and language of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people.
- Developing place names that reflect the area's Wangkangurru Yarluyandi culture.
- Increasing the protection and recognition of Aboriginal and early European artefacts through increasing visitors' understanding.
- Enabling Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people to monitor the health of plants and animals in order to better understand the impact of long term seasonal conditions and climate change.
- Improving the resilience of native plants and animals through reducing the impact of exotic plants including buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*), *Tribulus terrestris* and *Neurada procumbens*.
- Coordinating Simpson Desert management activities between South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.
- Securing the habitat of small native mammals, reptiles and birds.
- Managing threatened species to ensure their long-term conservation, particularly in response to climate change.
- Preventing grazing pressure on native plants through controlling populations of exotic species including camels, rabbits and cattle.
- Managing the impacts of introduced predators such as foxes and cats on native animals
- Using fire to manage habitat and support the health of native vegetation, in particular bush tucker species
- Enabling visitors to have a safe and low impact experience on the fragile desert environment.





## Management themes and priorities

This section of the management plan addresses the most important management issues for the conservation park and regional reserve, focussing on three key themes.

### Theme 1: Keeping Wangkangurru Yarluyandi culture alive

***“I’m proud knowing the old people walked and knew the Country. My vision and passion is getting out on Country and sharing cultural information and stories, passing this knowledge down to the younger generations. It is important to secure knowledge, stories, knowing connections and having that cultural connection to Country and family. Going out in the desert is like going home.”***

*Aulpunda, Jean Barr Crombie, traditional owner*

The Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve form part of an area of great significance to the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people. Their stories, such as that of the Two Boys, intertwine tales of native animals and land features to explain the creation of the landscape. These stories form maps, helping the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people to remember where they can find water, food and shelter on their travels across the desert.

To live in the desert, the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people relied on seeds as a staple food source. Seeds require processing using

implements, and the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people sourced these implements through trading with neighbouring Aboriginal groups. They obtained sandstone grinding stones from the Flinders Ranges, and from Mt Isa in Queensland they procured dolomite stone axes. Other items were also acquired through trade, for instance, Pitcheri (*Duboisia hopwoodii*), a plant treated and chewed for its narcotic properties. Wood was also an important resource, and the Maya-Maya (gidgee) (*Acacia cambagei*) in particular was used to make digging sticks, bowls and mia mias (also known as wiltjas or humpies) for shelter.

Animal remains found at popular gathering sites reveal that the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people ate a wide variety of animals such as bandicoots, bettongs, hare-wallabies, bilbies, desert rat-kangaroos, spinifex hopping mouse, Madla-Yapa (Dingo), carpet snakes, lizards, Warru-Kathi (Emu) and a number of smaller birds. Wadnangkani (woma python) were a highly prized food item but very hard to catch. The men would risk their lives digging out the snake’s tunnels which could easily collapse and bury them. While the men were off hunting, the women would search for seeds in the dunefields.

### Two Boys Dreaming

The story of the Two Boys is one of the most important Wangkangurru Yarluyandi creation stories.

The Two Boys lived with their mother at Dalhousie and were rainmakers who spent their days catching small birds. While chasing birds they gradually ended up in Munga-Thirri. Here they met the Karanguru people, to whom they gave feathers from the birds they caught, linking the Karanguru of the east with the Wangkangurru.

The lively Two Boys story is comprised of a string of story lines that takes the traveller from Dalhousie in the west to Birdsville in the east. The story contains important information on where water can be found, creating a pathway across the desert. This story is a small part of a much larger story that travels through South Australia, Queensland, and the Northern Territory.





The seed of Piltikardi (pigweed) (*Gunniopsis quadrifida*) was a favoured food and Ngardu (Nardoo) (*Marsilea drummondii*) was a useful food plant found growing in shallow pools in the eastern and north-eastern desert, where flooding was more regular.

While the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people inhabited the central and southern-central Simpson Desert, a number of other Aboriginal groups also lived in the area. The Lower Southern Arrernte and Eastern Arrernte people occupied the west, and the Karanguru and Wangkamadla were found in the east. The range of the Wangkamadla also extended into the northern areas of the desert.

The rapid pastoral expansion on desert margins in 1860-1900 brought with it displacement of Aboriginal groups and at this time, the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi began leaving the desert. The last remaining Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people vacated the desert in the summer of 1899-1900. There was a dramatic decline in all Aboriginal populations during this time and a major influenza outbreak in 1919 took its toll. By the mid-1970s, only three Wangkangurru Yarluyandi who were born in the desert were still alive. The descendants of those born in the desert are now spread across Australia, from Adelaide and Port Augusta in South Australia, to Birdsville in Queensland, Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, and New South Wales. Those that speak Wangkangurru language are determined to use and share this knowledge, ensuring that language is revitalised and passed on to the next generation.

***My ancestors stretched from west of Dalhousie across the Simpson Desert. My father was a traditional man who came from the Macumba area, and my mother was a traditional women, born at Bloods Creek where she was tribally married. I was born in Marree and was part of the Stolen Generation, living at the Umeewarra mission in Port Augusta. The Simpson Desert means a lot to me as that is where my ancestors and family came from.***

***When I was back on Country with family, I learned the Wangkangurru language. Every chance I get, I go out into the desert visiting sites and sharing knowledge with my family.***

*Valerie Naylon-Fuschtei Senior, traditional owner*

There are cultural campsites throughout the conservation park and regional reserve that are important to modern day Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people, as it is through the use of these sites that they remain connected to Country. Being sites for congregation, many artefacts including stone implements are scattered within their vicinity.

Approdingna Attora Knolls are rare gypsum outcrops that were once the highest dune crests in the area. There are small gypsum nodes in the southern and eastern sections of the Simpson Desert but the Attora Knolls are particularly significant due to their height and great geological, historical and cultural significance. The Knolls are the home of the Rain Ancestor 'Kuntili'.

The rain ancestor Kuntili came from the north to Lake Mirri-ngupa-ngupanha. This name means 'many (dead) people live here'. He came night after night with massive clouds and by the light of his flashes of lightning he could see two beautiful girls and was determined to take them as his wives. So he came again night after night with stronger and stronger thunderbolts, trying out his strength smashing trees and finally coming as the biggest storm ever. He killed everybody except the two girls: the people are still lying about as many boulders. He carried the girls off to Warra-bullana and their camp is still there as the Knolls.

The Knolls provide a great view across the country but the fragile gypsum has been prone to visitor damage in the past. Visitor access is now controlled through a designated carpark and walking trail to the summit of one of the Knolls. Camping is not permitted within two kilometres of the Knolls to protect cultural sites.

Artefacts of Aboriginal occupation remain in the park, including stone implements and workings. While some sites and places are documented in the Central Archive, which includes the Register of Aboriginal Sites and Objects, there has not been a comprehensive survey of the conservation park and regional reserve. There are likely to be many more unrecorded sites. All sites are protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*, whether registered, recorded or unrecorded. Some artefacts are in danger from present land uses, a danger perhaps born more from ignorance than intent. Visitors may intentionally or unintentionally damage culturally significant sites through driving off the marked tracks or removing artefacts. In some areas, gypsum outcrops are traversed by tracks which not only causes physical damage, but can impact on story lines. There is a need to increase the knowledge of the cultural significance of the area as a first step in increasing the protection of these artefacts and important cultural sites.

Under the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Indigenous Land Use Agreement, traditional owners have the right to use firearms to hunt in the conservation park and regional reserve. Any firearms use must comply with Australian licensing and registration laws. Further

work is needed to ensure this activity is appropriately managed through the designation of an area for traditional hunting and the development of a traditional use protocol which outlines safe and sustainable hunting practices.

Traditional owners also have the right to collect plants, animals and minerals for food, craft and ceremonial activities. The continuation of these resource-use practices and methodologies is important to maintain culture and share knowledge.

Continuing to use, share and record cultural practices, language, and stories is important to ensure this knowledge is passed on to the next generation. Providing opportunities for visitors to learn about the cultural significance of the conservation park and regional reserve through signage, digital interpretive information, and cultural tourism will also increase visitor understanding of, and respect for, Wangkangurru Yarluyandi culture.

***"I am a Wangkangurru Yarluyandi and Lower Southern Aranda descendant from my grandparents. I was given direction and knowledge from the Old People, and this is still in my head today. Now that we are the Elders, it's our responsibility to ensure that we document and pass our knowledge down to future generations, working in harmony to ensure that our culture is passed down and remains strong after we are gone"***

*Arthur Ah Chee Senior, traditional owner*

## Objective

Ensure that Country is protected, visitors can learn about Country, and Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people can pass on cultural knowledge to younger generations.

## Strategies

- Continue to recognise, respect, protect and maintain Aboriginal cultural sites. Conduct surveys to document cultural sites and realign tracks where required to avoid disturbing significant sites.
- Continue to use, share and record Wangkangurru Yarluyandi language so that it is passed on to the next generation.
- Support further research, survey and protection of flora and fauna, as well as fossil deposits in the reserve.
- Increase visitor understanding of the importance of the conservation park and regional reserve for Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people through the development of cultural tourism, the upgrade of park signage, and the upgrade and maintenance of digital interpretive information.
- Ensure the development of sustainable nature-based and cultural tourism provides employment opportunities for traditional owners and their communities.
- Continue to ensure cultural values and practices are recognised, promoted and respected in all decision making.
- Work towards the development of a protocol for traditional hunting by Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people with firearms within a designated area. Any traditional use protocol will include conditions developed for safe and sustainable hunting.





***‘Nhayi Wangkangurru wadlhu, arnikunha  
wadlhu yarndi-nganha’***

*This is Wangkangurru Country, our  
Country, from ancient times.*





## Theme 2: Maintaining the natural desert landscape

The aridity of the desert - expressed in the high mean temperature and low and erratic rainfall - provides for a specialised variety of flora and fauna species capable either of surviving or evading the periods of extended drought.

Sandhill canegrass (*Zygochloa paradoxa*) hummock grassland dominates the desert and helps to stabilise the dunes. The desert is far from ecologically uniform, however. On a local scale, swales provide habitat for dense Gidgee (*Acacia cambagei*) communities and on a broader scale, the chain of playa lakes in the central part of the desert brings with it biogeographical variation. The smaller playa lakes, irpi (claypans), have a smooth and hard clay surface. Larger playa lakes have a bright white salt crust sitting over a layer of mud which remains damp even during drought. During wet years, the claypans and salt lakes provide important habitat for endemic and migratory species.

Grasslands such as those of the Simpson Desert do not usually support a great diversity or large numbers of vertebrate species. After rains, however, resources are abundant and populations boom. As a result, the distributions of local and regional species are continuously fluctuating. A complete picture of the fauna is therefore only possible through repeated observations over long periods. The remoteness and scale of the conservation park and regional reserve has limited the number of surveys and as a consequence, the desert animals are not as well-known as the desert plants. Further survey work is needed in future. Species which are known to occur include the Itjari tjara (Southern marsupial mole), Ampurta (crest-tailed mulgara), and plains mouse. The Friends of the Simpson Desert Parks have undertaken some survey work which has complemented previous surveys in the conservation park and regional reserve.

Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) has only been recorded at one site in the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve. However, there should be focus on its containment as this weed is a declared weed of national significance and considered to be one of Australia's worst due to its ease of establishment, its fast maturation and spread. The plant can disperse its seeds far and wide and these seeds can remain viable for over 12 months. The plants themselves can live for at least 20 years. The weed can quickly form a monoculture, out-competing native grasses and reducing food supply for native birds. The broader landscape is also compromised as buffel grass produces more combustible material than native grasses resulting in hotter and more intense fires.

Other weeds which are a priority for management include *Tribulus terrestris* and *Neurada procumbens*. *Neurada* was first observed in

Australia in 2000 in the north-west corner of the Simpson Desert along French Line to west of Rig Road Junction. It is only otherwise known to occur at a couple of sites in the Northern Territory. *Tribulus terrestris* is a spreading vine found throughout mainland Australia. *Neurada procumbens* and *Tribulus terrestris* are most prevalent in areas where visitors stop their vehicles at track intersections, sites of interest and campsites. *Neurada procumbens* and *Tribulus terrestris* are resilient weeds owing to their ability to germinate only one seed at a time, only germinating others when moisture is detected. Both of these weeds, along with buffel grass, have seeds that allow them to be easily transported by tyres, shoes, camping gear and in the fur of animals. Visitors therefore have an important role in managing the spread of these weeds.

Many neighbouring pastoral properties run cattle, which can stray into the conservation park and regional reserve following favourable conditions and greening of vegetation in the Simpson Desert. The hooves of cattle can cause erosion to fragile soils. Cattle also directly impact native vegetation through trampling and grazing. Due to the size and remoteness of the conservation park and regional reserve, it is difficult to know when cattle incursions have occurred and removing cattle is challenging. In most cases, cattle either move off the conservation park and regional reserve or perish as water sources dry up.

Camels (*Camelus dromedarius*) were introduced into Australia for the purpose of transporting people and goods during exploration and development of central Australia. Afghan cameleers crisscrossed the desert from the mid nineteenth century. When cars became available, the use of camels declined and many animals were abandoned. Wild camels browse on most native species, and can foul water sources, reducing the availability of clean water for native species. Both camels and cattle can also disturb or destroy cultural sites.

Rabbit populations fluctuate with seasonal conditions. When conditions are favourable, rabbits can be seen right across the desert. Especially when in large numbers, rabbits can decimate native plant and compete with native animals for available resources. This in turn causes erosion as the topsoil becomes exposed. Due to the remoteness and size of the desert, rabbits are difficult to control. Utilising biological control such as Rabbit Calicivirus disease may be the only option available to control rabbit populations in arid South Australia.

Foxes and cats predate on native species, and increase in number in parallel with prey species. Feral cats in particular can have a devastating impact on native reptiles and small mammals found

in the conservation park and regional reserve, a number of which are of state and national conservation significance (Appendix 2). As such, managing their impacts is also a priority. A recovery plan has been developed for the plains mouse (Moseby 2012) and the Southern marsupial mole (Benshemesh 2004). Management of the conservation park and regional reserve aims to align with these plans, as well as other recovery plans that may be developed in the future.

Dingoes can play an important role in managing numbers of foxes and feral cats. The role of the Dingo as an apex predator should be considered when managing dingo populations in the conservation park and regional reserve.

The Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people used fire for tens of thousands of years as a landscape management tool. Fire is a natural part of the landscape and it has an important role in rejuvenating Country and protecting bush tucker plants and animals. The reintroduction of fire using a combination of contemporary and traditional fire practices should be developed in the future.

The natural and undeveloped qualities of the Simpson Desert provides a continental-scale protected corridor extending from western Queensland's Munga-Thirri National Park, through the Simpson Desert in South Australia and down to Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park. This complements the privately held Kalamurina Sanctuary, managed by Australian Wildlife Conservancy, which captures 667,000 hectares of ecologically significant land between the southern Simpson Desert and the north shore of Lake Eyre/Kati Thanda (Figure 1). These large and interconnected protected areas provide corridors, through which species can move and adapt to a changing climate.

Climate change is expected to bring increased temperatures and decreased rainfall to the South Australian Arid Lands region (Suppiah et al. 2006). Potential implications of climate change include an increase in weeds and pest animals, a change in density and distribution

## Regulation of mineral and petroleum activities in South Australia

Processes for the assessment, approval and regulation of mineral and petroleum activities are directed by the *Mining Act 1971* and the *Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act 2000*. The Department for Energy and Mines works with petroleum and mining companies to implement leases, prepare environmental impact reports, consult with relevant stakeholders, and undertake licensing processes in a safe and sustainable manner.

Companies are also required to comply with other legislation, including the *Native Title Act 1993*, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*, and the *National Parks and Wildlife (National Parks) Regulations 2016*.

of native plants, increased risk of extinction of vulnerable species, changes to the fire regime, and increased soil erosion. Management actions should be adaptive to take into account climate change and be consistent with any regional climate change adaptation plan.

The Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert Regional Reserve was proclaimed to allow for resource use to occur alongside conservation. Prior to the dedication of the Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert Conservation Park and regional reserve in the late 1950s, there was some petroleum exploration activity in the area, however there has been no mining in the regional reserve.

## Objective

Conserve the fragile desert environment so that it can be enjoyed by all people for many generations to come.

## Strategies

- Encourage and support research, monitoring and surveys to increase our understanding of plants and animals in the desert.
- Continue the large herbivore aerial control program in the desert to keep camel numbers low and control cats and foxes opportunistically.
- Investigate and pursue opportunities to strengthen coordination of pest management activities and fire management activities across the broader landscape, including Queensland and the Northern Territory.
- Control buffel grass as a priority before it spreads further, conduct trials to control *Neurada procumbens* at track junctions and educate visitors on how they can limit the spread of weed seeds and encourage the reporting of new buffel grass infestations.
- Develop an understanding of the use of fire to manage habitat for threatened species, and to increase health and achieve rejuvenation of the landscape, particularly bush tucker.
- In the event of future mineral and petroleum exploration or production activities within the regional reserve, ensure that the regional reserve's remote and natural qualities are maintained, precautions are taken to minimise the spread of weeds, tracks are rehabilitated, and visitor experience and Aboriginal cultural heritage is not impacted.





## Theme 3: Providing a unique cultural and nature-based experience for visitors

This seemingly endless, ever-changing landscape is one of the quintessential Australian experiences. Depending on the track travelled and the season, visitors will see the surprising diversity of the desert. Some years may be dry with only sparse vegetation whilst in other years, the desert puts on a display of wildflowers complemented by lush green vegetation not often imagined when picturing a desert.

***'Despite its inherent harshness the Simpson Desert is a living, fertile and resilient environment. It is a land to be enjoyed for its wilderness attributes, its cultural and natural history, its colour and contrasts. The Simpson Desert is many things to many people – formidable and implacable, intolerant to the ill-advised and unprepared, a place to be respected and admired. It is a land for all Australians to enjoy.'***

Mark Shephard, author - *The Simpson Desert: natural history and human endeavour*, 1992

### Managing visitor safety

High visibility safety flags displayed at least 2.5 metres from the bull bar are mandatory for all vehicles and UHF radios should be tuned into channel 10 to check for oncoming traffic. All visitors must purchase a Desert Parks Pass before entering the conservation park and regional reserve. The conservation park and regional reserve are closed from 1 December to 15 March each year due to extreme summer temperatures that can reach over 50 degrees Celsius, making peak travel time between May and September.

The major relics of European exploration are the marks of explorers. Two of the most significant items, Poeppel Peg and one of surveyor Lindsay's 1886 marked trees, were originally within Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park but have now been removed and are preserved in Adelaide. A replica corner marker stands in place of Poeppel's Peg and a plaque commemorates Lindsay's marked tree. Also on the tourist route is the Lone Gum – a single Coolibah tree oddly located in the middle of the desert.

Cultural tourism enterprises driven by Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people would significantly enhance the visitor experience. There is increasing interest and support for the establishment of nature-based and cultural tourism ventures in South Australia. Such opportunity not only provides employment for Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people, but undertaking tours helps to increase the knowledge and understanding of visitors, providing them with an insight into why the conservation park and regional reserve are so special.

Visitor use is largely limited to well-equipped and self-sustaining groups possessing suitable four-wheel drive vehicles and competent leaders. It takes 2-3 days to cross Simpson Desert. Four-wheel driving skills are needed. There is no mobile phone reception or fuel services and there are no rubbish bins, toilets or shelters. Some sections of tracks have become degraded due to a combination of increased visitor traffic and incorrect tyre pressures being selected for vehicles. There is also concern that the use of trailers contributes to track damage, in particular on the crest of dunes. It is acknowledged, however, that some visitors require the use of a trailer to make the journey possible. Effort has been made over the last four years to monitor the health of the dunes via photo-points. The results are not yet conclusive but it seems that scalloping occurs during the high use tourist season and that the dunes then undergo a repair phase during the summer closure period with the help of sand movement and rainfall. Dune monitoring is ongoing and in the future, monitoring outcomes may highlight a need for mitigation actions to be taken to protect the dunes.

Careless driving impacts the environment through damage to native vegetation, the spread of weeds such as buffel grass, erosion



## The Lone Gum

The Lone Gum is a single isolated Coolibah tree in the middle of the Simpson Desert Dune field, far from any other trees. Little is known about the origin of the Lone Gum, how it came to be here, or its age.

The Coolibah (*Eucalyptus collabah*) is renowned for its hard, durable timber and provision of excellent shade. Aboriginal people collected seeds, grubs and lerps (sap sucking insects) from such trees for food, obtained water from roots and used the bark for medicinal purposes.

Coolibah generally grow on heavy clay soils in seasonally flooded areas such as floodplains, margins of water courses, lagoons and swamps. The location of this tree, in the middle of the southern Simpson Desert dune field, far removed from the nearest watercourses is both fascinating and intriguing.

and generally scarring the landscape. Cultural campsites, artefacts and culturally significant land features such as gypsum outcrops can be easily damaged. Visitors must remain on the marked tracks and consider their impact when driving off tracks to camp.

Direction signs have been established to guide visitors across the desert. There is also some interpretive information about the conservation park and regional reserve. The remoteness of the conservation park and regional reserve adds significant costs for both implementation and maintenance of signage.

Camping is currently allowed within 100 metres of public access tracks. Minimal impact camping is encouraged. A camping strategy is being developed to ensure consistency with the neighbouring Munga-Thirri National Park in Queensland, and the Central Land

Council in the Northern Territory. Generators are permitted throughout the conservation park and regional reserve.

Sitting by the glow of a campfire under a sky of stars is part of the desert experience. Fallen tree branches, sticks and other dead wood may seem ideal for campfire fuel, but these provide valuable habitat for reptiles, small mammals, insects and emerging plants. In addition suitable campfire wood is extremely limited. The collection of firewood for campfires is not prohibited but visitors are encouraged to bring their own firewood from sustainable sources outside the conservation park and regional reserve. Restrictions on the collection of firewood for campfires may be considered if impacts become apparent.

Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people have traditional rights which enable them to collect firewood for cultural purposes. However, supply is limited, and the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people want the habitat provided by this dead wood to be protected. As such, traditional owners will also bring in their wood from sustainable sources outside of the conservation park and regional reserve.

A number of events take advantage of the uniqueness of the desert and the challenge it offers. The Simpson Desert Bike Challenge sees competitors cycle across the desert and Variety - the Children's Charity has held charity 4WD events in the past. These events help to increase the profile of the conservation park and regional reserve. Event organisers are required to ensure that activities have a minimal impact, and are undertaken in a manner that ensures the safety of participants and organisers. Opportunities for events to provide benefits to local communities are also considered. Any event or new visitor experience such as camel trekking or horse riding will be considered on a case by case basis and agreements developed as required. Culturally significant sites and places must be carefully considered in the planning of any future events or developments. Each proposal will be assessed to ensure the activity is compatible with the values of the conservation park and regional reserve and the aspirations of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people.

## Objective

Enable visitors to have a positive experience without impacting on the environmental values of the conservation park and regional reserve.

## Strategies

- Encourage and promote appropriate cultural and nature-based tourism. Work with Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people to identify opportunities for the establishment of cultural tourism ventures driven by Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people.
- Ensure tracks provide for tourism experiences but do not jeopardise culturally significant sites or ecologically sensitive areas.
- Continue to monitor the condition of tracks. Provide guidance to visitors to prevent the establishment of new tracks or damage to vegetation. Instigate mitigation actions as appropriate.
- Promote a coordinated and consistent message about minimal impact camping in conjunction with Munga-Thirri National Park in Queensland and the Central Land Council in the Northern Territory.
- Promote the correct setup for four wheel drive vehicles, including loading and most importantly tyre pressures through signage and publications to limit environmental impact and remind visitors to stay on the marked tracks.
- Improve interpretive material for the conservation park and regional reserve which includes online applications to enhance the visitor experience through sharing more information about the environmental, cultural and European history of the Simpson Desert.
- Maintain directional signage at entry points, track junctions and other key locations to increase public safety.



# Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Language

WANGKANGURRU YARLUYANDI NAME	COMMON NAME
<b>Fauna</b>	
<i>Madla-Yapa</i>	Dingo
<i>Kapirri</i>	Goanna
<i>Warru-Kathi</i>	Emu
<i>Yatyaparra</i>	Zebra Finch
<i>Karrawara</i>	Eagle
<i>Ampurta</i>	Crest-tailed Mulgara
<i>Itjaritjara</i>	Southern Marsupial Mole
<i>Wadhangkani</i>	Woma
<b>Flora</b>	
<i>Piltikardi</i>	Pigweed
<i>Ngardu</i>	Nardoo
<i>Maya-Maya</i>	Gidgee
<i>Murumpa</i>	Bogan Flea

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## Appendix 1 - Flora species of conservation significance

FLORA SPECIES	COMMON NAME	CONSERVATION STATUS	
		EPBC Act Cwlth <sup>1</sup>	NPW Act SA <sup>2</sup>
<i>Frankenia plicata</i>	Sea Heath	En	Vu
<i>Plantago multiscapa</i>	Many-stem Plantain		Vu
<i>Acacia georginae</i>	Georgina Gidgee		Ra
<i>Acacia jennerae</i>	Coonavittra Wattle		Ra
<i>Eragrostis lacunaria</i>	Purple Love-grass		Ra
<i>Frankenia cinerea</i>			Ra
<i>Frankenia cupularis</i>			Ra
<i>Lobelia heterophylla</i> ssp. <i>centralis</i>			Ra
<i>Pimelea penicillaris</i>	Sandhill Riceflower		Ra
<i>Swainsona oligophylla</i>			Ra

## Appendix 2 - Fauna species of conservation significance

FAUNA SPECIES	COMMON NAME	CONSERVATION STATUS	
		EPBC Act Cwlth <sup>1</sup>	NPW Act SA <sup>2</sup>
<i>Notoryctes typhlops</i>	Southern Marsupial Mole (Itjaritjara)	En	Vu
<i>Pseudomys australis</i>	Plains Mouse	Vu	Vu
<i>Dasycercus cristicauda</i>	Crest-tailed Mulgara (Ampurta)	Vu	
<i>Ardeotis australis</i>	Australian Bustard		Vu
<i>Cladorhynchus leucocephalus</i>	Banded Stilt		Vu
<i>Neophema chrysostoma</i>	Blue-winged Parrot		Vu
<i>Elanus scriptus</i>	Letter-winged Kite		Ra
<i>Falco hypoleucos</i>	Grey Falcon		Ra
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine Falcon		Ra
<i>Hamirostra melanosternon</i>	Black-breasted Buzzard		Ra
<i>Phaps histrionica</i>	Flock Bronzewing		Ra
<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Glossy Ibis		Ra
<i>Stipiturus ruficeps</i>	Rufous-crowned Emuwren		Ra
<i>Sminthopsis youngsoni</i>	Lesser Hairy-footed Dunnart		Ra
<i>Aspidites ramsayi</i>	Woma (Wadnangkani)		Ra
<i>Notoscincus ornatus</i>	Desert Glossy Skink		Ra

<sup>1</sup> Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth)

En - Endangered  
Vu - Vulnerable

<sup>2</sup> National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (South Australia)

En - Endangered  
Vu - Vulnerable  
Ra - Rare

Source: Biological Databases of South Australia

## For further information please contact

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

## Recognition of Aboriginal Culture

Aboriginal Australians have rights to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

Please contact the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation to understand these rights in relation to the Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Management Plan 2018.

## Photography

Images on pages 1, 5, 9 & 13 courtesy of Theresa Andrew

Image on page 8 courtesy of Tony Magor

Cover image and images on page 3, 7, 11 & 15 courtesy of professional Desert Parks Pass Photos (2010)



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# Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve

Draft Management Plan 2017

*'Ularaka-purru, thamuna-purru, wadlhu ngurku arla. malyka madla-marna. Walyparara yukarnda'.*

Full of our history and sacred traditions, it is a most beautiful Country. Do not spoil it, and travel carefully.

Don Rowlands OAM, Wangkangurru Elder





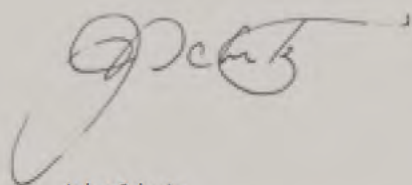
# Your views are important

The Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Management Plan is being developed to guide management of the conservation park and regional reserve, and to progress the aspirations of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people for their Country.

The plan is not intended to be prescriptive or to cover all aspects of management, rather it seeks to establish realistic and achievable goals that will enable a responsive and adaptive approach to management.

This draft plan is released for public comment so that members of the community can express their views about the future management of the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve. Feedback received on this draft plan will be used to develop a final management plan. Once developed, the final plan will be submitted to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation for adoption in accordance with section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

I encourage you to make a submission on the draft plan. Guidance for making a submission can be found on page 15.



**John Schutz**  
Director of National Parks and Wildlife

## Cultural Sensitivity Warning

Aboriginal people are warned that this publication may contain culturally sensitive material.







# Developing this plan

The Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Draft Management Plan has been developed by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources with advice from representatives of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation.

This is the first management plan for the conservation park and regional reserve. Through the process of developing the plan, current management practices have been reviewed, and emerging management issues have been considered.

The Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people know this area as Munga-Thirri, meaning Big Sandhill Country. The traditional owners and the South Australian Government are working towards the incorporation of this name into the names for the conservation park and regional reserve.

Members of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation encourage all interested people to have their say about the future management of the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve.

***‘Nhayi Wangkangurru wadlhu, arnikunha wadlhu yarndi-nganha’***

*This is Wangkangurru country, our country, from ancient times.*

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# Directions for management

***The Simpson Desert Parks are the traditional lands of the Wangkangurru Yarluypandi people.***

***This iconic Australian landscape is diverse and changeable. It is fragile but can also be unforgiving.***

***We will care for and respect our Country to maintain its cultural and natural values.***

Wangkangurru Yarluypandi [Wun-Kung-Guru] + [Yarlu-Yandi] people are the native title holders over their Country which encompasses Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve. As traditional owners they set directions for management in partnership with the South Australian Government.

Simpson Desert Conservation Park is proclaimed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. As a result it is protected and managed to achieve conservation goals. It is also managed to foster the use, enjoyment and appreciation of the park.

Simpson Desert Regional Reserve is also proclaimed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. Regional reserves are managed to achieve the same objectives as conservation parks but are also available for the utilisation of natural resources. As such, appropriate resource utilisation may be authorised in the regional reserve under the *Mining Act 1971* and the *Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act 2000*.

Together with South Australia's Witjira National Park and Munga-Thirri National Park in Queensland, the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve form the central part of an enormous multistate landscape that is focused on broad scale conservation. The effective management of threats such as pest plant and pest animals across this landscape is a primary focus and requires a coordinated approach with land managers in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. In South Australia, this integrated approach is guided by natural resources management plans. It is also supported by ongoing liaison between each state and territory.



## Significance and purpose

The Simpson Desert is the world's largest sand dune desert, with the world's longest parallel dunes. South Australia's Simpson Desert Conservation Park (688,142 ha) and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve (2,919,123 ha) sit just within the South Australian border, abutting southern Queensland and the Northern Territory (Figure 1).

The Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people have lived with this country for tens of thousands of years. Their intimate knowledge of the natural environment enables them to perform many rituals for continued existence. This includes long-established customs such as 'rain making' ceremonies. The Simpson Desert landscape is an integral part of their creation stories, with each prominent feature being associated with a story or being celebrated in song cycles.

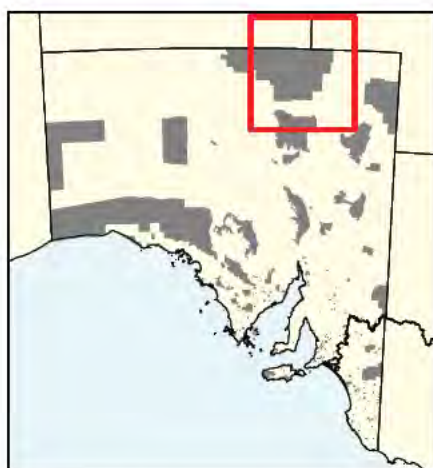
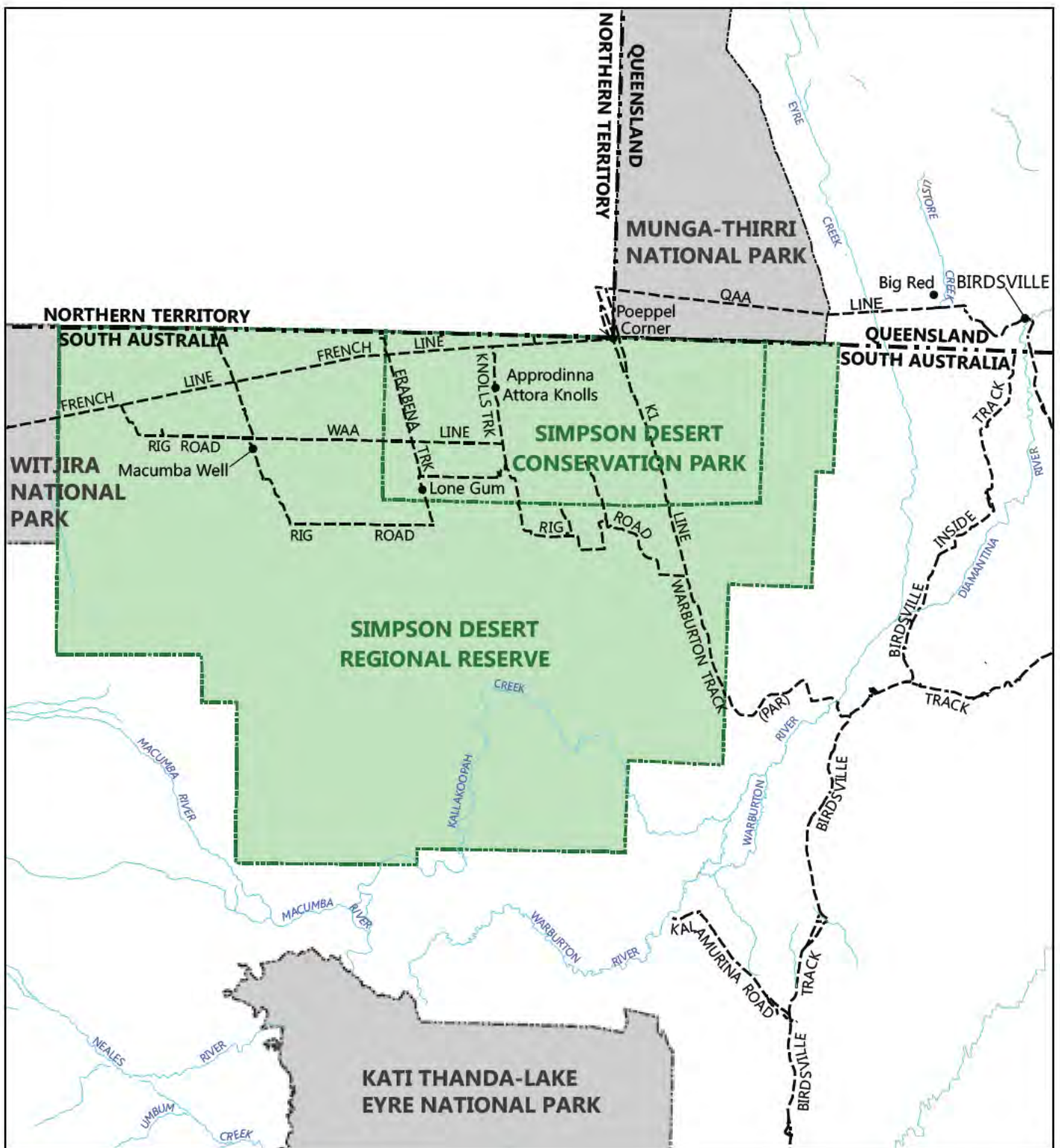
***This is where the old people lived. The landscape unites people and there is a sense of connection to Country.***

*Wangkangurru Yarluyandi community workshop,  
Birdsville, March 2016*

The conservation park and regional reserve are part of an interconnected desert ecosystem and support a diverse range of plants and animals adapted to living in the harsh desert environment. Given the geographical size of the parks and the seasonal boom and bust climate cycles, species vary both spatially and temporally. Grasses dominate the desert, but there are also a number of tree species. The desert supports a number of small mammals and reptiles, even frog species, and migratory birds visit the parks in wetter years.

Crossing the Simpson Desert is considered the trip of a lifetime for many travelers, enticing visitors from near and far to experience the true Australian outback. At times the desert is hot, dry and seemingly lifeless. Following rain, the desert greens up dramatically, hosting displays of wildflowers in some years. With such great seasonal variation, one can visit the Simpson Desert conservation park and regional reserve many times and never see them the same. Regardless of the season, the Simpson Desert is also variable travelling from one side to the other – the height, spacing and colour of the dunes changes noticeability and the swales are more diverse than expected.





**Figure 1**

Simpson Desert Conservation Park & Simpson Desert Regional Reserve



0km 20 40 60

**Legend**

- Road/track
- Watercourse
- - - State or territory border
- Simpson Desert Conservation Park & Simpson Desert Regional Reserve
- Other park



## What are we looking after?

The Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve help protect:

- Culturally significant sites and landscapes, including rare gypsum outcrops, known as Knolls. These rare and extremely fragile land formations were formed by the gypsum swept off local salt lakes to create high dunes. These later produced a hard outer crust, creating the Knolls.
- Ancient song lines that reflect the creation of desert landforms and provide a geographical reference, enabling Wangkangurru Yaryulandi people to navigate their way across the desert.
- Bush tucker foods and culturally significant animals.
- The world's largest system of parallel sand dunes. The primary characteristic of the Simpson Desert is the extensive system of long, straight and evenly spaced parallel dunes that vary in colour from vibrant red to white. Individual dunes commonly extend continuously for over 150km, with some as long as 200km.
- One of the largest areas of high quality wilderness left in Australia (Australian Heritage Commission 2003)
- Fossil sites of extinct megafauna that once roamed these deserts, providing opportunities for scientific research.
- A variety of plants including ten that are listed as vulnerable or rare in South Australia under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (Appendix 1). Sea heath (*Frankenia plicata*), a small dense shrub, is also listed as endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).
- Important fauna including 16 species listed as rare or vulnerable in South Australia. Three of these species are also listed as nationally endangered or vulnerable under the EPBC Act - Itjoritjara (Southern marsupial mole *Notoryctes typhlops*), Ampurta (crest-tailed mulgara *Dasycercus cristicauda*), and the plains mouse *Pseudomys australis* (Appendix 2).
- One of the greatest 4WD challenges in the world and a true Australian outback experience.





## What are the challenges and opportunities?

The Conservation Park and Regional Reserve face a number of challenges, but with these challenges are also opportunities:

- Promoting Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people's connection to Country and enhancing the tourist experience through sharing the stories and language of the traditional owners.
- Developing place names that reflect the area's Wangkangurru Yarluyandi culture.
- Increasing the protection and recognition of Aboriginal and early European artefacts through increasing visitors' understanding.
- Enabling Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people to monitor the health of plants and animals in order to better understand the impact of long term seasonal conditions and climate change.
- Improving the resilience of native plants and animals through reducing the impact of exotic plants including buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*), *Tribulus terrestris* and *Neurada procumbens*.
- Coordinating Simpson Desert management activities between South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.
- Securing the habitat of small native mammals, reptiles and birds.
- Preventing grazing pressure on native plants through controlling populations of exotic species including camels, rabbits, foxes, feral cats and cattle.
- Enhancing knowledge of the native plants and animals.
- Using fire to support the health of native vegetation, in particular bush tucker species.
- Enabling visitors to have a safe and low impact experience on the fragile desert environment.



# Management themes and priorities

This section of the management plan addresses the most important management issues for the conservation park and regional reserve, focussing on three key themes.

## Theme 1: Keeping Wangkangurru Yarluyandi culture alive

The Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve form part of an area of great significance to the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people. Their stories, such as that of the Two Boys, intertwine tales of native animals and land features to explain the creation of the landscape. These stories form maps, helping the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people to remember where they can find water, food and shelter on their travels across the desert.

### Two Boys Dreaming

The story of the Two Boys is one of the most important Wangkangurru Yarluyandi creation stories.

The Two Boys lived with their mother at Dalhousie and were rainmakers who spent their days catching small birds. While chasing birds they gradually ended up in the Simpson Desert. Here they met the Karanguru people, to whom they gave feathers from the birds they caught, linking the Karanguru of the east with the Wangkangurru.

The lively Two Boys story is comprised of a string of story lines that takes the traveller from Dalhousie in the west to Birdsville in the east. The story contains important information on where water can be found, creating a pathway across the desert. This story is a small part of a much larger story that travels through South Australia, Queensland, and the Northern Territory.

To live in the desert, the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people relied on seeds as a staple food source. Seeds require processing using implements, and the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people sourced these implements through trading with neighbouring Aboriginal groups. They obtained sandstone grinding stones from the Flinders Ranges, and from Mt Isa in Queensland they procured dolomite stone axes. Other items were also acquired through trade, for instance, Pitcheri (*Duboisia hopwoodii*), a plant treated and chewed for its narcotic properties. Wood was also an important resource, and the Maya-Maya (Gidgee) (*Acacia georginae*) in particular was used to make digging sticks, bowls and mia mias (also known as wiltjas or humpies) for shelter.

Animal remains found at popular gathering sites reveal that the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people ate a wide variety of animals such as bandicoots, bettongs, hare-wallabies, bilbies, desert rat-kangaroos, spinifex hopping mouse, Madla-Yapa (Dingo), carpet snakes, lizards, Warru-Kathi (Emu) and a number of smaller birds. Carpet snakes were a highly prized food item but very hard to catch. The men would risk their lives digging out the snake's tunnels which could easily collapse and bury them. While the men were off hunting, the women would search for seeds in the dunefields. The seed of Piltikardi (Pigweed) (*Aizoon quadrifidum*) was a favoured food and Ngardu (Nardoo) (*Marsilea drummondii*) was a useful food plant found growing in shallow pools in the eastern and north-eastern desert, where flooding was more regular.

While the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people inhabited the central and southern-central Simpson Desert, a number of other Aboriginal groups also lived in the area. The Lower Southern Arrernte and Eastern Arrernte people occupied the west, and the Karanguru and Wangkamadla were found in the east. The range of the Wangkamadla also extended into the northern areas of the desert.



The rapid pastoral expansion on desert margins in 1860-1900 brought with it displacement of Aboriginal groups and at this time, the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi began leaving the desert. The last remaining Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people vacated the desert in the summer of 1899-1900. There was a dramatic decline in all Aboriginal populations during this time and a major influenza outbreak in 1919 took its toll. By the mid-1970s, only three Wangkangurru Yarluyandi who were born in the desert were still alive. The decedents of those born in the desert are now spread across Australia, from Birdsville in Queensland, Alice Springs in the Northern Territory and Port Augusta in South Australia to New South Wales. Sadly, there are no fluent speakers of Wangkangurru language remaining.

There are cultural campsites throughout the conservation park and regional reserve that are important to modern day Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people, as it is through the use of these sites that they remain connected to Country. Being sites for congregation, many artefacts including stone implements are scattered within their vicinity.

Approdingna Attora Knolls are rare gypsum outcrops that were once the highest dune crests in the area. There are small gypsum nodes in the southern and eastern sections of the Simpson Desert but the Attora Knolls are particularly significant due to their height and great geological, historical and cultural significance. The Knolls are the home of the Rain Ancestor 'Kuntili'.

***The rain ancestor Kuntili came from the north to Lake Mirri-ngupa-ngupanha. This name means 'many (dead) people live here'. He came night after night with massive clouds and by the light of his flashes of lightning he could see two beautiful girls and was determined to take them as his wives. So he came again night after night with stronger and stronger thunderbolts, trying out his strength smashing trees and finally coming as the biggest storm ever. He killed everybody except the two girls: the people are still lying about as many boulders. He carried the girls off to Warra-bullana and their camp is still there as the Knolls.***

*Don Rowlands, Wangkangurru traditional owner*

The Knolls provide a great view across the country but the fragile gypsum has been prone to visitor damage in the past. Visitor access is now controlled through a designated carpark and walking trail to the summit of one of the Knolls. Camping is not permitted within two kilometres of the Knolls to protect cultural sites.

Artefacts of Aboriginal occupation remain in the park, including stone implements and workings. While some sites and places are documented in the Register of Aboriginal Sites and Objects under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*, there has not been a comprehensive survey of the parks and there are likely to be many more sites. Some artefacts are in danger from present land uses, a danger perhaps born more from ignorance than intent. Visitors may intentionally or unintentionally damage culturally significant sites through driving off the marked tracks or removing artefacts. In some areas, gypsum outcrops are traversed by tracks which not only causes physical damage, but can impact on story lines. There is a need to increase the knowledge of the cultural significance of the area as a first step in increasing the protection of these artefacts and important cultural sites.

Traditional owners are permitted to collect plants, animals and minerals for food, craft and ceremonial activities. The continuation of these resource-use practices and methodologies is important to maintain culture and share knowledge. While a formal permission has not yet been granted, traditional owners have used firearms in the park and regional reserve for hunting. Further work is needed to ensure that this is appropriately authorised and managed.

Enterprise driven by Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people is encouraged and there are increasing opportunities for nature-based and cultural tourism in South Australia. Such opportunity not only provides employment, but undertaking tours of the parks helps to increase the knowledge and understanding of visitors, providing them with an insight into why the parks are so special.

## Objective

Ensure that Country is protected, visitors can learn about Country, and Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people can pass on cultural knowledge to younger generations.

## Strategies

- Continue to recognise, respect, protect and maintain Aboriginal cultural sites. Conduct surveys to document cultural sites and realign tracks where required to avoid disturbing significant sites.
- Provide opportunities for visitors to learn about the importance of the conservation park and regional reserve for Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people through the upgrade and maintenance of digital interpretive information and signage.
- Enable the development of sustainable nature-based and cultural tourism enterprises that provide employment for traditional owners and their communities and increase visitor's understanding of Wangkangurru Yarluyandi culture.
- Continue to ensure cultural values and practices are recognised, promoted and respected in all decision making.
- Work towards the authorisation of traditional hunting by Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people with firearms within a designated area. Any authorisation will include conditions developed for safe and sustainable hunting.



## Theme 2: Maintaining the natural desert landscape

The aridity of the desert, expressed in the high mean temperature and low and erratic rainfall, limits the variety of flora and fauna species capable either of surviving or evading the periods of extended drought.

Sandhill canegrass (*Zygochloa paradoxa*) hummock grassland dominates the desert and helps to stabilise the dunes. The desert is far from ecologically uniform, however. On a local scale, swales provide habitat to dense Gidgee (*Acacia cambagei*) communities and on a broader scale, the chain of playa lakes in the central part of the desert brings with it biogeographical variation. The smaller playa lakes, irpi (claypans), have a smooth and hard clay surface. Larger playa lakes have a bright white salt crust sitting over a layer of mud which remains damp even during drought.

Grasslands such as those of the Simpson Desert do not usually support a great diversity or large numbers of vertebrate species. After rains, however, resources are abundant and populations boom. As a result, the distributions of local and regional species are continuously fluctuating. A complete picture of the fauna is therefore only possible through repeated observations over long periods. The remoteness and scale of the parks has limited the number of surveys and as a consequence, the desert animals are not as well-known as the desert plants.

Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) has only been recorded at one site in the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve. However, there should be focus on its control as this weed is considered to be one of Australia's worst due to its ease of establishment, its fast maturation and spread. The plant can disperse its seeds far and wide and these seeds can remain viable for over 12 months. The plants themselves can live for at least 20 years. The weed can quickly form a monoculture, out-competing native grasses and reducing food supply for native birds. The broader landscape is also compromised as buffel grass produces more combustible material than native grasses resulting in hotter and more intense fires.

Other weeds which are a priority for management include *Tribulus terrestris* and *Neurada procumbens*. *Neurada* was first observed in Australia in 2000 in the north-west corner of the Simpson Desert along French Line to west of Rig Road Junction. It is only otherwise known to occur at a couple of sites in the Northern Territory. *Tribulus terrestris* is a spreading vine found throughout mainland Australia. *Neurada procumbens* and *Tribulus terrestris* are most prevalent in areas where

visitors stop their vehicles at track intersections, sites of interest and campsites. *Neurada procumbens* and *Tribulus terrestris* are resilient weeds owing to their ability to germinate only one seed at a time, only germinating others when moisture is detected. Both of these weeds, along with buffel grass, have seeds that allow them to be easily transported by tyres, shoes, camping gear and in the fur of animals. Visitors therefore have an important role in managing the spread of these weeds. Management focus should be on *Neurada procumbens* as *Tribulus terrestris* has spread beyond control.

Many neighbouring pastoral properties run cattle, which can stray into the parks following favourable conditions and greening of vegetation in the Simpson Desert. The hooves of cattle can cause erosion to fragile soils. Cattle also directly impact native vegetation through trampling and grazing. Due to the size and remoteness of the parks, it is difficult to know when cattle incursions have occurred and removing cattle from the parks is challenging. In most cases, cattle either move off the parks or perish as water sources dry up.

Camels (*Camelus dromedaries*) were introduced into Australia for the purpose of transporting people and goods during exploration and development of central Australia. Afghan cameleers crisscrossed the desert from the mid nineteenth century. When cars became available, the use of camels declined and many animals were abandoned. Wild camels browse on some native species including the Maya-Maya (Gidgee) (*Acacia georginae*), and can foul water sources, reducing the availability of clean water for native species. Both camels and cattle can also disturb or destroy cultural sites.

Rabbit populations fluctuate with seasonal conditions. When conditions are favourable, rabbits can be seen right across the desert. Especially when in large numbers, rabbits can decimate native plants. This in turn causes erosion as the topsoil becomes exposed. Due to the remoteness and size of the desert, rabbits are difficult to control. Utilising biological control such as Calici virus may be the only option available to control rabbit populations in arid South Australia.

Foxes and cats predate on native species, and increase in number in parallel with prey species. Feral cats in particular can have a devastating impact on native reptiles and small mammals found in the conservation park and regional reserve, a number of which are of state and national conservation significance (Appendix 2). As such, managing their impacts is also a priority. A recovery plan has been developed for the plains



mouse (Moseby 2012) and the Southern marsupial mole (Benshemesh 2004). Other recovery plans may be developed in the future.

The Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people used fire for tens of thousands of years as a landscape management tool. Fire is a natural part of the landscape and it has an important role in rejuvenating Country and protecting bush tucker plants and animals. The reintroduction of fire using a combination of contemporary and traditional fire practices should be developed in the future.

The natural and undeveloped qualities of the Simpson Desert provides a continental-scale protected corridor extending from western Queensland's Munga-Thirri National Park, through the Simpson Desert in South Australia and down to Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park. This complements the privately held Kalamurina Sanctuary, managed by Australian Wildlife Conservancy, which captures 667,000 hectares of ecologically significant land between the southern Simpson Desert and the north shore of Lake Eyre/Kati Thanda. These large and interconnected protected areas provide corridors, through which species can move and adapt to a changing climate.

Climate change is expected to bring increased temperatures and decreased rainfall to the South Australian Arid Lands region (Suppiah et al. 2006). Potential implications of climate change include an increase in weeds and pest animals, a change in density and distribution of native plants, increased risk of extinction of vulnerable species, changes to the fire regime, and increased soil erosion. Management actions should be adaptive to take into account climate change and be consistent with any regional climate change adaptation plan.

The Simpson Desert Regional Reserve was proclaimed to allow for resource use to occur alongside conservation. Prior to the dedication of the Simpson Desert parks in the late 1950s, there was some petroleum exploration activity in the area, however there has been no mining in the regional reserve.

## Regulation of mineral and petroleum activities in South Australia

Processes for the assessment, approval and regulation of mineral and petroleum activities are directed by the *Mining Act 1971* and the *Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act 2000*. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet works with petroleum and mining companies to implement leases, environmental impact reports, and other licensing processes in a safe and sustainable manner.

Companies are also required to comply with other legislation, including the *Native Title Act 1993*, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, and the *National Parks and Wildlife (National Parks) Regulations 2016*.

## Objective

Conserve the fragile desert environment so that it can be enjoyed by all people for many generations to come.

## Strategies

- Encourage and support research to increase our understanding of plants and animals in the desert.
- Continue to monitor the condition of tracks. Provide guidance to visitors to prevent the establishment of new tracks or damage to vegetation. Instigate mitigation actions as appropriate.
- Continue the large herbivore aerial control program in the desert to keep camel numbers low and control cats and foxes opportunistically.
- Control buffel grass as a priority before it spreads further, conduct trials to control *Neurada procumbens* at track junctions and educate visitors on how they can limit the spread of weed seeds and encourage the reporting of new buffel grass infestations.
- Develop an understanding of the use of fire to increase health and achieve rejuvenation of the landscape, particularly bush tucker.
- In the event of future mineral and petroleum exploration or production activities within the regional reserve, ensure that the regional reserve's remote and natural qualities are maintained, precautions are taken to minimise the spread of weeds, tracks are rehabilitated, and visitor experience and aboriginal cultural heritage is not impacted.



## Theme 3: Providing a unique cultural and nature-based experience for visitors

This seemingly endless, ever-changing landscape is one of the quintessential Australian experiences. Depending on the track travelled and the season, visitors will see the surprising diversity of the desert. Some years may be dry with only sparse vegetation whilst in other years, the desert puts on a display of wildflowers complemented by lush green vegetation not often imagined when picturing a desert.

***‘Despite its inherent harshness the Simpson Desert is a living, fertile and resilient environment. It is a land to be enjoyed for its wilderness attributes, its cultural and natural history, its colour and contrasts. The Simpson Desert is many things to many people – formidable and implacable, intolerant to the ill-advised and unprepared, a place to be respected and admired. It is a land for all Australians to enjoy.’***

*Mark Shephard, author - The Simpson Desert: natural history and human endeavour, 1992*

### Managing visitor safety

High visibility safety flags displayed at least 2.5 metres from the bull bar are mandatory for all vehicles and UHF radios should be tuned into channel 10 to check for oncoming traffic. All visitors must purchase a Desert Parks Pass before entering the conservation park and regional reserve. The conservation park and regional reserve are closed from 1 December to 15 March each year due to extreme summer temperatures that can reach over 50 degrees Celsius, making peak travel time between May and September.

The major relics of European exploration are the marks of explorers. Two of the most significant items, Poeppel Peg and one of surveyor Lindsay’s 1886 marked trees, were originally within Simpson Desert Conservation Park but have now been removed and are preserved in Adelaide. A replica corner marker stands in place of Poeppel’s Peg and a plaque commemorates Lindsay’s marked tree. Also on the tourist route is the Lone Gum – a single Coolibah tree oddly located in the middle of the desert.

Visitor use is largely limited to well-equipped and self-sustaining groups possessing suitable four-wheel drive vehicles and competent leaders. It takes 2-3 days to cross Simpson Desert. Four-wheel driving skills are needed. There is no phone reception or fuel services and there are no rubbish bins, toilets or shelters.

Some sections of tracks have become degraded due to a combination of increased visitor traffic and incorrect tyre pressures being selected for vehicles. There is also concern that the use of trailers contributes to track damage, in particular on the crest of dunes. It is acknowledged, however, that some visitors require the use of a trailer to make the journey possible. Effort has been made over the last three years to monitor the health of the dunes via photo-points. The results are not yet conclusive but it seems that scalloping occurs during the high use tourist season and that the dunes then undergo a repair phase during the summer closure period with the help of sand movement and rainfall. Dune monitoring is ongoing and in the future, monitoring outcomes may highlight a need for mitigation actions to be taken to protect the dunes.

Careless driving impacts the environment through damage to native vegetation, the spread of weeds such as buffel grass, erosion and generally scarring the landscape. Cultural campsites, artefacts and culturally significant land features such as gypsum outcrops can be easily damaged. Visitors must remain on the marked tracks and consider their impact when driving off tracks to camp.



## The Lone Gum

The Lone Gum is a single isolated Coolibah tree in the middle of the Simpson Desert Dune field, far from any other trees. Little is known about the origin of the Lone Gum, how it came to be here, or its age.

The Coolibah (*Eucalyptus microtheca*) is renowned for its hard, durable timber and provision of excellent shade. Aboriginal people collected seeds, grubs and lerps (sap sucking insects) from such trees for food, obtained water from roots and used the bark for medicinal purposes.

Coolibah generally grow on heavy clay soils in seasonally flooded areas such as floodplains, margins of water courses, lagoons and swamps. The location of this tree, in the middle of the southern Simpson Desert dune field, far removed from the nearest watercourses is both fascinating and intriguing.

Direction signs have been established to guide visitors across the desert. There is also some interpretive information about the conservation park and regional reserve. The remoteness of the conservation park and regional reserve adds significant costs for both implementation and maintenance of signage.

Camping is currently allowed within 50 metres of public access tracks, unless otherwise signed. A camping strategy should be developed to ensure consistency with the neighbouring Munga-Thirri

National Park in Queensland. Generators are permitted throughout the conservation park and regional reserve.

Sitting by the glow of a campfire under a sky of stars is part of the desert experience. The collection of firewood, however, is not permitted. Fallen tree branches, sticks, and other dead wood may seem ideal for campfire fuel, but these provide valuable habitat for reptiles, small mammals, insects and emerging plants. Visitors must bring in their own firewood from sustainable sources outside the conservation park and regional reserve.

Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people have traditional rights which enable them to collect firewood for cultural purposes. However, supply is limited, and the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people want the habitat provided by this dead wood to be protected. As such, traditional owners will also bring in their wood from sustainable sources outside of the conservation park and regional reserve.

A number of events take advantage of the uniqueness of the desert and the challenge it offers. The Simpson Desert Bike Challenge sees competitors cycle across the desert and Variety - the Children's Charity has held charity 4WD events in the past. These events help to increase the profile of the conservation park and regional reserve. Event organisers are required to ensure that activities have a minimal impact, and are undertaken in a manner that ensures the safety of participants and organisers. Opportunities for events to provide benefits to local communities are also considered. Any event or new visitor experience such as camel trekking or horse riding will be considered on a case by case basis and agreements developed as required. Each proposal will be assessed to ensure the activity is compatible with the values of the conservation park and regional reserve and the aspirations of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people.

## Objective

Enable visitors to have a positive experience without impacting on the environmental values of the conservation park and regional reserve.

## Strategies

- Ensure tracks provide for tourism experiences but do not jeopardise culturally significant sites or ecologically sensitive areas.
- Promote a coordinated and consistent message about minimal impact camping in conjunction with Munga-Thirri National Park and the Northern Territory.
- Encourage nature-based tourism ventures and the delivery of relevant and appropriate cultural tourism.
- Promote the correct setup for four wheel drive vehicles, including loading and most importantly tyre pressures through signage and publications to limit environmental impact and remind visitors to stay on the marked tracks.
- Develop an interpretive plan for the conservation park and regional reserve which includes online applications to enhance the visitor experience through sharing more information about the environmental, cultural and European history of the Simpson Desert.
- Maintain directional signage at entry points, track junctions and other key locations to increase public safety.



# Invitation to contribute

The Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Draft Management Plan has been released for public consultation to facilitate community input into the development of a management plan for the conservation park and regional reserve. You are invited to contribute by making a submission.

To ensure that your submission is effective:

- Make your submission concise and clear.
- Reference any specific comments to a page or section within the draft plan.
- Identify aspects of the draft plan that you support, or do not support. Explain your reasons for disagreeing with the content of the draft plan and suggest alternatives.
- It is also important to state what sections of the plan you agree with.
- Highlight any information that may be inaccurate and provide a reference to assist with further editing.

Each submission will be carefully reviewed. A final Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Management Plan will then be prepared and forwarded to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation for consideration together with a detailed analysis of submissions received.

The Minister may adopt the plan with or without alteration. Once adopted, the plan will be published in the Government Gazette. The plan and an analysis of the public submissions will be available at [www.environment.sa.gov.au/park-management](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/park-management).

Please note that your submission will become part of the public record and will be available to anyone who requests a copy unless you specifically request otherwise.

## Submission closes on 10 November 2017

### Written submissions:

Protected Areas Unit  
Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources  
GPO Box 1047  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

### E-mail submissions:

[DEWNRProtectedAreaManagement@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEWNRProtectedAreaManagement@sa.gov.au)

### Online submissions:

[yoursay.sa.gov.au/decisions](http://yoursay.sa.gov.au/decisions)





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## Appendix 1 - Flora species of conservation significance

FLORA SPECIES	COMMON NAME	CONSERVATION STATUS	
		EPBC Act Cwlth <sup>1</sup>	NPW Act SA <sup>2</sup>
<i>Frankenia plicata</i>	Sea Heath	En	Vu
<i>Plantago multiscapa</i>	Many-stem Plantain		Vu
<i>Acacia georginae</i>	Georgina Gidgee		Ra
<i>Acacia jennerae</i>	Coonavittira Wattle		Ra
<i>Eragrostis lacunaria</i>	Purple Love-grass		Ra
<i>Frankenia cinerea</i>			Ra
<i>Frankenia cupularis</i>			Ra
<i>Lobelia heterophylla ssp. centralis</i>			Ra
<i>Pimelea penicillaris</i>	Sandhill Riceflower		Ra
<i>Swainsona oligophylla</i>			Ra

\* Taxonomic issues. The species as described is not recognised as nationally threatened in SA.

## Appendix 2 - Fauna species of conservation significance

FAUNA SPECIES	COMMON NAME	CONSERVATION STATUS	
		EPBC Act Cwlth <sup>1</sup>	NPW Act SA <sup>2</sup>
<i>Notoryctes typhlops</i>	Southern Marsupial Mole (Itjaritjara)	En	Vu
<i>Pseudomys australis</i>	Plains Mouse	Vu	Vu
<i>Dasycercus cristicauda</i>	Crest-tailed Mulgara (Ampurta)	Vu	
<i>Ardeotis australis</i>	Australian Bustard		Vu
<i>Cladorhynchus leucocephalus</i>	Banded Stilt		Vu
<i>Neophema chrysostoma</i>	Blue-winged Parrot		Vu
<i>Elanus scriptus</i>	Letter-winged Kite		Ra
<i>Falco hypoleucos</i>	Grey Falcon		Ra
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine Falcon		Ra
<i>Hamirostra melanosternon</i>	Black-breasted Buzzard		Ra
<i>Phaps histrionica</i>	Flock Bronzewing		Ra
<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Glossy Ibis		Ra
<i>Stipiturus ruficeps</i>	Rufous-crowned Emuwren		Ra
<i>Sminthopsis youngsoni</i>	Lesser Hairy-footed Dunnart		Ra
<i>Aspidites ramsayi</i>	Woma (Wadnangkani)		Ra
<i>Notoscincus ornatus</i>	Desert Glossy Skink		Ra

<sup>1</sup> Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth)

En - Endangered

Vu - Vulnerable

<sup>2</sup> National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (South Australia)

En - Endangered

Vu - Vulnerable

Ra - Rare

Source: Biological Databases of South Australia



## Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Language

WANGKANGURRU YARLUYANDI NAME	COMMON NAME
<b>Fauna</b>	
<i>Madla-Yapa</i>	Dingo
<i>Kapirri</i>	Goanna
<i>Warru-Kathi</i>	Emu
<i>Yatyaparra</i>	Zebra Finch
<i>Karrawara</i>	Eagle
<i>Ampurta</i>	Crest-tailed Mulgara
<i>Itjaritjara</i>	Southern Marsupial Mole
<i>Wadnangkani</i>	Woma
<b>Flora</b>	
<i>Piltikardi</i>	Pigweed
<i>Ngardu</i>	Nardoo
<i>Maya-Maya</i>	Gidgee
<i>Murumpa</i>	Bogan Flea

## For further information please contact

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

## Recognition of Aboriginal Culture

Aboriginal Australians have rights to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

Please contact the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation to understand these rights in relation to the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve draft Management Plan 2017.

## Photography

Images on pages 1, 3, 5, 9, 11, 13, 17 courtesy of Theresa Andrew

Image on page 8 courtesy of Tony Magor

Image on page 18 courtesy of Grant Sebastian

Images on cover and page 7 courtesy of Professional Desert Parks Pass Photos (2010)



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# Analysis of Public Submissions

## Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Draft Management Plan

The Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Draft Management Plan was released for public consultation from 8 August 2017 to 10 November 2017. Ten submissions on the draft management plan were received. These are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 – Summary of submissions

Submission Number	Name
1	6 - Documents affecting personal affairs
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

All submissions on draft park management plans are carefully reviewed against the following criteria:

Feedback meeting criteria 1-3 below, result in alterations:

1. Feedback provided additional information of direct relevance to management;
2. Feedback suggested an alternative approach that was considered more appropriate than that proposed in the draft plan;
3. Feedback highlighted omissions, inaccuracies or a lack of clarity.

Feedback meeting criteria 4-9 below do not result in alterations:

4. Feedback clearly supported the draft plan;
5. Feedback was already addressed in the plan;
6. Feedback addressed issues beyond the scope of the plan, or recommended the inclusion of detailed or prescriptive information that is not appropriate for a strategic plan of this type;
7. Feedback proposed an alternative approach but the recommendation of the draft plan was still considered the most appropriate option;
8. Feedback was based on incorrect information;
9. Feedback offered an open statement, or no change was sought.

A summary of all feedback received and any changes arising is provided in Table 2.



Table 2 – Summary of feedback

Comment No.	Comment	Sub No	Plan Amended	Proposed Response	Criteria
1	Expressed general support for directions set out in the draft management plan.	1, 3, 4, 6	No	No change required – supportive of plan	4
2	Recommended changes to the description of sand dunes.	1	No	No change required – the description of sand dune in the draft plan was adequate.	5
3	Recommended minor alterations to the list of important flora and fauna.	1, 6	Yes	Appendix 1 & 3 corrected.	3
4	Suggested the plan should clarify the threats posed by introduced predators such as foxes and feral cats, and identify appropriate management strategies to mitigate these threats.	1, 6, 7	Yes	Further detail has been included in Theme 2 to describe the impact of pest animals on reptiles and small mammals, and to describe how these threats will be managed.	3
5	Suggested the plan detail how the management of healthy dingo populations can assist with managing feral predators. Suggested the plan reference the Wild Dog Strategic Plan and other broader literature.	1, 6	Yes	The plan has been altered on page 12 to provide further detail on the role of Dingos in the ecology of the parks and to reference the Wild Dog Strategic Plan.	3
6	Expressed support for the use of fire to manage the health of native vegetation communities and bush tucker species. Recommended that importance of using fire to manage habitat for native animal species is addressed in the plan.	1, 6	Yes	The strategy on page 12 regarding the use of fire as a management tool has been altered to clarify the importance of using fire.	3
7	Expressed support for the objective to ensure that culturally significant sites and artefacts of significance are protected; whether registered, unregistered or not yet recorded under the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988</i> .	1, 2, 4	No	No change required – supportive of plan	4
8	Corrected reference to the Central Archive, which includes the Register of Aboriginal Sites and Objectives	2	Yes	The plan has been altered on page 10 to correct this title.	3
9	Suggested the plan clarify that all sites of cultural significance, whether registered, unregistered or not yet recorded, are protected.	2	Yes	The plan has been altered on page 10 to clarify that all sites are protected under the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 1998</i> , whether registered, recorded or unrecorded.	3
10	Expressed the view that the explanation of historical mining and exploration was unnecessary.	2	No	References to past mining and exploration provide context for the future management of these activities. This reference has been retained.	7
11	Suggested the inclusion of a reference to <i>Natural Resources Management Act 2004</i> in the summary of regulations pertaining to mineral and petroleum activities.	2	Yes	The plan has been altered to include reference to this Act on page 12.	2





Comment No.	Comment	Sub No	Plan Amended	Proposed Response	Criteria
12	Suggested the inclusion of an additional strategy to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are consulted during relevant stages under both the <i>Mining Act 1971</i> and the <i>Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act 2000</i> .	2	Yes	The consultation processes for mineral and petroleum exploration and production are set out and regulated under the <i>Mining Act 1971</i> and the <i>Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act 2000</i> . The explanatory text on page 12 has been altered to clarify that stakeholder engagement is a requirement of these processes.	6
13	Commented that renaming the park to include the traditional name, Munga-Thirri would align with Munga-Thirri National Park in Queensland.	3	Yes	Since the release of the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve Draft Management Plan, these parks have been renamed.	9
14	Commented that a strategy should be developed to enhance opportunities for desert four wheel-driving by making former seismic lines available for public use.	3	No	Expanding the network of tracks is not supported as this would be costly, have additional impacts on the park and would not achieve a significant improvement to the visitor experience.	7
15	Commented that signage and interpretive information should be improved throughout the park, including coordination with Queensland Munga-Thirri information centre.	3, 7	No	Strategies to update signage are already included in the plan.	5
16	Suggested that the management plan should identify how mining and exploration impacts upon neighbouring parks and regions.	3	No	No Change. Comment is beyond the scope of this plan.	6
17	Raised concern about implications of hunting by traditional owners.	3	Yes	The plan has been altered with the inclusion of additional text and a strategy to provide further clarity regarding hunting protocols for traditional owners (page 10).	3
18	Suggested the inclusion of a strategy in Theme 1 to ensure that the traditional owners are consulted during the consideration of any future development within the park	3	No	The consultation requirements for any future developments are already adequately covered.	5
19	Suggested that park managers should coordinate with the Queensland Munga-Thirri information centre for the presentation of Aboriginal interpretation information	3	No	This recommendation is noted and will be passed onto park managers. No change required.	6
20	Suggested that park managers should consider a renewed investigation into the merits of a single desert pass across jurisdictions (states and territories) to simplify visitor management.	3	No	This suggestion is outside of the scope of this plan. No change required.	6
21	Suggested that the plan identify opportunities to strengthen coordination of management activities between SA and QLD.	3	Yes	The plan has been altered to highlight the tri-state collaboration activities that occur.	3



Comment No.	Comment	Sub No	Plan Amended	Proposed Response	Criteria
22	Commented on the environmental changes in the landscape.	4	No	No change sought.	9
23	Offered historical information, personal stories, and other information sources regarding the Simpson Desert.	4	No	No change sought.	9
24	Expressed concerns about off-track driving.	4, 6	No	Strategies to prevent off-track driving have already been outlined in the plan.	5
25	Expressed an objection to the restriction or banning of campfires for non-Aboriginal Australians.	5, 7	No	Campfires are permitted within Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve.	8
26	Commented that the collection of dead wood from within the parks has minimal impact. Inferred that wood collection within the parks is a common activity.	5, 7	Yes	The plan has been altered to highlight that collection of dead wood for campfires is discouraged but not prohibited.  Should impacts become apparent, restrictions on the collection of wood may be put in place in the future.	2
27	Suggested the plan acknowledge the conservation significance of some of the plants and animals that occur within the parks.	6	Yes	The significance and purpose section has been revised to highlight that species of conservation significance occur in the park and regional reserve. This level of detail is considered sufficient for this section of the plan.	6
28	Suggested that the boundary of Kalamurina Sanctuary should be included in the park map as it forms part of a continuous link of protected areas.	6	Yes	The park map (Figure 1, page 6) has been altered to include Kalamurina Sanctuary.	2
29	Suggested that the plan include examples of important bush tucker foods and culturally significant animals.	6	Yes	Some examples of bush tucker foods and culturally significant animals have been provided by traditional owners for inclusion in the plan on page 7.	2
30	Commented that the plan should include references to the Lesser Hairy Footed Dunnart, Night Parrots and the Brush-tailed Mulgara as these species are important for the area.	6	Yes	The plan has been altered to include references to the Lesser Hairy Footed Dunnart, Night Parrot and the Crest-tailed mulga. A reference to the Brush-tailed Mulgara has not been included because it has not been recorded in Australia for 30 years.	1





Comment No.	Comment	Sub No	Plan Amended	Proposed Response	Criteria
31	Commented that the plan should identify and include archaeological sites of significance, such as mid tertiary, Pliocene and Pleistocene fossil deposits adjacent to Kallakoopah Creek.	6	Yes	The presence of archaeological sites of significance is included in 'what are we protecting'. A strategy has been added in theme 2 highlighting that park management activities should support further research activities.	1
32	Suggested that the plan include the management of threatened species, particularly in response to climate change, as a critical challenge.	6	Yes	The plan has been altered to reflect this comment in the 'challenges and opportunities' section (page 8).	2
33	Suggested that the plan include the implementation of conservation priorities identified in recovery plans for threatened species as a challenge	6	Yes	The plan has been altered on page 12 to highlight that management actions will aim to align with existing and future recovery plans for threatened species.	2
34	Suggested that the plan mention specific sites used by Aboriginal people to cross the desert.	6	No	The sites referenced in this submission are sacred sites and their inclusion in the plan of management is not considered culturally appropriate.	7
35	Commented that the plan is unclear on where carpet snakes are found within the park.	6	Yes	The plan has been altered to clarify which species of snake is being referred to on page 9.	3
36	Expressed support for the requirement for traditional hunting by Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people with firearms to be conducted within a designated area and to include conditions for safe and sustainable hunting.	6	No	No change required – supportive of plan	4
37	Recommended that the plan provide more information about the management of Buffel Grass.	6	No	Sufficient information on the management of Buffel grass is already included in the plan.	5
38	Recommended that the plan state that the desert's claypans and salt lakes provide important habitat for endemic and migratory shorebirds and other waterbirds during wet years.	6	Yes	The plan has been altered to include this information on page 11.	3
39	Recommended acknowledging the work undertaken by the Friends of Simpson Desert to support and undertake flora and fauna surveys.	6	Yes	The plan has been altered on page 11 to acknowledge the important contributions of the Friends of the Simpson Desert Parks.	3
40	Recommended including a strategy in the plan to address the need for additional/more frequent surveys to accurately document flora and fauna in the region, particularly following rain events.	6	Yes	The plan has been altered to include a strategy on page 10 to support additional flora and fauna surveys in the park and regional reserve.	3
41	Recommend that the plan state that management of the parks will aim to align with any Recovery Plans that are developed in the future.	6	Yes	The plan has been altered to reflect this comment on page 12.	2



Comment No.	Comment	Sub No	Plan Amended	Proposed Response	Criteria
42	Expressed concerns about the negative impacts of camping, off track driving and inappropriate waste disposal.	6	Yes	The plan has been altered on page 14 to highlight that minimal impact camping is encouraged.	3
43	Expressed opposition to the traditional rights granted by the Federal Court to the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people.	7	No	No change required. These rights have been granted by the Federal Court.	8
44	Suggested that the plan clarify access rights and regulations for use of the park by Aboriginal people.	7	No	The plan provides sufficient detail on the rights of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi people and their use of the park.	5
45	Requested that the plan detail how feral cats will be managed in the park	7	No	It is not appropriate to describe the specific strategies that will be used in a strategic plan of this type.	6
46	Recommended that the plan include more information regarding the regulation of mineral and petroleum exploration and production activities, including a summary of the approval process that relates to exploration licencing, environmental assessment and production authorisation.	8	Yes	Some additional information has been included in the plan on page 12 plan to reflect this comment.	2
47	Expressed an interest allowing for horse riding in the parks	9	No	Page 14 outlines the permitting requirements for horses. Any event or new visitor experience such as horse riding will be considered on a case by case basis and agreements developed as required.	5
48	Suggested that the views of the traditional owners and the general public are not recognised.	10	No	No change sought. Engagement of the traditional owners was undertaken as directed by Wangkangurru Yarluyandi representatives on the plan development steering committee. Several opportunities were provided for public input and feedback from the community has been included as appropriate.	8





I, David Speirs, Minister for Environment and Water, (being the Minister of the Crown to whom the administration of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* is for the time being committed), pursuant to section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*, **HEREBY ADOPT** the **Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Management Plan**.

Signed:

**DAVID SPEIRS MP**  
**MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND WATER**

Date:

## Minister's Foreword

The Simpson Desert is one of Australia's most iconic landscapes. It is a place of profound cultural significance for the Wangkanguru Yarluyandi traditional owners, and a unique tourism destination which draws visitors from all over the world.

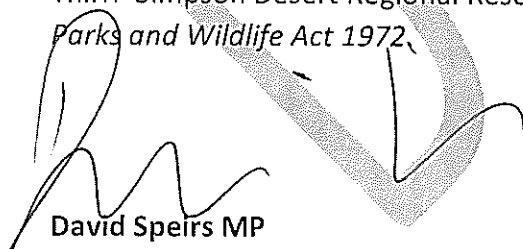
The Wangkanguru Yarluyandi people know this area as Munga-Thirri. The co-naming of the conservation park and regional reserve to Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve acknowledges the ongoing connection of the traditional owners to their Country.

Together with adjacent parks in South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory, the conservation park and regional reserve contribute to one of the largest continuous protected areas in Australia. The objectives and strategies set out in this plan will ensure the conservation park and regional reserve are managed wisely into the future, as part of landscape-scale conservation efforts that extend across State and Territory borders.

This plan focuses on keeping Wangkangurru Yarluyandi culture alive, conserving the fragile natural desert landscape, and maintaining a distinctive Simpson Desert experience for visitors.

The development of this plan and the co-naming of the conservation park and regional reserve are milestone achievements, illustrating the strength of the collaborative relationship between the Wangkanguru Yarluyandi people and the South Australian Government.

I am pleased to adopt the Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Munga-Thirri–Simpson Desert Regional Reserve Management Plan under section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.



David Speirs MP

Minister for Environment and Water

Approved.





Rec'd	25/10/18
Reg. No.	18EN0002779
File No.	
Ack.	
Action Officers	1 AN
Response due	1/11/18



Government of South Australia

Department for Environment  
and Water

Document No. DEW D0001090

TO MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

FOR APPROVAL

**RE: FRIENDS OF SIMPSON DESERT PARKS - MEMBER RECOGNITION FOR  
LENGTH OF SERVICE - LETTERS AND CERTIFICATES FOR SIGNING**

**THROUGH: CHIEF EXECUTIVE** *[Signature]*  
**A/GROUP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PARKS AND REGIONS** *[Signature]*

**Priority:** Urgent**Critical Date:** 1 November 2018 for 10 November 2018 presentation**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That you:

1. Note this briefing.

**NOTED**

2. Consider and sign the attached letters of congratulations, and Certificates of Appreciation, for members of the Friends of Simpson Desert Parks.

**APPROVED / NOT APPROVED**

3. Return the signed letters and certificates to the Volunteer Support Programs Unit, Department for Environment and Water (DEW), for distribution to the group at the event on 10 November 2018.

**NOTED****Comments**
**DAVID SPEIRS MP****Minister for Environment and Water**

31/10/2018

## **PRIORITY**

Urgent. The Friends of Simpson Desert Parks has an end of year event where the group acknowledges milestones by members. This event will be held on 10 November, 2018.

## **BACKGROUND**

Friends of Parks groups work to help protect the State's natural and cultural heritage. Most member groups work on individual Reserves or a group of Reserves protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* or on the cultural heritage at a particular site.

The first Friends of Parks group was established in 1982 with many other groups forming soon after that period. It has become traditional to recognise individual milestones of volunteer service with Friends of Parks groups, and upon request, the individual Friends Group milestones. The milestone periods are set at the completion of 10, 20, 25, 30 and more recently, 35 years of service as a member of Friends of Parks groups.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Friends of Simpson Desert Parks was formed on 7 August 1986. The Friends Group is not celebrating a milestone this year, but the group has requested a Certificate of Appreciation for individual members as their membership milestone falls due. The certificate is accompanied by a letter of congratulations from the Minister. The traditional end of year event will be held on 10 November 2018.

The signed letters and Certificates of Appreciation will need to be returned to the Volunteer Support Programs Unit, DEW, for distribution.

The Friends have issued invitations to the following DEW staff:

Mr Tony Magor, Manager Public Lands & Co-management

Mr Frank Lyman, Ranger in Charge, Central Outback

## **CONSULTATION**

DEW SAAL District Staff and Friends of Simpson Desert Parks.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – list of recipients of Certificates of Appreciation and letters

Stuart Paul  
A/Director  
Regional Programs, Parks and Regions  
Department for Environment and Water  
Date: 23 October 2018





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of South Australia**

**Office of the Minister for  
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Tel 08 8463 5680  
minister.speirs@sa.gov.au

6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

Dear

I write to congratulate you on 20 years of membership with the Friends of Simpson Desert Parks.

Your dedication and commitment over the years has ensured that the Simpson Desert Parks retain a high level of biodiversity and remains a wonderful area to visit.

This significant contribution shows great stewardship and practical, long-term protection and improvement of the parks.

On behalf of the South Australian Government and the community, thank you for helping to protect our precious natural environment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Speirs".

**DAVID SPEIRS MP**

Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 31/10/2018



**Government  
of South Australia**

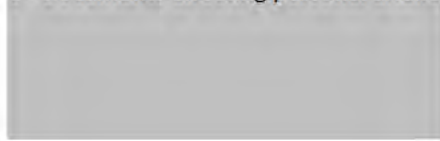
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Dear 6 -  
Documents

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Yours sincerely

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**DAVID SPEIRS MP**  
Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 31/10/18



18EW0002779



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Yours sincerely

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**DAVID SPEIRS MP**  
Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 31/10/18

Rec'd	11 OCT 2019
Reg. No.	19EM0006905
File No.	
Ack.	
Action Officers	1
Response due	



Government of South Australia

Department for Environment  
and Water

Document No. DEW-D0005272

**TO: MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND WATER**

**RE: FRIENDS OF THE MUNGA-THIRRI SIMPSON DESERT PARKS -  
RECOGNITION FOR LENGTH OF SERVICE - LETTERS AND CERTIFICATES**

**THROUGH: CHIEF EXECUTIVE****A/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE****Critical Date for Minister Action: 08/11/2019 (presentation event)****RECOMMENDATIONS**

That you:

1. Consider and sign the attached letters of congratulations and Certificates of Appreciation (certificates provided in hardcopy only) for members of the Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks.

**APPROVED / NOT APPROVED**

2. Return the signed letters and certificates to the Volunteer Support Programs Unit, DEW, for distribution to the group for the event on 8 November 2019.

**NOTED****Comments**
**DAVID SPEIRS MP****Minister for Environment and Water**

23 / 10 / 2019



## BACKGROUND

Friends of Parks groups work to help protect the State's natural and cultural heritage. Most member groups work on and are associated with particular parks or reserves protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. The Friends of Parks organisation was established in 1982, with many groups forming soon after this time. It has become traditional to recognise individual milestones of volunteer service with Friends of Parks groups, and upon request, the individual Friends Group milestones. The milestone periods are set at the completion of 10, 20, 25, 30 and more recently, 35 years of service as a member of Friends of Parks groups.

## DISCUSSION

The Friends of the Simpson Desert Parks was formed on 7 August 1986, and has been an active group in the park and surrounding areas. The group has requested Certificates of Appreciation to be presented to eight (8) long serving members as their membership milestone falls due in 2019. The Secretary has also advised that nine (9) members were due for recognition in 2018, but recognition had not been previously requested. The Certificates of Appreciation are accompanied by letters of congratulations from you. The Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks will be meeting on Friday, 8 November 2019 to recognise these milestones. The certificates will be placed within a frame for presentation on the day.

The signed letters and Certificates of Appreciation will need to be returned to the Volunteer Support Programs Unit, DEW, for distribution.

## CONSULTATION

DEW Flinders and Outback Region Staff, and Friends of the Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – list of recipients of Certificates of Appreciation and letters

Approved electronically

Grant Pelton  
Director, National Parks and Crown Land Programs  
**National Parks and Wildlife Service**  
**Department for Environment and Water**

1 October 2019



**Government  
of South Australia**

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6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

Dear M

Congratulations on 10 years of membership with the Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks.

Your dedication and commitment over the years to the Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks has ensured that the park retains a high level of biodiversity, as well as being wonderful place to visit and explore.

This significant contribution shows great stewardship and practical, long-term protection and improvement of the park.

On behalf of the South Australian Government and the community, thank you for helping to protect our precious natural environment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Speirs".

**DAVID SPEIRS MP**

Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 23/10/2019

6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

THANK you  
for your PRACTICAL  
SERVICE in our  
PRECIOUS ENVIRONMENT!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David".



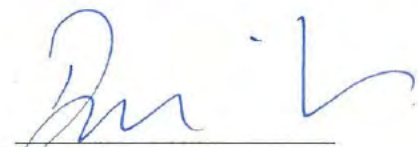
# Certificate of Appreciation

*Presented to*

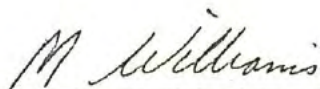
6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

*Ten Years voluntary service and commitment to environmental stewardship*

*Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks*



**The Hon. David Speirs MP**  
Minister for Environment and Water



**Michael Williams**  
Director, National Parks and Wildlife

8 November 2019





19EW0006905



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of South Australia**

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6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

Dear 6 - Documents affecting personal

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Yours sincerely

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**DAVID SPEIRS MP**

Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 23/10/2019

6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

THANK you for  
your SERVICE!  
David

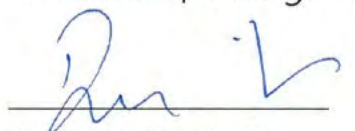
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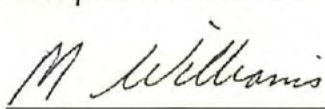
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*Ten Years voluntary service and commitment to  
environmental stewardship*

*Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks*



**The Hon. David Speirs MP**  
Minister for Environment and Water



**Michael Williams**  
Director, National Parks and Wildlife

8 November 2019



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Dear 6 - Documents affecting

Congratulations on 20 years of membership with the Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks.

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Yours sincerely

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**DAVID SPEIRS MP**

Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 23/10/2019



# Certificate of Appreciation

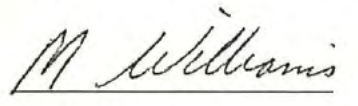
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6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

*Twenty Years voluntary service and commitment  
to environmental stewardship*

*Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks*

  
The Hon. David Speirs MP  
Minister for Environment and Water

  
Michael Williams  
Director, National Parks and Wildlife

8 November 2019



19EW0006905



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6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

Dear 6 - Documents

Congratulations on 30 years of membership with the Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks.

Your dedication and commitment over the years to the Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks has ensured that the park retains a high level of biodiversity, as well as being wonderful place to visit and explore.

This significant contribution shows great stewardship and practical, long-term protection and improvement of the park.

On behalf of the South Australian Government and the community, thank you for helping to protect our precious natural environment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Speirs".

**DAVID SPEIRS MP**  
Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 23/10/2019



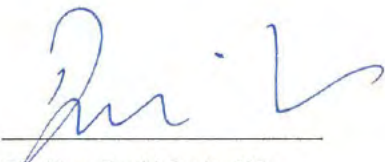
# Certificate of Appreciation

*Presented to*

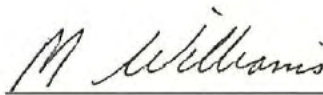
6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

*Thirty Years voluntary service and commitment to environmental stewardship*

*Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks*



**The Hon. David Speirs MP**  
Minister for Environment and Water



**Michael Williams**  
Director, National Parks and Wildlife

8 November 2019





19EW0006905



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of South Australia**

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Dear 6 -

Congratulations on 30 years of membership with the Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks.

Your dedication and commitment over the years to the Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks has ensured that the park retains a high level of biodiversity, as well as being wonderful place to visit and explore.

This significant contribution shows great stewardship and practical, long-term protection and improvement of the park.

On behalf of the South Australian Government and the community, thank you for helping to protect our precious natural environment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Speirs", followed by a horizontal line.

**DAVID SPEIRS MP**

Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 23/10/19

# Certificate of Appreciation

*Presented to*

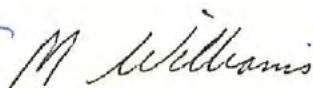
6 - Documents affecting  
personal affairs

*Thirty Years voluntary service and commitment  
to environmental stewardship*

*Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks*



**The Hon. David Speirs MP**  
Minister for Environment and Water



**Michael Williams**  
Director, National Parks and Wildlife

8 November 2019





19EW0006905



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6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

Dear 6 - Documents

Congratulations on 25 years of membership with the Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks.

Your dedication and commitment over the years to the Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks has ensured that the park retains a high level of biodiversity, as well as being wonderful place to visit and explore.

This significant contribution shows great stewardship and practical, long-term protection and improvement of the park.

On behalf of the South Australian Government and the community, thank you for helping to protect our precious natural environment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Speirs", with a horizontal line underneath.

**DAVID SPEIRS MP**  
Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 23/10/2019

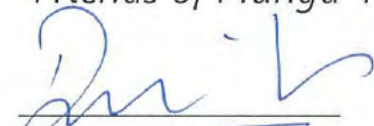
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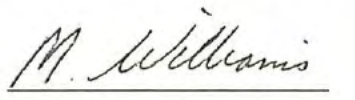
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6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

*Twenty Five Years voluntary service and  
commitment to environmental stewardship*

*Friends of Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert Parks*

  
The Hon. David Speirs MP  
Minister for Environment and Water

  
Michael Williams  
Director, National Parks and Wildlife

8 November 2019





19EW0006905



**Government  
of South Australia**

**Office of the Minister for  
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81-95 Waymouth Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
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Adelaide SA 5001

Tel 08 8463 5680  
minister.speirs@sa.gov.au

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On behalf of the South Australian Government and the community, thank you for helping to protect our precious natural environment.

Yours sincerely

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**DAVID SPEIRS MP**

Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 23/10/2019

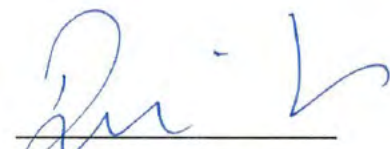
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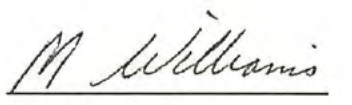
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Minister for Environment and Water

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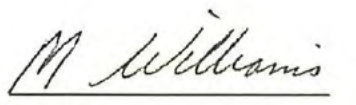
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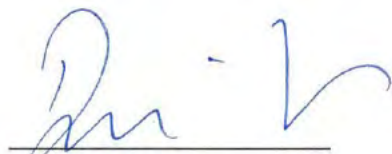
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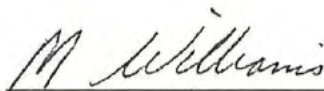
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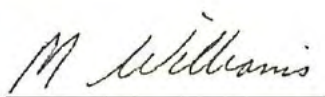
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**Michael Williams**  
Director, National Parks and Wildlife

8 November 2019







Government of South Australia  
Department for Environment  
and Water

DEW-D0010265

TO MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

RE: FRIENDS OF SIMPSON DESERT PARKS, LETTERS AND CERTIFICATES TO  
RECOGNISE LENGTH OF SERVICE

THROUGH: CHIEF EXECUTIVE *[Signature]* 15/10/2020  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE MW 14/10

Critical Date for Minister Action: 30/10/2020 for presentation at the group's gathering on 06/11/2020.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS


That you:

1. Sign the attached letters of congratulations and Certificates of Appreciation (certificates provided in hard copy only) for members of the Friends of Simpson Desert Parks.

~~APPROVED~~ / NOT APPROVED

2. Return the signed letters and certificates to the Volunteer Programs Unit for distribution to the group.

~~NOTED~~

Comments	 <b>DAVID SPEIRS MP</b> Minister for Environment and Water 27/10/2020
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## BACKGROUND

Friends of Parks work to help protect the State's natural and cultural heritage. Most member groups work on and are associated with particular parks or reserves protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. The Friends of Parks organisation was established in 1982, with many groups forming soon after this time. It has become traditional to recognise individual milestones of volunteer service with Friends of Parks groups, and upon request, the individual Friends Group milestones. The milestone periods are set at the completion of 10, 20, 25, 30, 35, and more recently, 40 years of service as a member of Friends of Parks groups.

## DISCUSSION

The Friends of Simpson Desert Parks formed on 7 August 1986 and has been an active group in the park and surrounding areas. The group and liaison staff have requested Certificates of Appreciation to be presented to seven long serving members. Certificates of Appreciation are accompanied by letters of congratulations from you. The certificates will be presented at the group's gathering on 6 November 2020.

The signed letters and Certificates of Appreciation will need to be returned to the Volunteer Programs Unit for distribution.

## CONSULTATION

DEW Flinders and Outback District Staff and Friends of Simpson Desert Parks.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – list of recipients for Certificates of Appreciation and letters

Grant Pelton  
Director, National Parks and Crown Land Program  
**National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia**  
**Department for Environment and Water**

/ / 2020



## Friends of Simpson Desert Parks

7 x letters; 7 x Certificates of Appreciation

Names		Years of Service
6 - Documents affecting personal affairs		10
		10
		10
		10
		20
		25
		25

Contact: Gill Peacey, Manager, Volunteer Programs Unit, 8124 4931, [gill.peacey@sa.gov.au](mailto:gill.peacey@sa.gov.au)

Date: 8 October 2020

Reference Number: DEW D0010265



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20EW0010986

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Yours sincerely

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Date: 27/10/2020

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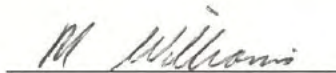
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*Ten Years voluntary service and commitment to environmental stewardship*

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**Michael Williams**  
Director, National Parks and Wildlife

6 November 2020







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I write to congratulate you on 20 years of membership with the Friends of Simpson Desert Parks.

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On behalf of the South Australian government and the community, thank you for helping to protect our precious natural environment.

Yours sincerely

**DAVID SPEIRS MP**

Minister for Environment and Water

Date: 27/10/22

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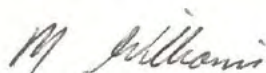
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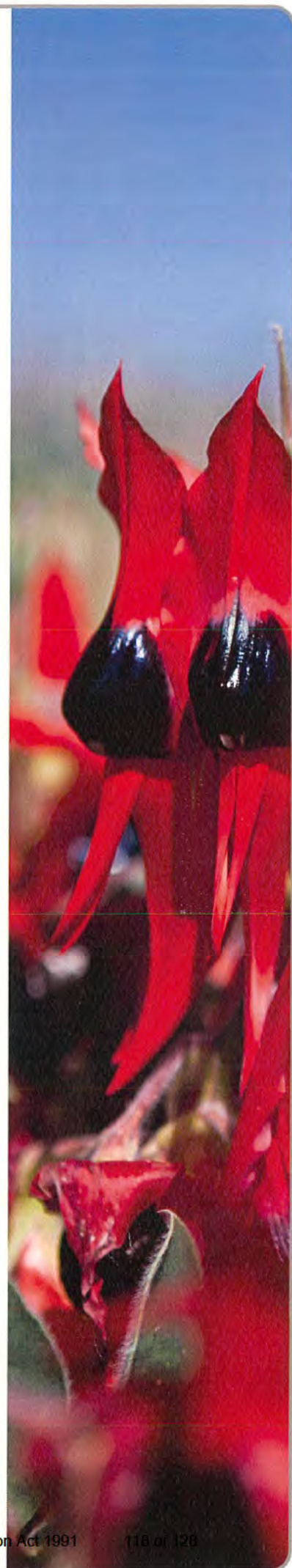


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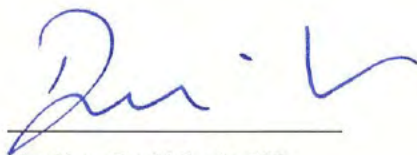
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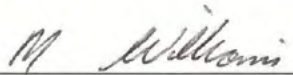
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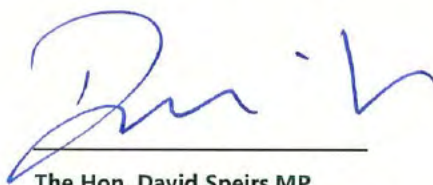
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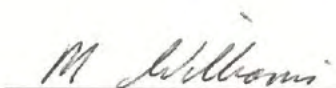
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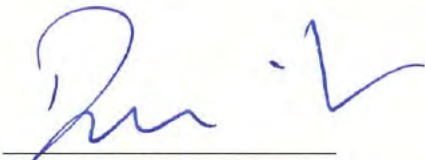
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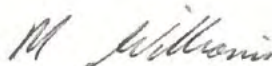
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