

# Public Access Route Review Project



## Background

Public Access Routes (PARs) are designated routes that allow the public to traverse specific areas of pastoral leases without needing permission from the lessee (pastoral lease holder). PARs support the state's valuable outback tourism industry and benefit the general community. They allow visitors to reach sites of interest like national parks and historic sites which can only be accessed by crossing a pastoral lease. The routes are established under the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989* (the PLMC Act).

Currently, there are 23 PARs gazetted in South Australia, covering approximately 730 kilometres. These routes are not formal roads, but rather unimproved dirt tracks designed for four-wheel drive travel under dry conditions.

There have been multiple reports over the past 10 years that identify challenges and opportunities for PAR management.

More recently, PIRSA released a discussion paper in 2019 seeking feedback on the current and future operation of the PLMC Act. As part of the discussion paper, feedback was sought on how best to maintain a system of public access to the rangelands. Respondents indicated that PARs were highly valued, and many felt that more could be done to improve the management of PARs including safety and maintenance.

Severe rainfall events in 2022 caused considerable damage to the PAR network. Funding from the Australian Government was available to enable repairs on the damaged PARs, for public safety purposes. These repairs are now complete.

This rain event, coupled with frequent requests for better management of PARs in the future, prompted the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) to undertake a comprehensive review of PAR management.

## Project scope

In scope for the project will be:

- Identifying how to modernise PAR management.
- Engagement with stakeholders to inform decision making.
- Reviewing gazetting and degazetting processes for PARs.
- Considering whether new PARs should be added to the network, or if current PARs should be removed, or managed under different processes.
- Analysing PAR safety, awareness, and liability, using condition reports to guide improvements.
- Researching sustainable funding options for PAR management, like co-management options and user pays.
- Exploring effective maintenance solutions for both leaseholders and PAR users, including potential accreditation processes for maintenance.

Out of scope for the project will be:

- Creating tourism strategies.
- Activities related to public reserves.
- Development of waste management strategies for people camping on PARs.
- Management of the associated sites of interest.

Potential changes to the PLMC Act may be identified to improve PAR management. Specific legislative amendments will be out of scope for the review stage of the project and if any amendments are contemplated, further consultation will be undertaken.

## Areas of focus

The review will focus on:

- Identifying high and low frequency PARs, prioritising high-use routes for maintenance or alternative management.
- Reviewing internal administrative processes that will help improve PAR management, including how information is shared.
- Exploring options for quicker, more effective temporary PAR closure and reopening, particularly after wet weather.
- Improving consistency in information about PAR use, closures, and management (e.g., camping rules).
- Considering the use of innovative technologies and methods to monitor condition of PARs and support more proactive management.
- Investigating maintenance options beneficial to both leaseholders and public users, including any feasible options for accreditation for leaseholders to manage PARs.

## Engagement

Effective stakeholder engagement will be crucial to ensure all views are captured accurately and can inform recommendations for the future management of PARs.

The department anticipates that a mix of consultative methods will be used. This may include online information sessions, as well as targeted consultation with those most impacted by how PARs are managed.

The department will be seeking to engage with pastoral lease holders, tourism operators, and relevant government agencies like the Department for Transport and Infrastructure, and the department's National Parks and Wildlife service.

Previous input from stakeholders has been reviewed to ensure we are building on past engagement.

## Timeframe

The Pastoral Unit has commenced desktop research to help guide the development of the discussion paper. It is anticipated that the review will be finalised by mid-late 2025.

Recommendations and an implementation plan for any accepted recommendations will be established following the completion of the review.

### Indicative timeframe

Activity	Indicative Timeframe
Develop project brief and contact key stakeholders.	Quarter 4 2024
Develop Discussion Paper, provide to stakeholders and commence consultation.	Quarter 1 2025
Collate feedback and data and develop consultation report.	Quarter 2 2025
Develop final recommendations report for PAR management.	Mid-late 2025

## More information

For more information, please contact the Pastoral Unit via [DEW.pastoral@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEW.pastoral@sa.gov.au)