

This Communique provides an update following the Forum in February. Visit the [Nature of SA website](#) for more details.

The Nature of SA Forum

The Forum in February was well attended, with approximately 180 people coming from all over South Australia to engage in lively discussion about a series of [‘shifts’ in approaches proposed](#) for future nature conservation efforts in SA. The shifts reflected the wide-ranging conversation that took place across the State, which engaged over 350 people.

The whole premise for the Nature of SA (NSA) is that business as usual in itself will not be enough to achieve the conservation outcomes that we all want for SA. The co-design approach, and the idea of shifting aspects of our work, as outlined in the discussion paper, reflect the intent to build on but go beyond the status quo.

The opening addresses set the scene for doing things differently. Craig Wilkins (CE Conservation Council) and Sandy Pitcher (CE DEWNR) acknowledged the challenges and opportunities with approaching things differently, and working together. Importantly both CE’s pledged support for NSA and the approach being taken, and also acknowledged the need to embrace the ambiguity that comes with trying new things.

We heard the [case for change from Saskia Gerhardy](#) – who provided a young person’s perspective with a compelling treatise for us all, and [Professor Richard Hobbs](#) who spoke about charting a path

from the past to the future. Each of the [nine ‘shifts’](#) presented in the discussion paper were explored via small table sessions on Day 1. On Day 2 deeper insights were gained from intensive table discussions for each shift. Ryan Hubbard also guided us through the NSA Narrative: the importance of moving the nature narrative from ‘almost but not quite core to who we are’ to recognising ‘nature as central to our lives as South Australians’. Click [here](#) to view the videos of these talks.

There was general agreement that all the really good conservation work we have been doing in the past while invaluable is not enough with the rapid change occurring in our landscapes, due to the pressures of climate change, broad biophysical and social change and resource constraints. Of course we will keep doing the things that will continue to work well, but we also need to make some changes to the way we do nature conservation into the future.

All notes from the Forum workshops have been written up and a brief summary will be available on the website soon with key points for each shifts.

Post Forum Survey

Post Forum, a questionnaire was sent to participants to seek feedback on the Forum and the nine shifts. A review of the 58 responses indicated: the participants were impressed that such a diverse range of people attended and openly discussed their points of view at the Forum.

In general, the survey responses indicated:

- the Forum was an effective engagement approach;
- attendees were satisfied with the purpose of the forum and the opportunity to discuss the shifts openly;
- there was an increased level of comfort in accepting the nine shifts on reflection post-Forum.

Discussions with the Forum 'critical observers'

As discussions over the last 12 months have been largely inward focused there was a deliberate strategy to invite critical thinkers/champions from other sectors as observers. We have met with all observers to discuss their Forum observations and ways forward to engage outside our sector with these ideas. They will have an on-going role in helping design the next round of consultations.

Phase 2 of the Nature of SA

Planning for the Phase 2 workshop was completed at a workshop in mid-April and the Strategy Group members are now tasked with implementing Phase 2, which will run from now until June 2018.

A high priority is to engage with Aboriginal people across the state, recognising that they were custodians of SA's nature for tens of thousands of years prior to the development of current western concepts of nature conservation.

Other priority tasks for this period are to:

1. Revise the discussion paper to reflect current thinking, based on the workshops at the Forum.

2. Develop a portfolio of projects that can be initiated to test various aspects of the shifts and underlying assumptions:
 - Many project ideas were put forward at the Forum. Ideally each NRM Region and a range of eNGOs will implement projects to test aspects of the shifts.
 - These projects could be a mixture of existing and new projects.
3. Develop a set of principles and associated framework to guide future implementation strategies.
4. Work with DEWNR, NRM and NGO staff to shift the focus of MERI from reporting to learning and adaptation, by identifying and addressing the barriers to effective learning, and transfer of knowledge.
5. Create a meaningful way to talk about nature.
6. Engage representatives from other sectors including primary production, mining, health/wellbeing and planning to discuss the principles and future approaches to nature conservation being proposed, and to investigate the potential to partner on projects.
7. Ensure that the State NRM Plan, the State of the Environment Reporting and Health Parks Healthy People programs are integrated with the NSA.