

# The landscape and water levies

## Your questions answered

### What are the landscape and water levies and who pays them?

- The landscape levy – based on rateable property value and collected via council rates. Anyone who owns property will pay the landscape levy.
- The water levy – based on water licence and water allocation. Anyone who owns an authorisation to take water, which is a water licence or a water access entitlement, will pay the water levy.

The levies are how everyone makes an important contribution to our region's vision for a healthy living landscape for today and future generations.

### Why is there a difference in landscape levy rates between regions?

A strength of the Landscape SA reform model is that it focusses on what's important to local communities. Landscape boards with community based membership have been established, putting community at the heart of sustainably managing the state's soil, water, pest plants and animals, and biodiversity. The landscape boards raise funds for the management of landscapes in each region through the levies. The *Landscape South Australia Act (2019)* provides different options for raising the levies and each landscape board makes its own decision about what is the best choice for them to set the levy. In the Murraylands and Riverland region it was decided that the landscape levy would be based on **capital value** and the water levy would be based on **allocation**.

### Why doesn't a flat rate apply across the Murraylands and Riverland region?

We think a flat rate charge is a less fair way of asking people to pay than applying a rate based on capital value. Someone who owns a large parcel of land is gaining more direct benefits from the management of our landscapes compared to someone who owns a house block in an urban area.

However, those who live in townships should also contribute towards the management of the landscapes that sustain their quality of life.

It is a fairer and more equal system to base the landscape levy on property value.

### What are the levies used for?

The levies play an important role in helping to secure our region's vision for a healthy living landscape meeting the social, environmental, economic and cultural needs of the community, and ensuring the rights and wellbeing of future generations.

Funds raised through the levies are used for a variety of regional priorities including managing land, vegetation and water, citizen science, community education and awareness.

The levies are used to leverage significant external funds from many sources including the Australian Government and that money comes directly into the Murraylands and Riverland region.

The levies are used to employ staff who manage a range of projects and look for other financial opportunities and grant funding. You may know some of these people as almost all of them live within regional communities, you might even bump into them at the supermarket or at the local

sporting club. The levies are also used to support community projects either directly through funding or by providing advice and assistance from regional staff.

### Why does the council collect the landscape levy with their council rates?

Collection via council rates notices is the most efficient and cost effective way to collect the landscape levy. This enables more money to be reinvested into important priorities across the region and back into our communities. Councils are reimbursed for the cost of collecting the landscape levy on behalf of the landscape boards.

### How are the levies helping me?

The levies help us to look after our soil, water, air and natural landscapes, this benefits everyone. The levies fund many initiatives including support to volunteers, community small grants, environmental education to regional schools, advice relating to weed and pest control, sustainable farming, and land and water management. The levies are invested in local communities to take on the responsibility for looking after their environment and protecting natural resources. You are likely to know someone who's benefiting from the levies investment, even if there is no direct investment on your property.

The levies also contribute to the employment of people who are members of the regional community and live, work and play locally. This investment into the regional community by supporting local jobs and services is often an overlooked benefit that is a critical contribution to a strong regional economy and social infrastructure.

### Who makes the decisions about how the money is spent and how much the levies increase by?

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board is a community based board made up of landholders with different business interests and skills. These people all pay the levies too. They work with the local community to determine what the landscape management priorities are and what the levy will be spent on.