

Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board

# Annual Business Plan

2025-26





# Foreword

A Message from Frances Simes  
Presiding Member



On behalf of the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, I am delighted to present you with our Annual Business Plan for 2025-26.

This plan provides an overview of the programs and projects that the landscape board will deliver across the 2025-26 financial year. Throughout this plan, you'll see how we invest funds across a diverse range of projects that align with the priorities and focus areas outlined in our 5-year strategic plan, the [Regional Landscape Plan](#).

The organisation draws most of its income from land and water levies, leveraging these funds to attract additional investment from state and federal government departments. This allows the landscape board to deliver more projects, often with longer timeframes which allow us to enact long-lasting improvements to the region's landscapes and farmland.

Each year, we provide funding to the community to undertake environmental projects they've identified in their local area. In 2025-26, the landscape board will reinvest around \$500,000 through the Grassroots Grants program with applicants ranging from regional schools through to farming systems groups, Landcare organisations, volunteer groups and more.

As you read through this plan, I encourage you to consider how you could be involved in the projects or programs that you learn about. To keep up to date with future opportunities, consider [subscribing to our newsletter](#), following us on social media or signing up to our [community engagement website, Flow](#).

I'd like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude and thanks to all our partner organisations, volunteers, staff and supporters who collaborate with us to safeguard our landscapes for future generations to enjoy.

Frances Simes  
Presiding Member  
Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board

29 May 2025

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## Acknowledgement of Country

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



# The region

The Murraylands and Riverland region extends from where the River Murray crosses the border into South Australia, through the northern Mallee to the foot of the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges, from the Rangelands in the north to the southern Mallee and Murray Mouth in the south.

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

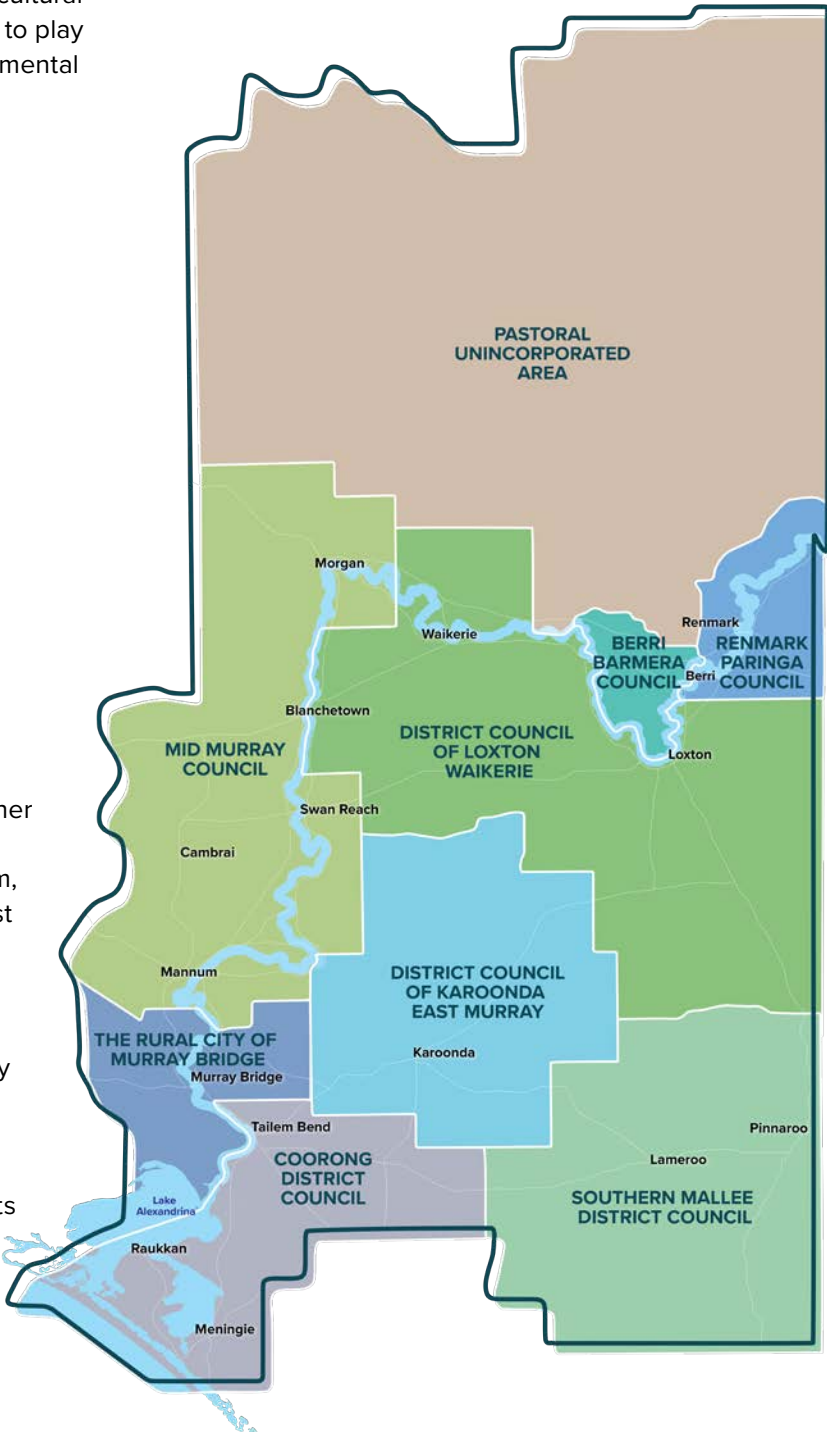
The region includes the following council areas:

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

The region forms the south-western portion of the Murray-Darling catchment into which the River Murray flows. The River Murray supports highly productive horticultural industries as well as supplying the majority of the water needs for the city of Adelaide and many other towns in the state. The natural resources of the Murraylands and Riverland region support tourism, recreation and manufacturing and one of the most productive agricultural areas in South Australia.

Much of the land in the region is used for primary production including pastoral lands, dryland cropping, grazing, horticulture, irrigation and dairy farming. Within the region, there are ecosystems that are of state, national and international significance, including the Ramsar-listed Chowilla Floodplain and Banrock Station wetland, and parts of the Coorong and Lower Lakes.

The region has a rich and diverse history of volunteering in landscape and environmental management, with a wide range of active groups undertaking action to look after their local landscapes. Groups include Landcare, land management, wetland, farming systems organisations and catchment groups.



# The landscape board’s role

As a statutory body, we are required to produce an annual business plan and operate as an instrument of the Crown, accountable to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, and subject to any direction made by the minister.

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

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

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

## Guiding principles

- > We work to sustain a productive economy underpinned by a healthy environment.
- > We ensure climate science is part of all planning and decisions.
- > We respect, recognise and are informed by regional and traditional knowledge throughout our work.
- > We innovate in the solutions we implement.
- > We seek continuous improvement to provide the best possible support for our region.
- > We communicate and celebrate the impact of our work with the regional community.
- > We bring people together to achieve the priorities for our region.
- > We work in partnership with First Nations across all aspects of our business.



# Implementing our work

The annual business plan sets out the landscape board’s plan to deliver outcomes that contribute to the priorities in the [Murraylands and Riverland Regional Landscape Plan 2021-2026](#).

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

The following table and pie chart summarises the landscape board’s expenditure for 2025-26 for each strategic priority, as well as our foundational program.

Investment by priority	Levies (\$)	External (\$)	Total (\$)
Sustainable agricultural and pastoral landscapes	1,767,879	1,293,458	3,061,337
Sustainable water use	3,648,571	582,742	4,231,313
Healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands	1,427,919	886,674	2,314,592
Healthy natural landscapes	1,021,535	715,731	1,737,266
People at the heart of landscape management	2,219,008	1,270,438	3,399,447
Foundational programs	3,776,949	360,160	4,137,108
Total expenditure	13,771,861	5,109,202	18,881,064

Table 1: Expenditure by priorities and funding source in 2025-26

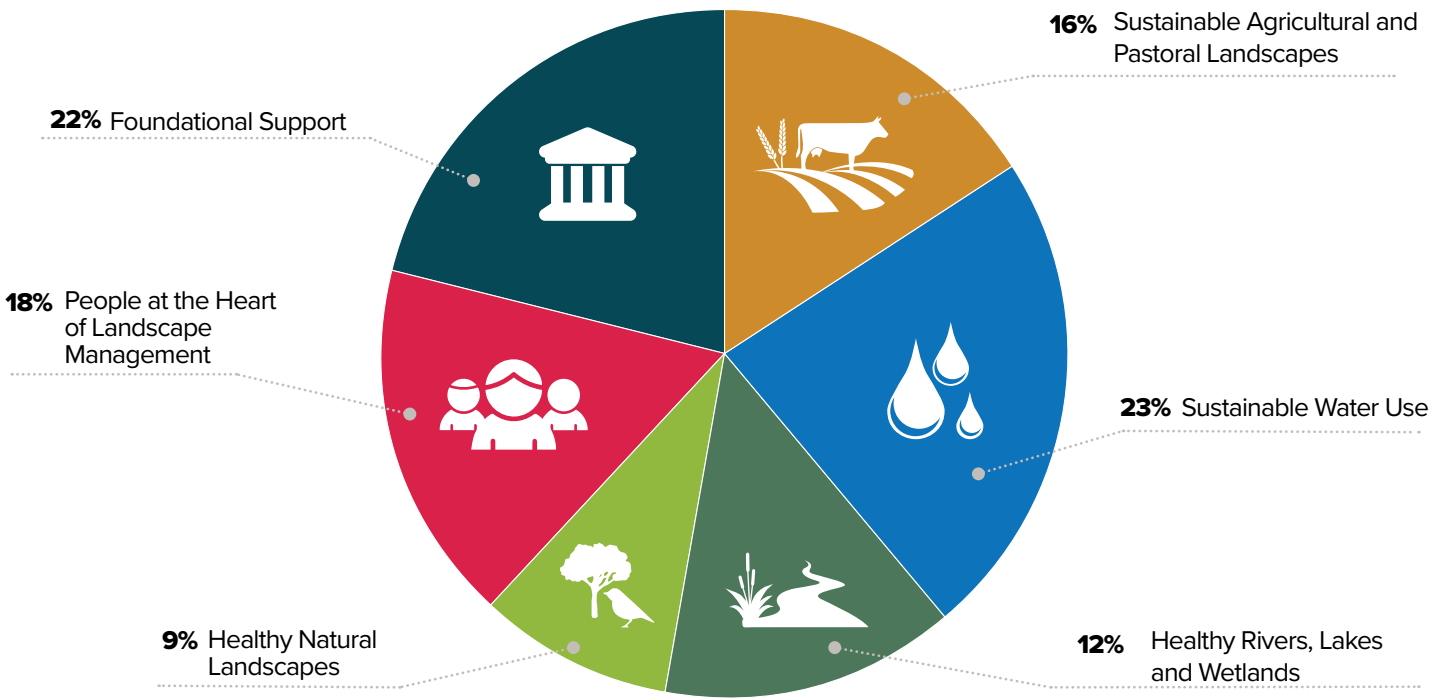


Figure 1: Expenditure across priorities and foundational support



## Sustainable agricultural and pastoral landscapes

Program	Levies (\$)	External (\$)	Total (\$)
Sustainable agriculture	643,945	797,454	1,441,400
Pest plant and animal management	857,284	180,000	1,037,284
Program support	266,650	316,004	582,653
Total expenditure	1,767,879	1,293,458	3,061,337

### Focus areas

- Work with industry and farming groups to identify and address soil management issues to improve soil health and build resilience
- Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species for improved biosecurity Focus areas Sustainable agricultural and pastoral landscapes
- Promote and support the protection and enhancement of on-farm biodiversity and native vegetation as part of a productive system
- Promote and demonstrate best management practices to retain groundcover and reduce erosion risk
- Support land managers to build resilience in farming systems through monitoring and managing climate risks and extreme events







## Sustainable water use

Program	Levies (\$)	External (\$)	Total (\$)
Water planning and management <sup>1</sup>	1,750,740	414,199	2,164,939
Water allocation planning <sup>2</sup>	769,563	-	769,563
Pest plant and animal management	403,937	-	403,937
Program support	724,332	168,543	892,875
Total expenditure	3,648,571	582,742	4,231,313

### Focus areas

- Work with the irrigation industry to optimise water use for productive, environmental and cultural outcomes
  - Support water users to build resilience through monitoring and managing climate risks and extreme event
  - Ensure sustainable water use by all water users in a changing climate
- Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species for improved biosecurity
  - Improve water literacy to develop the community’s understanding of water management for productive, environmental and cultural outcomes

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

<sup>2</sup>The Murraylands and Riverland region shares three prescribed water resources areas with neighbouring regions. The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board is responsible for water planning for the River Murray and Marne and Saunders catchment because most of the resource area falls within the Murraylands and Riverland region.

Only a small portion of the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges catchment falls within the Murraylands and Riverland region, therefore Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu is responsible for water planning and implementation.



## Healthy river, lakes and wetlands

Program	Levies (\$)	External (\$)	Total (\$)
Wetlands and floodplain restoration	1,002,966	505,713	1,508,679
Pest plant and animal management	261,779	249,683	511,462
Program support	163,174	131,277	294,451
Total expenditure	1,427,919	886,674	2,314,592

### Focus areas

- Manage and deliver environmental water to build the resilience of targeted wetland and floodplain ecosystems
  - Actively manage watercourses for improved ecological outcomes in a changing climate
  - Deliver initiatives that improve conditions for threatened species and culturally significant species
- Improve water literacy to develop the community’s understanding of water management for productive, environmental and cultural outcomes
  - Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species







## Healthy natural landscapes

Program	Levies (\$)	External (\$)	Total (\$)
Landscape scale restoration	555,646	594,060	1,149,706
Pest plant and animal management	314,655	-	314,655
Program support	151,234	121,671	272,905
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>1,021,535</b>	<b>715,731</b>	<b>1,737,266</b>

### Focus areas

- Work in partnership to manage total grazing pressure, including from over-abundant native species
- Work in partnership to proactively manage fire in the landscape to improve or maintain condition of key ecological and cultural assets
- Encourage targeted revegetation and restoration
- Ensure future seed availability of native species for revegetation in a changing climate
- Improve the level of protection for threatened and culturally significant species and ecological communities
- Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species



## People at the heart of landscape management

Program	Levies (\$)	External (\$)	Total (\$)
Grassroots Grants	499,268	-	499,268
Education program	383,582	-	383,582
First Nations partnership program	388,051	818,086	1,206,137
Community partnerships and engagement	314,009	-	314,009
Citizen Science	221,731	193,000	414,731
Program support	322,367	259,352	581,720
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>2,219,008</b>	<b>1,270,438</b>	<b>3,399,447</b>

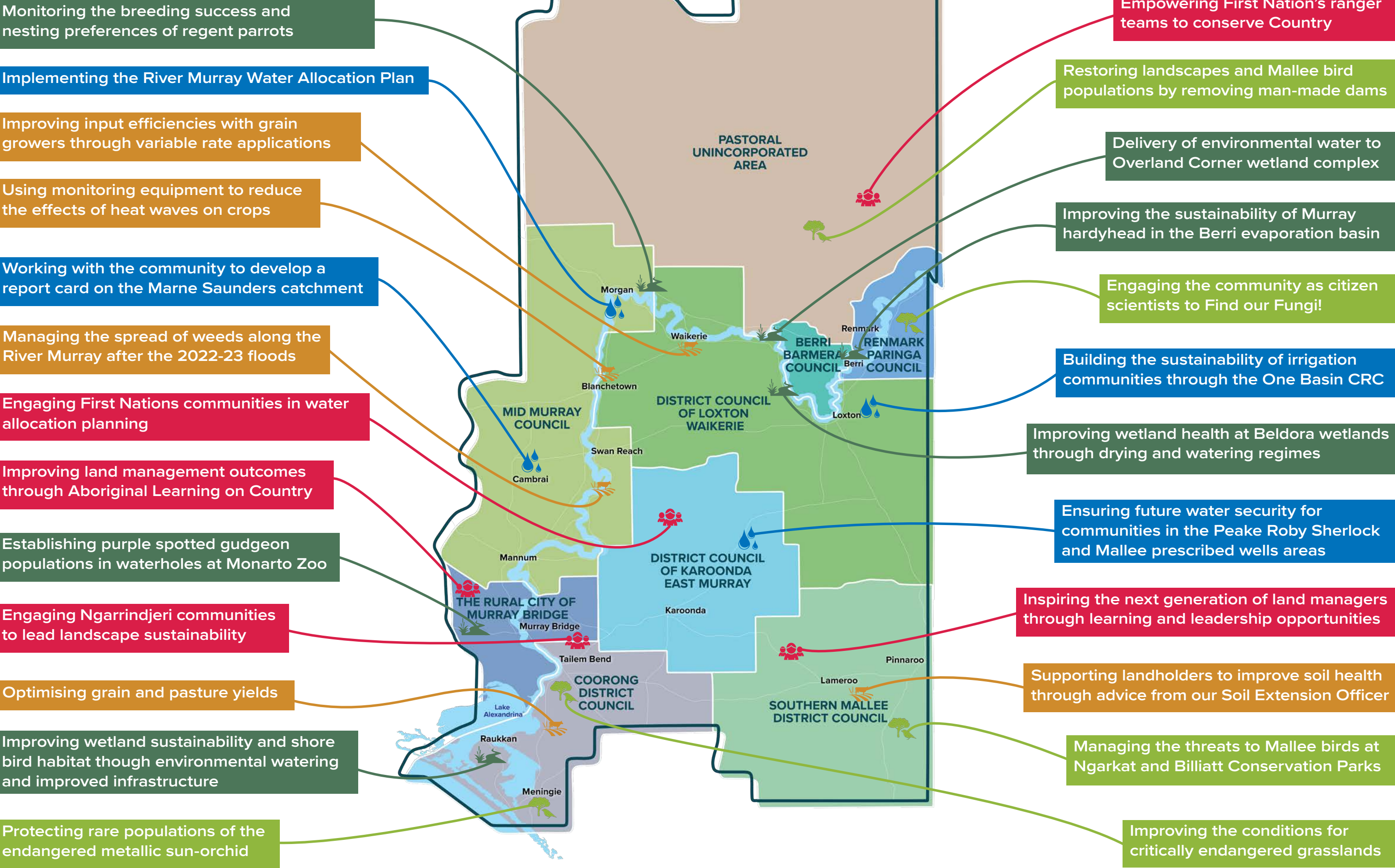
### Focus areas

- Build and maintain strategic partnerships with, and between, stakeholders for mutually beneficial outcomes
- Work in partnership with First Nations to manage the region's landscapes, protect and restore cultural values and assets, and build capacity
- Partner with young people, foster their understanding, participation and leadership
- Strengthen capacity through increased knowledge, skills and participation
- Support community-led landscape management, providing resources to support community projects and practical action
- Recognise and encourage volunteers and volunteer community groups and support them to work safely and effectively





Explore some of the projects and activities to be led by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board in 2025-26





## Foundational programs

Program	Levies (\$)	External (\$)	Total (\$)
Board leadership and governance	320,902	22,300	343,202
Planning and evaluation	949,172	46,489	995,661
Customer and business services	1,524,167	-	1,524,167
Council levy collection fees	41,117	-	41,117
Communications	579,425	-	579,425
Program support	362,166	291,371	653,537
Total expenditure	3,776,949	360,160	4,137,108

## Focus areas

- Develop the Regional Landscape Plan and associated business plans
- Implement an effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework
- Ensure contractual obligations with external funding are delivered
- Continuously improve the information management systems that support evidence-based decision making
- Regular communication of landscape board business

## Funding sources

Table 2 shows the forecasted income for the 2025-26 financial year, by source. Additional funds may be secured during the financial year.

Income source	Budget 2025-26 (\$)
<b>Levies</b>	<b>13,767,861</b>
Regional Landscape Levy	3,552,059
Water Levy	10,215,802
<b>Other income</b>	<b>180,000</b>
Animal and plant control contracts	180,000
<b>Revenue – State government</b>	<b>801,403</b>
Landscape Priority Fund	593,583
Other	207,820
<b>Revenue – Australian government</b>	<b>2,459,297</b>
*Regional Delivery Partnership	1,748,211
Riverland Indigenous Ranger - NIAA	711,086
<b>Revenue – other</b>	<b>12,750</b>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>17,221,311</b>

Table 2: 2025-26 income





# Landscape and water levies

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

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

## Landscape Levy

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

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

Council	# of Rateable Properties	Indicative share (\$)	Collection fee (\$)
Berri Barmera Council	6,781	\$330,626	\$5,184.51
Coorong District Council	3,918	\$325,614	\$4,306.68
District Council of Karoonda East Murray	1,505	\$95,651	\$3,566.83
District Council of Loxton Waikerie	9,115	\$540,317	\$5,813.49
Mid Murray Council	11,738	\$676,639	\$6,592.80
Rural City of Murray Bridge	13,080	\$957,512	\$6,991.51
Renmark Paringa Council	6,228	\$388,483	\$4,955.75
Southern Mallee District Council	2,021	\$237,217	\$3,705.82
Total	54,386	\$3,552,059	\$41,117

Table 3: Levy share per council



## Basis for the levies

When setting the levies, the landscape board uses the following principles:

### Fairness

- **User/beneficiary pays** - people who are the beneficiaries of natural resources and their management in the region should pay accordingly.
- **Shared responsibility** - the responsibility to achieve ecologically sustainable development is a shared responsibility between the public sector, the private sector and the community.

### Efficiency

- **Certainty** - the levy arrangement should deliver a certain outcome for the managers of the natural resources of the region and the ‘users’ of the natural resources, so that they can plan and budget accordingly.
- **Resource use efficiency** - the basis for determining the levy should encourage efficient and sustainable use, and the protection and enhancement of the region’s natural resources.
- **Administrative efficiency** - the levy collection and management procedures should operate at minimum cost.

### Governance

- **Accountability** - the landscape board should be publicly accountable for the expenditure of these funds.
- **Transparency** - the process for calculating the levy and the amount paid by users should be readily observable, subject to individual user confidentiality constraints.
- **Reasonable basis** - costs incurred in managing the natural resources of the region should be contained at an economic level.







# Water Levy

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

- option ‘g’ (the share of the water that makes up the relevant water resource) will be applied by the landscape board as the basis for calculating the water levy.
- For all other prescribed water resources within the Murraylands and Riverland region, option ‘b’ (the quantity of water allocated) will be applied as the basis for calculating the water levy.

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

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

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

Prescribed resource	2025-26 Rate - \$/ML
River Murray – Metropolitan Adelaide Consumptive Pool (Class 6)	25.73
<b>River Murray – All Purpose Consumptive Pool (Class 2)</b>	<b>25.73</b>
River Murray - All Purpose Consumptive Pool (Class 3 (3a, 4, 5,7))	8.29
<b>River Murray - All Purpose Consumptive Pool (Class 3 (3b))</b>	<b>7.86</b>
Mallee – reticulated	25.73
<b>Mallee</b>	<b>8.29</b>
Peake, Sherlock & Roby	8.29
<b>Marne Saunders</b>	<b>8.29</b>
Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges	8.29

Table 4: Water levy rates by prescribed resource, 2025-26

# Other income

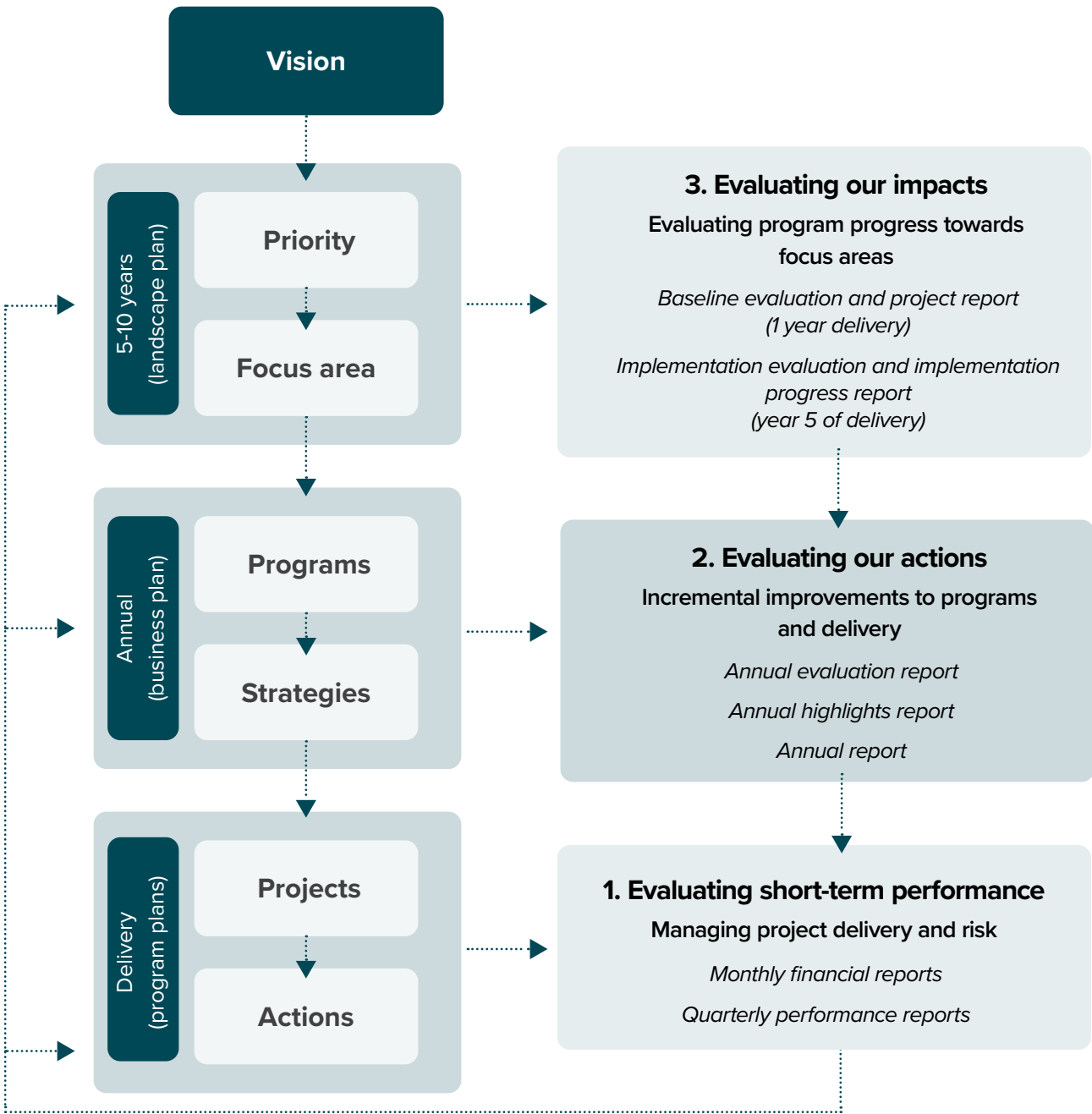
## Cost recovery

The landscape board will continue to implement a cost recovery program to partially offset the costs of pest plant and animal programs implementation throughout the region. It is estimated that the landscape board will recover approximately \$180,000 annually.

# Evaluating our work

Significant public funds are invested into the Murraylands and Riverland region through the business plan. The landscape board is committed to ensuring that these funds are well managed, deliver good value for money and achieve significant landscape outcomes.

Assessing the performance of the business plan and landscape plan, ensuring improvements in delivery and governance requires a multi-layered approach that recognises the timeframes, audiences and the varying levels of MERI across the organisation.







Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board: Front row (left to right) - Tammy O'Malley, Samantha Blight, Frances Simes (Board Chair), Andrew Biele. Back row - Brian Lund, Greg Cock, Jason Size.

## The landscape board and committees

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board is a statutory regional board formed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*. The landscape board includes of seven community members, appointed by the Minister for Environment and Water on the basis of their skills and knowledge.

The landscape board may also form committees and other bodies to enable stakeholders to be involved in planning and provide advice on specific natural resource management issues. The proposed fees for the landscape board and its committees come to a total of \$133,140 for 2025-26 which includes the sitting fees, training development, and travel and meeting costs.

## Staff and physical resources

Under the Act, the landscape board is overseen by a General Manager with staff working to deliver its programs and services. In 2025-26, it is anticipated that there will be 79 full-time equivalent positions employed by the General Manager on behalf of the landscape board. These staff are public sector employees.

The landscape board will continue to receive corporate support through the Department of Environment and Water in 2025-26 via a corporate fee. The landscape board owns and leases buildings and sheds in various locations across the Murraylands and Riverland region.

## More information

[landscape.sa.gov.au/mr](https://landscape.sa.gov.au/mr)

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