

LANDSCAPE LEVY

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the landscape levy?

The landscape levy (previously the Natural Resource Management levy) is a levy established under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*, which is used to fund the work needed to protect and enhance the natural environment. Councils collect the landscape levy on behalf of the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board, adding the levy to the council rate notices for all ratepayers.

What does the landscape levy pay for?

The landscape levy is used by the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board to protect the region's natural assets, including water, soil and biodiversity. Funds are used to undertake pest plant and animal control, restore watercourses, protect threatened ecosystems and provide grant funding and educational programs. Around 3% of the levies collected are returned to the community through grant programs, which support local volunteer and community groups to undertake important environmental work. The levy also supports Landscape Officers across the region to work directly with landowners to ensure our land is managed sustainably .

I live in a town, not a farm, so why do I have to pay the landscape levy?

Our livelihoods, lifestyles and landscapes are all closely linked to the soil, water, native plants and animals around us. With more than 80% of the Northern and Yorke region under agricultural production, the sustainable use of our soils and water assets is critical to our long-term prosperity as a region.

In a changing climate, water assets are particularly at risk and the levy contributes to long term water planning ensuring residents continue to have access to secure water, without harming our natural environment. Likewise, the continued viability of our soils is critical to food production, affecting all South Australians.

The Northern and Yorke Landscape Board also holds the responsibility for watercourse management. Many of the towns in the region are centred on a river or watercourse, with many used for recreation, tourism, as wildlife corridors or for general community amenity. The health of these river systems is important to the ecosystems they support, but also current and future generations.

Can I have an exemption from paying the landscape levy?

The landscape levy is charged directly to councils, which recoup their costs through charging ratepayers on their council rates. Councils may have options available for ratepayers who are having difficulty paying or would like a concession. There is no exemption available to councils under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*.

How is the landscape levy calculated?

The Northern and Yorke Landscape Board publishes an annual business plan in May/June each year, outlining the council contributions for the coming financial year. The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* outlines that the levy may only be increased by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) annually.

Councils recoup the levy from ratepayers through applying a charge to all rateable properties within the council area. Councils set and publish a rate (cents per dollar of capital value) that they charge ratepayers. The rate may appear on your council rates notice, or may be outlined in council rating policies.

The Board pays each council a fixed fee, plus a per property amount for collecting the landscape levy on its behalf. In 2023-2024, the collection costs paid by the Board to councils will be approximately \$74,400.

Why has my landscape levy increased this year?

The landscape levy appearing on your council rates notice may have increased due to the following:

- **Capital value of your property** – If your property has increased in value, the amount payable as landscape levy will increase accordingly. Your council collects the levy based on cents per dollar of capital value.
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** – The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* provides that the levy may only increase by CPI and specifies that the Board must use the September Quarter Adelaide All Groups CPI as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The CPI for September 2022 was 8.4%, which has been applied to the levy. The past 3 years (2019-2021) saw CPI at between 1% and 2.5%, resulting in minimal increases to the landscape levy paid by ratepayers.
- **Levy Equalisation** – With the commencement of the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*, the region's boundaries were amended. As a result, the Adelaide Plains Regional Council, Light Regional Council, the Barossa Council and the Town of Gawler were welcomed into the Northern and Yorke region. These councils were formerly part of the Adelaide Mt Lofty Ranges (AMLR) NRM region which included all of metropolitan Adelaide and the Fleurieu Peninsula.

Since the start of the landscape levy in 2020, these councils have continued to be charged the former AMLR rate, which was significantly less than the former Northern and Yorke NRM rate.

The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* requires that for the 2023-2024 financial year and beyond, a common levy rate must apply to the whole Northern and Yorke region. To achieve this, the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board has redistributed the 2022-2023 levy across the region based on the capital value of each council area.

The result is that all ratepayers within the region are charged a common rate, and the Board's landscape levy revenue has remained at the 2022-2023 rate plus CPI, as per the requirements of the Act.

Why has my landscape levy decreased this year? Will I get less service from the Board?

As a result of levy equalisation and the application of a common rate across all councils, some ratepayers may see a decrease in their landscape levy. This is due to the redistribution of the levy across the region based on council's total capital value. For example, the Yorke Peninsula Council previously contributed approximately 21% of the total landscape levy due to the large size and value of the council. With the common rate applied, Yorke Peninsula Council now contributes 18.5%,

potentially providing a small decrease to ratepayers. Conversely, the Adelaide Plains Council previously contributed 3.4% of the total levy. This figure has increased to 5.1%, resulting in an increase to ratepayers in that council area.

The equalisation method which maintains the 2022-2023 levy plus CPI will ensure that the Board continues to deliver all current services, and can continue to leverage levy funding to secure project State and Commonwealth funding.

Will levy equalisation result in more revenue for the Board?

No. The Board will not raise any additional revenue as a result of equalisation. The total levy to be collected from the councils remains the same as the 2022-2023 financial year, plus CPI.

Who determines the capital value of my property?

The value of properties is determined by the Valuer-General. For more information, refer to the Office of the Valuer-General: <https://www.valuergeneral.sa.gov.au/valuation/Property-Valuations>

What is the aim of the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board?

The landscape levy helps to fund the delivery of the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board's strategic plan, which sets out the targets for the region. A key priority of the Board is to support local communities and landowners to be directly responsible for sustainably managing their region's landscapes, with an emphasis on land and water management, biodiversity and pest animal and plant control. This includes providing greater funding and partnership opportunities with local community organisations to deliver on-ground works and projects.

While the landscape levy makes up a large proportion of the Board's total annual budget, it also allows the Board to attract additional Commonwealth Government funding that greatly increases the amount of work that can be accomplished in our region.

The Board contributes towards stimulating regional economic growth through the protection and sustainable use of our landscapes. Amongst many initiatives that are supported and sponsored by the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board, this is achieved through;

- Increasing farm viability by assisting and sponsoring collaborative weed management and control programs
- Improving productivity in the sheep industry by significantly reducing lambing deaths through management and control of predatory animals
- Advances in soil conditioning techniques and no tillage farming
- Support for research into new cultivars of crops that are better suited to our changing climate

The Board encourages the community to consider the levy as an investment in the environmentally sustainable economic growth and prosperity of the region.

Where can I learn more about the Board and its work?

The Northern and Yorke Landscape Board website: <https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ny>