



Government of South Australia

Department of Environment,  
Water and Natural Resources



Conservation  
Council SA

# *the* Nature *of* SA



Directions for nature conservation  
in South Australia

*January 2018*

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# We love our nature

Over **90%** of South  
Australians get out into our  
parks and beaches every year

## What is the Nature of SA?

The Nature of SA is a sector-wide partnership to guide positive change in our approach to nature conservation in response to a changing climate, extensive landscape change and a changing world. The partnership is following an adaptive, inclusive process to develop a strategic approach for conserving nature in the 21st century in SA.

## Purpose of this document

This document is a product of the Nature of SA and outlines nine shifts for nature conservation in South Australia. It explores how nature and our society is changing and charts a course to best respond to these challenges.

The paper reports back to the conservation sector. It represents an important waypoint, consolidating new thinking and approaches required to progress nature conservation into the 21st century. Importantly, it outlines a new paradigm; a 'future ready' approach for nature conservation in SA.

# Introduction

## Nature and South Australians in the 21st century

South Australians value nature in their lives for its inherent beauty and inspiration, the opportunities it offers for fun, wonder and relaxation, and the livelihoods it supports. Collectively, we value nature in its many forms—as part of our heritage, as part of our culture, as part of us.

Ensuring the nature we all value persists is an increasing challenge. Not only does our modern way of life mean we have become more isolated from nature and its benefits, but the legacies of European colonisation such as vegetation clearance and species introductions, the growth and globalisation of the economy, and the impacts of climate change, mean our natural world is also changing rapidly.

It is important we recognise that some of these changes are largely unstoppable. This means in South Australia we can't solely rely on a purely historical approach to restoration to sustain nature. We need to be more open to exploring new methods that will sustain nature into the future.



## Building on a deep foundation

The Nature of SA recognises that the work we do in the future builds on the legacy of those who have come before us. Aboriginal people have played a fundamental role in shaping and managing nature for millennia (see Shift #1). Their worldview and connection to country ensured that nature was not over exploited.

In recent times conservationists and land managers have worked tirelessly to conserve, manage and honour South Australia's natural heritage within the western paradigm of nature conservation. In particular the protection of many areas within the National Parks and reserves system resulted from their tireless efforts. We are standing on the shoulders of these people, past and present, and South Australians are in their debt for the wealth of nature we enjoy today.

It is also critical to acknowledge that protecting and sustainably managing nature through traditional conservation practices such as native vegetation protection, revegetation, protected area management and landscape connectivity will be as crucial in the future as they ever have been.

## The case for change

Over the past 50 years we have experienced unprecedented changes in global environmental, social and economic systems such that the period has been referred to as 'The Great Acceleration'. Many scientists and commentators believe we have entered a new geological era – termed the Anthropocene – in which human activity has become the dominant influence on the earth's environment and systems such as climate.

Recent evidence strongly supports local, national and global climate projections that the planet is warming at an unprecedented rate as a result of human activity. The past three years have been three of the four warmest years on record, 2016 was the warmest year on record, and more than 260 heat and low rainfall records were broken in winter (2017), with average maximum temperatures reaching 1.9C above average. Changes to weather, storm and fire patterns are evident, locally and globally.

These changes will have uncertain but likely detrimental consequences for South Australia's natural environment. While most of us have limited control over the global systems driving this change, we do have a choice about how we respond locally.

This scenario is both confronting and deeply distressing for many of us who recognise the intrinsic value of nature and the role it plays to sustain our lives as South Australians. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges ahead and the loss we have already experienced.

Recognising some of the irreversible shifts, however, fosters potential to rethink nature, for example: how we view it, what we manage for, and how we can work differently with others to secure nature into the future. Concepts that seek to place nature at arms length from humans may need reshaping in a world where humans have become the dominant force.

It also prompts a recast of the role of First Nations perspectives of nature from template to guide, providing a historical context for future decision-making rather than a script.

While these concepts are challenging for many of us they also create new opportunities to respond and realise gains for nature conservation in a rapidly changing and uncertain context where perhaps the greatest risk of all is to bury one's head in the sand.

## A future-orientated conservation paradigm

The scale and rate of global changes has compelled us to start looking at nature conservation through a number of different lenses. Building on the previous discussion paper and statewide forum, nine areas have been identified where a shift in our thinking and/or approaches and/or actions is expected to foster better outcomes.

Many of the conservation activities we have historically undertaken will continue to be important, however, increasing emphasis should be placed on the identified shifts, starting now. Taken together these shifts represent a new paradigm for nature conservation, one built on the legacy of past efforts, but that prepares us for the future. This 'future-orientated' paradigm will form the basis of strong and deliberate conservation planning and action going forward.

It is important to note that while the shifts are, in reality, intertwined, they have been broken down into separate ideas in order to communicate them.

# Our process

## Consultation sessions

with conservation professionals in every region across the state

**Sector-wide** working group with representation from environmental NGOs, state regions, central DEW, and Primary Industries

## Active listening

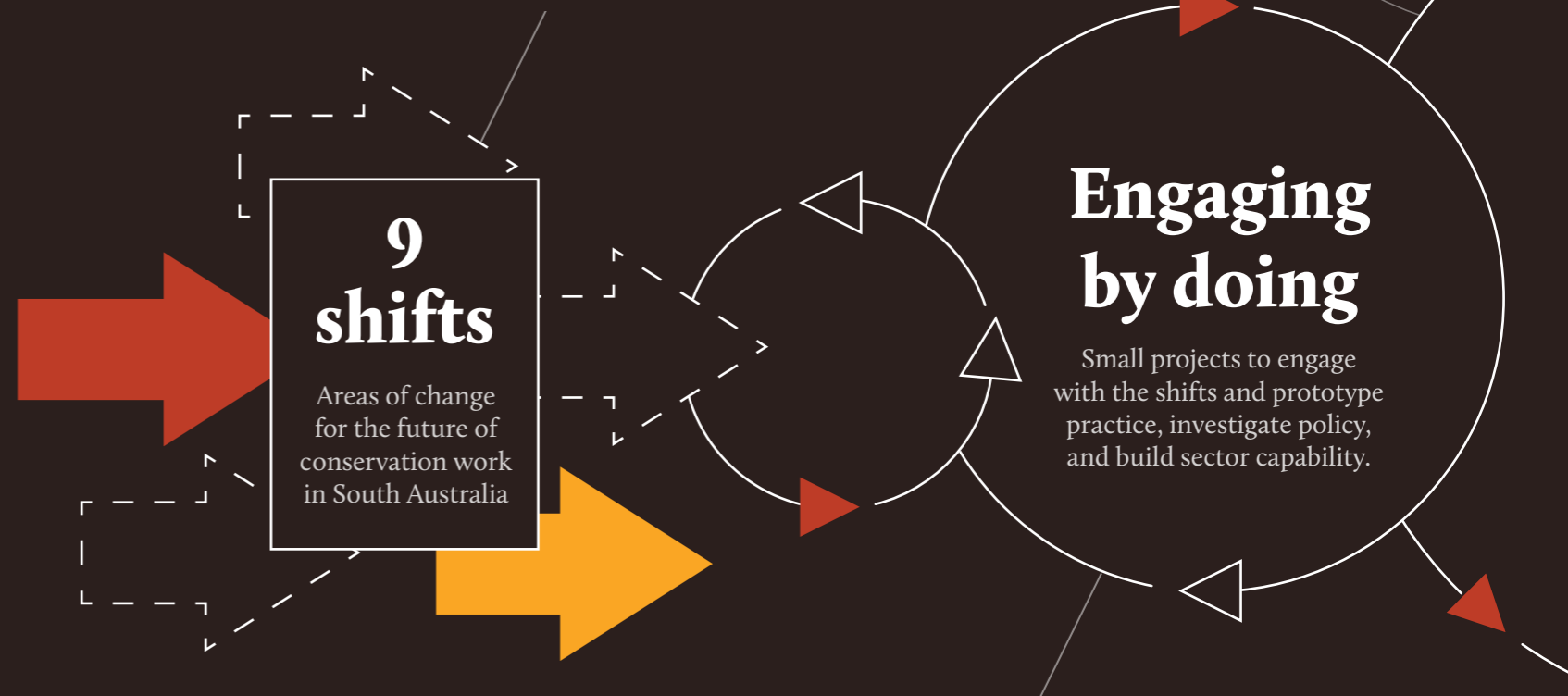
**Over 400** professionals from across the sector involved throughout

**State forum** convened hundreds of professionals to dive into the first draft of the shifts

**Workshops** to try out future themes from climate change to common cause to grief and loss in conservation

**Reviews** of the former biodiversity strategy (No Species Loss), the latest research, and SA policy and legislation

**Shift** (verb): to cause something to move or change from one position or direction to another.



## Active listening and adaptive learning

The Nature of SA was created to be an active and adaptive process. We began by holding conversations with more than 400 practitioners across the state, trying to understand what needs to change to enable better biodiversity outcomes.

We took themes from what we heard and turned those into a series of **Shifts**. These have been shared and deepened further through a state-wide forum and small tests over the last year.

By their nature, the shifts are engaged with a global conversation around the edges of our knowledge. They involve new ideas and questions that must be investigated through an iterative process of acting and reflecting, not just talking.

So we have begun a process of **engaging by doing**. We have hosted leading thinkers (Richard Hobbs, shift #4; Michael Dunlop, shift #7), organised capability-building workshops (Common Cause, shift #9), and

ran a prototype grant round (Amongst It, shift #2), all as ways to begin to learn more about the shifts in practice.

The next phase of the Nature of SA is to engage more broadly again. Drawing a wider loop, we'll use the shifts to prototype new practice, update policy, and continue to build sector capability.

**Prototype** (noun): a small, agile project (or collection of projects) intentionally designed to test assumptions about new ideas in particular contexts.



### What does collective, adaptive learning look like?

#### Step 1: Convene a learning group around a shift

Bring together representatives from across the system (in our sector and beyond) who are all interested in exploring questions around one of the 9 shifts.

#### Step 2: Identify questions and plan prototypes

As a group, we build a shared understanding of what we know and what we don't, then we plan small projects to try new approaches in different areas.

### How do we know if we're successful?

Accountability is just as important in innovation as anywhere else. The key is that we measure success not by whether the experiment worked but by questions answered: did we learn what we set out to learn? If we haven't, then we failed.

#### Step 4: Reflect, share, repeat

Re-convene the group a few times along the way to learn from each other and revise our plans. Reflect on learnings at the end and share them more broadly in the system.

#### Step 3: Do something small

Then we go out and run some projects. To get to meaningful change, we have to move beyond talking as quickly as possible and try something small.

This helps validate the knowns, bring new information for our unknowns (key questions), and uncover 'unknown unknowns' that might be unique to our context or problem space.

Source: process adapted from Hassan, Zaid, *The Social Labs Revolution: A New Approach to Solving our Most Complex Challenges*, Berrett-Koehler, 2014.

### Why didn't the Nature of SA just do a consultation round, write a strategy and implementation plan and be done with it?

Primarily, it's because we're not presenting tried-and-true answers. **No one has them.** This is a complex, adaptive challenge. Instead, we've framed **shifts** that are engaged with edges of our knowledge in South Australia and as a global society.

We could just write this document of shifts and be finished, but we all know documents alone **drive little change.** Reviews of the No Species Loss strategy (2007-2017) indicate that while it was seen as comprehensive and relevant, it drove little action for biodiversity conservation in the State. Regardless of sector, this is the story of many strategies and large-scale change projects: they write a great document and disappear.

So, in contrast to the traditional 'waterfall' of strategic plan to implementation, the Nature of SA has been structured as an **iterative process** of engaging by doing. Built on the same foundations of resilience and adaptive planning that we use in our conservation work, this creates a shared learning structure in the sector that extends beyond the group creating the strategy and makes it more likely for the Nature of SA to have a meaningful impact.

## Building a shared understanding

The insights and proposed shifts in thinking outlined in this paper were developed following an 18-month consultation process that: engaged over 400 people from the conservation sector across South Australia; gathered evidence that underpinned the need for change; collated and documented shifts in thinking and approaches in a discussion paper; and brought together over 180 people from the conservation sector at a forum in February 2017 to test emerging ideas and develop a shared understanding for a new way forward.

Most of the ideas outlined in the initial discussion paper and forum received widespread recognition and support, however, this paper does not seek to present a consensus view. It also does not preclude ongoing discussion and debate. Its purpose is to report back to the conservation sector on how thinking has been shaped by the forum, and conversations post forum, to drive the next phase of the work.

Uncertainties remain about how nature will be impacted as the climate changes, and how global and local communities will respond to the challenge. It is difficult to think about and plan for the future amidst so much uncertainty. There is no simple, single solution to these new

challenges, but one thing is certain – waiting to see what happens in the face of climate change is not a responsible course of action.

We need to act now to ensure we have a positive influence on the future direction of nature conservation in South Australia and give ourselves the greatest chance to conserve as much nature as possible for future generations.

“Any action is often better than no action! If it is a mistake, at least you learn something, in which case it’s no longer a mistake. If you remain stuck, you learn nothing.” Eckhart Tolle

The Nature of SA has determined a starting place to respond to many of the challenges associated with nature conservation in a changing climate. No one individual or organisation will have the capacity to address these challenges on their own or apply all the ideas in this document quickly. Some interest groups will want to see a radical response, others a more cautious approach that tests and builds on what we have done to date. It is likely different groups will propose a range of priorities across research, governance, policy and practice. We should see this spectrum of responses as strength; diverse responses will build resilience in our approach, as long as we **learn and share** our findings honestly and regularly on the way.

In reality, our approaches will likely involve a combination of all responses. It is critical that we explore every opportunity open to us, understanding it takes time to research, develop, implement and refine practices, to change policy or to shift institutional culture and community action, and that we face the challenges and make a start.

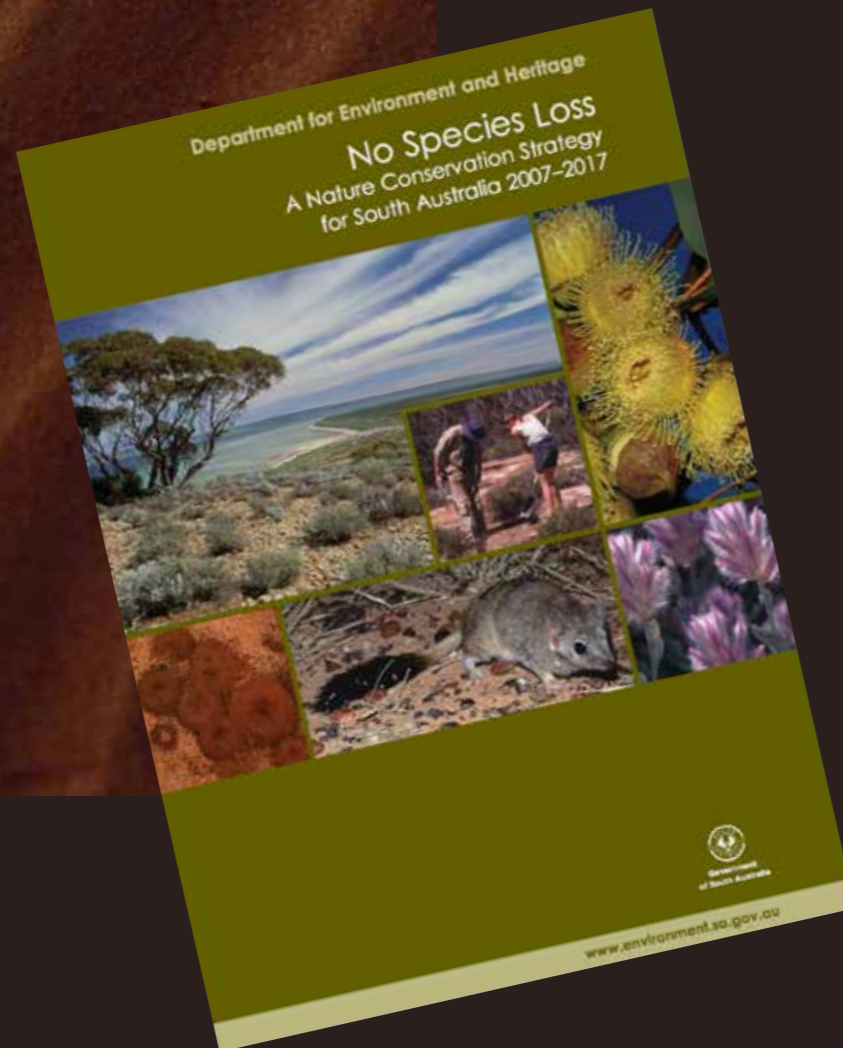
Looking to the future, it is critical the voices of young South Australians are heard and help guide the Nature of SA and the decisions that impact their future landscapes, lifestyles and livelihoods.



'No Species Loss' is a statement of aspiration. Species decline and become extinct naturally. This aspiration reflects the foresight, mindset and commitment needed by all South Australians if we are to prevent further loss of our known native species from human impacts, and if we are to conserve biodiversity for future generations. **The 100-year vision for No Species Loss is:**

### Vision

*The people of South Australia actively supporting their native plants, animals and ecosystems to survive, evolve and adapt to environmental change.*



## History

# No Species Loss – A Nature Conservation Strategy for South Australia 2007–2017

No Species Loss was South Australia's first biodiversity conservation strategy. It was developed in response to the SA Strategic Plan (2004) and linked to the plan's Target 69 Lose no species. The strategy contains five (5) goals, twenty (20) objectives and fifty-five (55) targets to underpin the vision of losing no species as a result of human impact.

Two reviews were undertaken of the strategy, an internal review in DEWNR (completed in 2015) and a sector-wide review based on a questionnaire (in 2016). The thinking reflected in the strategy provided a sound basis for improving outcomes for nature conservation, and yet, indicators of the state and condition of biodiversity continue to decline. In part this may reflect the lack of an implementation plan for the strategy, however, limited ownership of the strategy outside the conservation sector and limited resources for achieving the targets, are both contributing factors.



# shifts

**Shift:** (verb) to cause something to move or change from one position or direction to another.

1. Understand our landscapes and wildlife **co-evolved with Aboriginal people**
2. Strengthen our **state narrative** around nature
3. Hold onto **what's working**
4. Value nature **in all its forms**
5. From a purely historical focus to **future-orientated outcomes**
6. Decision making requires consideration of **values, rules and knowledge**
7. We have to **learn to change**
8. A **resilient conservation sector** is critical
9. Remember **what we love** about nature and start there



# I Understand our landscapes and wildlife co-evolved with Aboriginal people

*Moving from just acknowledging to deeply embracing Aboriginal connection to country in our work*

The area now known as South Australia was managed, farmed, cared for and modified by the Aboriginal people who lived here for over 60,000 years (see right). Our understanding of what it means to conserve nature in South Australia, and our references to ‘pre-1750’ or ‘pre-European’ vegetation, must acknowledge that the nature of South Australia was intimately linked with the livelihoods and the activities of the first people.

The journals and diaries of explorers and colonists “...revealed a much more complicated Aboriginal economy than the primitive hunter-gatherer lifestyle we had been told was the simple lot of Australia’s First People”. Many explorers and colonists wrote of observing people “...building dams and wells, planting, irrigating and harvesting seed, preserving surplus and storing it in houses, sheds, or secure vessels...none of which fitted the definition of hunter-gatherer”.

As well as supporting their economy for millennia, the natural environment is also central to Aboriginal spirituality and their beliefs and social systems. Aboriginal people believe there is no separation between people and nature – everything is connected. In the north-west of South Australia the word

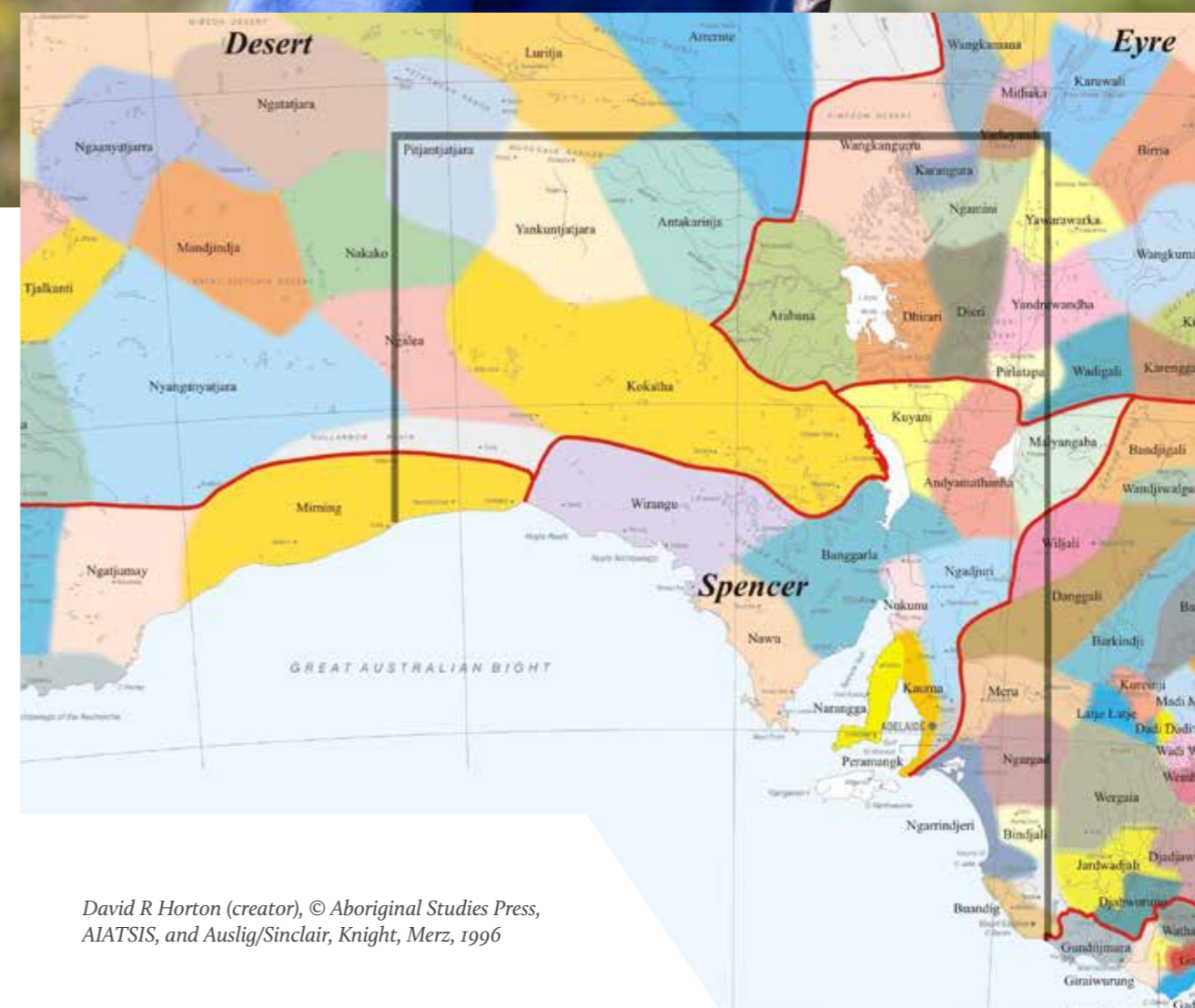
the Pitjantjatjara people, or Anangu, use to describe this is Tjukurpa.

Tjukurpa has many complex but complementary meanings and refers to the creation period. It encompasses religion, law and moral systems, and it defines the relationship between people, plants, animals and the physical features of the land. Tjukurpa contains knowledge of how these relationships came to be, what they mean and how they must be maintained. Western culture does not have an equivalent word that adequately explains these connections.

The Nature of SA acknowledges the First People’s care of country, through wise use of the land and wildlife. We acknowledge the role they played in shaping natural systems over tens of thousands of years, and the continuation of that role today.

There is a tremendous opportunity in South Australia to do a much better job of bringing Aboriginal knowledge and wisdom to the table to help solve today’s seemingly intractable issues. We have much to learn about how to live sustainably in this state from the descendants of the first Australians.

1. Bruce Pascoe. *Dark Emu. Black Seeds: agriculture of accident?* 2014.



## Case study

# Incorporating indigenous world views- recognising the rights and independence of a river in New Zealand

For the local Maori tribes the Whanganui river is considered tupuna (an ancestral being) and is the basis of their culture and identity. This genealogical and intrinsic link with the river is conceptualised in the Maori proverb:

*E rere kau mai te awa nui nei*

*Mai i te kāhui maunga ki Tangaroa*

*Ko au te awa*

*Ko te awa ko au.*

*(For as long as the great river has run its course from the noble assemblage of ancestral mountains to the sea*

*I am the river*

*The river is me.)*

The story of the Whanganui river and the renewed recognition of its place in Maori, and contemporary Aotearoa (New Zealand) culture, provides a unique example of how Indigenous views can reconceptualise governance of water and restore Indigenous rights in governing its use and access.

The river is the third longest in Aotearoa, being 290 km from its source on the slopes of Mt Tongariro to where it meets the sea at Whanganui. While the river does not traverse any western political borders, it does meander through the territory of multiple iwi (Maori tribes).



Through British colonisation of Aotearoa and despite the treaty of Waitangi, authority or chieftainship of the iwi over the river and land was undermined through actions taken by the Crown. For over a century the iwi petitioned against this gradual but persistent takeover of the Whanganui River culminating in a native title claim under the Treaty of Waitangi in 1990. In 2014, the claim finally led to the recognition of the River as Te Awa Tupua (river ancestor), a legal entity with rights and interests of its own, recognising; 1) the cultural significance of the river to Atihaunui-a-Paparangi, 2) the Maori world view that the river cannot be owned; and 3) the need for Maori inclusion in its governance.

Te Awa Tupua is the world's first recognition of rights belonging to anything other than individuals or corporations and is lauded as a major success in the Indigenous rights movement.

Source: Vincent van Uitregt. 2016. *Ko au te awa, kote awa ko au (I am the river and the river is me): Can a Maori approach to river rights be applied in an Australian context? Unpublished essay.*

## Journal article

# Conserving and restoring what exactly?

*“Australia’s unique ecosystems are the result of 60 million years of separate evolution and 60,000 years of human occupation. We reject the notion that restoration aims for some pristine ‘natural state’, especially if this is based on an idealised view of ‘wilderness’ as places untouched by people. Instead we recognise obstinately that Australia’s landscapes co-evolved with people, they are cultural landscapes, shaped by countless generations involved in this co-evolution”.*

This evocative quote makes a salient point about the state of nature, and its management in Australia. Undoubtedly, when Europeans imposed their values and economy on South Australia the changes to nature that followed were profound. As a result there are no ecosystems in South Australia that remain undisturbed, or in a “pre-European” state.

Equally importantly, “pre-European” in itself is a term that does not adequately acknowledge that Aboriginal people lived in and used the landscape for an inconceivably long period of time, shaping the natural environment to provide their physical, cultural and spiritual needs.



We need to consider nature conservation for what it is—a culturally constructed ideal that seeks to protect, conserve and restore the nature that exists now. We cannot seek to conserve or restore a pristine natural state, or idealised wilderness untouched by people, because no such thing has existed in Australia for over 60,000 years.

This does not diminish the value of the nature that surrounds us in SA, that we treasure, benefit from and seek to conserve, but it does give us more options for future management that can be a more honest reflection of the state of our ecosystems, and the change they have, and continue to, experience.

*Source: Andrew Campbell, Jason Alexandra and David Curtis. Reflection on four decades of land restoration in Australia. The Rangelands Journal. 2017.*

## 2

# Strengthen our state narrative around nature

*From just educating or engaging to deepening and celebrating our unique relationship with nature in South Australia*

Individually, people care deeply about the environment. More than 70% of South Australians visit a state or national park each year<sup>2</sup> (over 90% if beaches are included), and 94% of South Australians say conserving the environment is of critical importance.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, this doesn't often translate to our collective conversations about the future of our society or state, leaving the strong support base for conservation largely untapped. Nature doesn't feature in our current list of state priorities and makes up only a small and shrinking part of our state budget, even though it underpins our health and wellbeing, so much of our economic, social and cultural fabric, and indeed our identity as South Australians.

To address this, the work of conservation and partner organisations needs to expand to publicly and continually strengthen our collective narrative around nature in all its forms. That means helping citizens find more ways to celebrate and connect with nature in positive, public ways, and tying these closely to how we appreciated and think about what's special about South Australia.

This is not just responding to expressed community values. In an age of increasing urbanisation and technology, our culture is slowly forgetting the value of nature. Part of our role is to remind our community about how meaningful and therapeutic nature can be, in all its forms. We need to reinforce the notion that nature isn't something that's 'over there' that we visit occasionally or see in travel brochures, nor that it just 'provides us services.'

We are nature. When we re-establish this as part of our western worldview we can re-establish the reciprocal responsibilities to nature that indigenous people have always had, we can begin to shift toward genuinely sustainable footing.



Some of this work is happening already through initiatives like Nature Play, Healthy Parks: Healthy People, but we need to broaden and strengthen this kind of work for adults and all communities. We need festivals, public art, seminars, books, ambassadors, etc. We need groups of citizens celebrating our parklands and natural spaces. We need installations in our airports and city squares trumpeting the quiet, accessible gem of Morialta and the grand splendour of Arkaroola, and because nature benefits everyone, we need cross-sector partnerships collaborating to strengthen this narrative on behalf of the entire South Australian community.

The long-term effect of this work is to steward a community that can itself become better stewards of nature. By working in many and varied ways to reinforce our love of nature more strongly to our collective identity, we can end up in a place where people and politicians say 'of course we respect and protect nature, that's just what South Australians do'.

2. SMK, 2016. *South Australian Parks Visitation Survey 2016*. DEWNR Technical note 2016/32, Government of South Australia, Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Adelaide. <https://data.environment.sa.gov.au/Content/Publications/South-Australian-Parks-Visitation-Survey-2016.pdf>

3. *Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges. South Australians and the Environment 2016*. Report prepared by Harrison Research, Adelaide.

## Case study

# Amongst It: Connection to nature and our state identity

Amongst it is a home-grown South Australian movement of community groups, state and local government, NGOs and individuals, dedicated to connecting South Australians to the remote and everyday nature of our state. South Australia is at the forefront of the global transition to more sustainable ways of living; we are aiming to be the world's first carbon neutral city; we're world-leaders in revolutionary renewable energy projects; and our nature-based tourism industry has won us accolades in Lonely Planet.

And yet, a lot about our lives makes it harder to connect with nature in the everyday. We are working longer, spending more time inside, and are frequently distracted by our devices. We belong to a culture that idolises 'the busy'. Connecting with nature has significant proven benefits for our wellbeing, both physical and mental and could provide the perfect antidote to our increasingly stressful lifestyles if we could just remember to connect.

Amongst it is a network of groups and individuals – from Arts bodies to local government, schools and small businesses – all aiming to connect more South Australians to the nature that surrounds us every day.



It's also about amplifying all the great work already happening here in SA with programs like Nature Play – but it's time for adults of all ages to get into it too.

We don't need to travel far to find it-nature is here in our parks, streets and backyards. From the wilds of the Flinders, to the jacaranda outside your window, we are, already, Amongst it.

The Amongst it project has grown out of an obvious need to increase nature in the narrative of what it is to be South Australian, and to live in South Australia. Over 2017/18 the project will seek partners to join in on a year of experiments to try out a host of ways to invite South Australians to notice, get active in, or share in the beauty of local natural spaces. At the end of the year an evaluation of the many initiatives will be undertaken to help launch a more sustained movement, to improve the lot for nature conservation in SA. In parallel, opportunities are being pursued to undertake research into the assumptions that underpin the change being sought by Amongst it.

Source: [www.amongstSA.org.au](http://www.amongstSA.org.au)

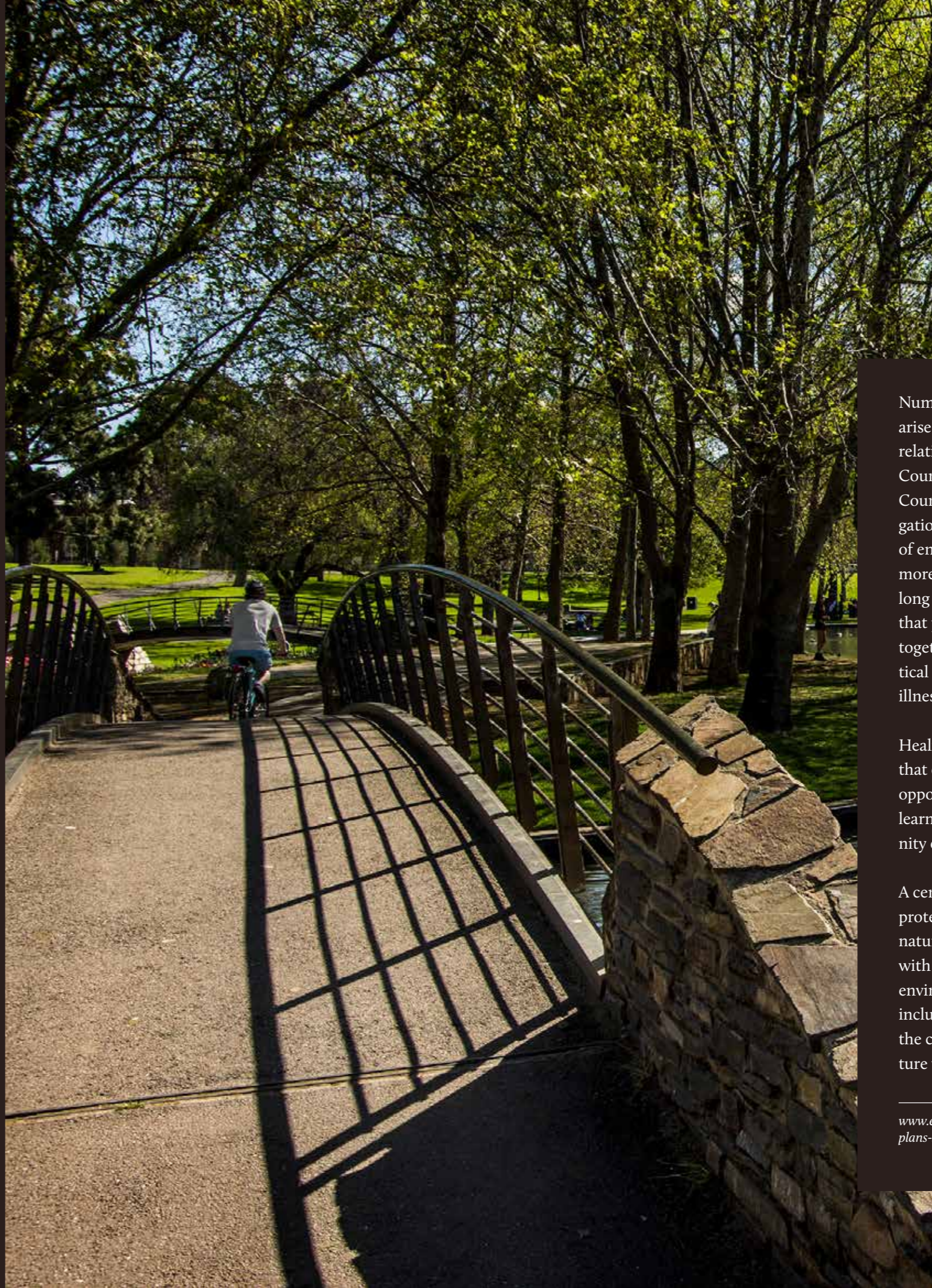
## Case study

# Healthy Parks, Healthy People

Healthy Parks Healthy People SA is a nature-based approach for population health and is supported by a first of its kind Public Health Partner Authority Agreement between the Department for Health and Ageing and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

It is guided by a vision to ensure that all South Australians are connected to nature and recognise it as an integral component of their health and wellbeing. Contact with nature enriches our physical, psychological, social and spiritual health and wellbeing. The links between the natural environment and our own wellbeing have been understood for a long time.

Connection to Country is an important determinant of health for Aboriginal people, who have long understood and benefited from a strong reciprocal relationship with the land. This relationship is described by Aboriginal peoples through the term Caring for Country. Caring for Country centres on the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and their Country, and includes activities that reinforce and support relationships with their physical, cultural, social, economic, and spiritual environment. By using the word 'care', this activity acknowledges responsibility, ethics, emotion and connection with Country.



Numerous studies confirm the benefits that arise from Aboriginal people's reciprocal relationship with their Country. Caring for Country activities also improve the health of Country, contributing to climate change mitigation, biodiversity monitoring, the protection of endangered species, landscape health and more. While the benefits of natural places have long been known, it is only relatively recently that park and health authorities have joined together to translate this knowledge into practical health initiatives, in particular preventing illness and promoting good health.

Healthy Parks Healthy People SA recognises that engaging with nature offers a host of opportunities for play, exercise, relaxation, learning, volunteering and social and community connection.

A central goal of this approach is conserving, protecting and promoting the benefits of nature, which relies on strong partnerships with different groups—Aboriginal, education, environment, health, primary industries, social inclusion and urban planning. As a first step, the campaign Five Ways to Wellbeing in Nature was launched December 2017.

[www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/park-management/plans-strategies-and-policies/healthy-parks-healthy-people](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/park-management/plans-strategies-and-policies/healthy-parks-healthy-people)



### 3

## Hold onto what's working

*From silver bullets to a considered recognition of what really works*

The impact that a globally changing environment has on South Australia's nature does not mean we simply stop implementing our current and traditional nature conservation practices. Many of our existing approaches will remain very important as we work towards improving the condition of our natural landscapes so it is better able to cope with these changes.

Protecting what we still have—'the best bits'—will continue to be critical, not only to maintain as much of the remaining native biodiversity as possible, but also to maximise resilience. Protecting areas, restoring areas, and adapting regulations will all become increasingly important in the future, as will identifying and managing important threats. These levers will remain important to us as the 'how', even if the 'why' may change through time.

We will always need to set priorities and make choices, and will place more value on some species and some places, directing considerable energy and resources at trying to conserve these priorities. But we need to recognise many of these priorities are likely to shift as climate change and other pressures continue to shape the context in which our decisions are made.



### Case study

## South Australia's Protected Area system and climate change

South Australians have had a long history of protecting our natural environment. As early as the second meeting of the South Australian Ornithological Association, in June 1899, members resolved to seek a deputation with the Premier "urging upon him the necessity of protecting our Forest Reserves". The introduction of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 helped to formally recognise and support our community's interest in protecting natural areas. The state's first National Park – Belair- was dedicated in 1891. Today we have 360 parks covering 21.5% of the land area of South Australia, including ten Indigenous Protected Areas and an extensive Marine Protected Areas network.

Even with limited resources for management, protecting areas for conservation is a 'no regrets' action. At the very least these areas allow nature to take precedence, to run its own course, with less of the direct impacts associated with human activity.

However, there is compelling evidence that the impacts of climate change on biodiversity will be significant over the remainder of this century. The magnitude and pervasiveness of future climate change means that all of our conservation programs are facing significant challenges. The role of protected areas has been investigated and fortunately, analysis of our reserve

system indicated that the systematic protection of a diversity of habitats is a robust action and will be even more important for conservation in the future. There is also considerable opportunity to increase the proportion of many of the ecosystems that are protected. The availability and diversity of habitat is likely to be increasingly important for conservation, and increasing diversity within the protected area systems remains a priority. Also, increasingly we will see protection of novel systems in recognition of the important values that these areas support.

New conservation objectives for parks will need to be developed that acknowledge and seek to minimise any losses, while accommodating environmental change. For example, it may become more effective to increase our focus on the protection of environmental settings and ecological processes that support biodiversity, rather than focusing solely on individual species or habitats, which are likely to alter, or move, over time.

A key message is that preparing for the change can occur iteratively, for example through a sequence of management plans, however, we must start now.

Source: Michael Dunlop, David W. Hilbert, et al. Implications for policymakers: Climate change, biodiversity conservation and the National Reserve System. CSIRO. 2012.





## 4

# Value nature in all its forms, **urban and novel**

*From a 'purely natural' as good to nature as good*

Nature is a nuanced term that means different things to different people. For nature conservation to have a broad base of support we need to ensure we embrace the diversity of values and views people hold about all nature. The nature most South Australians encounter most often is in our everyday lives: in our backyards, street trees, gardens and parks, not just 'out there' in remote National Parks or other wild areas.

In Adelaide and across South Australia nature is readily accessible to everyone every day. In Adelaide we are fortunate to have the parklands surrounding the city, Torrens linear park, beaches and numerous other parks and gardens. This is not the nature typically prioritised in conservation plans but nevertheless is vital to help foster community connections with nature, as well as offering

many benefits for our wellbeing. Children forge life-long connections with nature in these places. These areas also bring native species into our cities, towns and backyards allowing us to connect with the wider landscape.

We also need to recognise that much of the nature we value and relate to occurs in landscapes and ecosystems that have been changed dramatically since European colonisation. No system remains as it was when Europeans arrived. Even the outback, where native vegetation has not been cleared on a broadscale, has changed due to: loss of Aboriginal farming and fire practices; grazing pressure from introduced stock, rabbit plagues, and increased numbers of kangaroos; changes to dingo distribution and abundance; and the impacts of introduced predators.

These changes have resulted in the loss of over 20 species of small and medium mammals including bandicoots, rat-kangaroos, hare-wallabies and quolls. The changes in southern parts of the state are even more dramatic.

Some ecosystems have changed so much that they can be considered new, or novel. Many are dominated by agricultural land-uses, and non-indigenous species are also widespread through many ecosystems. Despite all these modifications, the reality is that this is the nature that we now have, it still supports our amazing wildlife and is still vital and often enchanting.

Ultimately, we need to place greater emphasis on valuing all nature, wherever it occurs, and in whatever form it occurs, recognising our own deep connection to nature typically

started near our homes and not in remote wilderness. When we can embrace more than the 'pristine', we learn to appreciate that all landscapes contain nature that is valuable and contributes to our conservation objectives and to celebrate the diverse communities that work to protect it. We need to continue to promote the values and benefits of maintaining all native vegetation, accepting that many aspects of 'novel nature' are present now and are likely to play a larger role in the future.

We believe this deeper connection and recognition of nature in all its forms will lead to a new level of community awareness and care that can translate into widespread support for the future protection and management of nature – an assumption we aim to test early in the roll out of The Nature of SA.



## Research

# Historical, hybrid and novel ecosystems

In the 21st century we need to “move away from partitioning the environment into dichotomous categories (eg natural/unnatural, production/conservation, intact/degraded). Instead landscapes are increasingly characterised by complex mosaics of ecosystems or patches in varying states of modification, each of which delivers various combinations of services...”

Richard Hobbs and numerous other ecologists have been encouraging us to acknowledge the current state of our ecosystems as the starting place for determining future options for conservation and restoration. Most ecosystems are now expected to accommodate the needs of both humans and other species. It is also important for us to acknowledge that many ecosystems have been pushed outside their historical range of variability, and it is unlikely to be practical or feasible to restore them to past conditions. Not only are co-evolutionary drivers no longer present across much of South Australia’s landscape, but recent changes, since Europeans arrived, are pushing ecosystems past their historic limits. Climate disruption only adds to this pressure.

Given this, it is particularly important to consider current values and the range of options available, rather than limiting ourselves solely to traditional approaches. Acknowledging the level of change, and indeed hybrid and novel ecosystems where they exist, need not constitute a threat to existing policy and management approaches, but instead provides us with a more comprehensive toolkit for intervening in rapidly changing landscapes. Both the Monarto Conservation Park and the paddock trees/declining woodland birds examples highlight what is to be gained from such an approach.

*Source: Richard Hobbs, Richard J Hobbs, Eric Higgs, Carol M Hall, Peter Bridgewater, F Stuart Chapin III, Erle C Ellis, John J Ewel, Lauren M Hallett, James Harris, Kristen B Hulvey, Stephen T Jackson, Patricia L Kennedy, Christoph Kueffer, Lori Lach, Trevor C Lantz, Ariel E Lugo, Joseph Mascaro, Stephen D Murphy, Cara R Nelson, Michael P Perring, David M Richardson, Timothy R Seastedt, Rachel J Standish, Brian M Starzomski, Katherine N Suding, Pedro M Tognetti, Laith Yakob, Laurie Yung. Managing the whole landscape: historical, hybrid and novel ecosystems. Frontiers in Ecology 2014.*



## Case study

# Monarto Woodlands Conservation Park

In the 1970s about 2,000 hectares of land that was cleared for agriculture around Monarto were revegetated to improve the setting for a planned satellite city. Approximately 250 species were planted in relatively widely spaced rows, using some local species, but many species from WA. This planting design has resulted in a completely novel system.

The city never eventuated, however, over 40 years later the novel woodlands are providing important habitat for a suite of birds that are declining in the Mount Lofty Ranges. Also, many of the WA plant species are faring better than the local SA species (David Paton pers. comm.).

In 2016 a new Conservation Park was proclaimed under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 in recognition of the important conservation values at the site. This represents a significant shift in thinking, and provides a great example of accepting a system based on current values, rather than making comparisons or judgements based on how natural an area is relative to a historical baseline.

This case study demonstrates the flexibility of our legislation, and highlights shifts already occurring with regard to our cultural and ideological notions of nature.

# 5

## From a purely historical focus to **future-orientated** outcomes

The nature of South Australia's landscapes is not static. The co-evolution of climate, nature and Aboriginal land management resulted in large changes over the past 60,000+ years. Since the arrival of Europeans, abrupt and dramatic change has occurred, driven by the replacement of Aboriginal land management with European models of agriculture and pastoralism. Dramatic shifts are likely to continue in the future, driven by the direct and indirect impacts of climate change. These historic legacies have resulted in a native biota that is quite different to that seen by the first European Australians and many of us have even observed major changes in our own lifetimes.

All this means that restoring our ecosystems to a historic state will become a less viable option in the future, especially at the landscape-scale. This doesn't mean that historic templates are not useful as a guide.<sup>4</sup> But we need to think deeply about what we are trying to achieve, beyond 'what was there', with increasing focus on conserving the things we value and can sustain, as well as on ecosystem function and processes.

There are many tools and frameworks already available to explore which landscape interventions will be most effective and no doubt these will continue to evolve. Whatever

tool we use our challenge is to be more critical about the activities we invest in and the decisions we make to better account for the context within which systems sit, intervene where we can affect system drivers, garner collective action and to learn and refine over time.

Ultimately the suite of direct management actions available to us is relatively limited (e.g. area protection, revegetation, reintroductions, or to manipulate pests, weeds, fire, grazing and water regimes) but there are less conservative options emerging that deserve more consideration such as assisted migration, re-wilding, mixing provenances, bolstering genetic diversity in small populations, food supplementation, and managing non-native species as habitat. These tools will need to be trialled cautiously and with community backing but we need to start considering and testing them as warranted.

4. <https://ianluntecology.com/2015/03/08/future-restoration/>

## Case study

### Considering the whole landscape and the future of biodiversity conservation

The Paddock Tree Project is focussed on supporting the recovery of declining woodland birds in the lower-rainfall production landscapes of the northern and eastern Mount Lofty Ranges by maintaining and expanding paddock tree habitat.

Recent examination of developed areas in the Mount Lofty Ranges has revealed that some parts retain very significant values that are not conserved elsewhere. Current land use practices (such as low-input, extensive livestock production) may even be essential to the persistence of these values.

In recognition of this, the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board has partnered with Trees For Life to deliver the Paddock Tree Project, a unique way of working directly with producers to support the retention of existing production systems and their biodiversity value. The sparse trees and their associated open pasture landscapes currently provide critical habitat for a large number of declining woodland bird species. However, the trees in these areas are typically over 200 years old and most will be gone within the next 50 years, resulting in reduced production benefits (from shade and shelter) and local wildlife extinctions.

To address this issue, the project is planting and protecting a new generation of trees. More

than 250 producers have expressed interest in being involved, and over two winters, 13,500 paddock trees have been planted and 183 naturally regenerating seedlings guarded, across nearly 11,000 hectares. These plantings will help to maintain the value of these landscapes for both production and conservation into the future. The approach is very different to most current practices, which would focus on protecting and restoring the patches of vegetation, but largely ignore the wider landscape values.

Year three of the project is being rolled out in 2018, and will focus on the Northern Mount Lofty Ranges and Barossa regions. Producers with low intensity sheep grazing properties are currently being recruited and investigations are underway to establish partnerships with other organisations to continue and expand the Paddock Tree Project in future.

The issue of paddock tree decline is clearly of concern to many people and the concept of planting scattered paddock trees is being wholeheartedly embraced across the region.

The Paddock Tree Project is an innovation in Landcare practice, as a project that will achieve both biodiversity and productivity benefits without asking landholders to set aside land especially for conservation.

Source: Government of SA The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide 2017 Update 2017; Adelaide and Mount Lofty Natural Resources Management Board; Trees for Life.



# 6

## Decision making requires consideration of **values, rules and knowledge**

*From conflict-focused argument to creative, values-focused decision-making*

Making decisions about nature conservation in today's complex and connected world is challenging. There are widely differing views across society about some of the most fundamental issues relating to nature: how important is nature to human well-being or to our economic prosperity? How much nature do we need to maintain (and where) to be sustainable? Where and how should we invest the limited resources we have to best manage nature?

As our society and climate rapidly change, decision-making about nature becomes even more complex. The current approach has led to polarised debate, a perceived battle between conservation and development, where nature conservation gains are represented as a loss for the economy and employment and vice versa.

There is considerable mistrust and pessimism about current decision-making processes.

Many people feel the precious little habitat we have left will always be traded off in the pursuit of short-term wealth or expediency. Making better decisions about nature is not just a conservation issue; it goes right to the heart of a harmonious and well functioning society. Conflict over decisions ultimately costs more and creates deep division, sometimes spilling over generations making it more difficult to tackle future issues.

The challenges we face require new ways for the community and stakeholders to participate in decision-making. For this to happen, we need to recognise and accept the range of values different people hold about nature

and be open to negotiation and compromise to identify win-win opportunities, or to draw lines in the sand when needed. In turn, decision-makers have a responsibility to be transparent, faithful to the process and accountable for decisions they make.

We can shift decision-making from conflict to creative. Well managed decision making processes open up many new options and opportunities leading to innovative solutions that can better meet and balance people's values and concerns. Working to understand and align community values, bring together technical and local knowledge and foster good governance surrounding decisions helps to create decision 'contexts' conducive to more constructive and effective decision-making.

There are also a myriad of smaller decisions made every day by people and organisations that could be made differently with a greater emphasis on good decision making and governance. Good governance can help to invigorate groups and organisations by making people feel genuinely engaged, ensuring resources are used effectively and reducing conflict. Focusing on how decisions are made can improve how willing people are to be involved or support particular causes or organisations. Having clear principles and communicating them to members of your organisation or community is a good first step to improving governance and decision making.

## Theory

# Increasing options for nature conservation

Making good decisions means finding the sweet spot between having the knowledge to know what to do, the support of stakeholders for the decision (alignment of values) and being allowed to make the decisions by the 'rules' that apply to that particular situation, whether they are formal rules like legislation or informal rules like local norms.

Finding this sweet spot means managing the decision context: where the knowledge, values and rules come together. There is evidence to show that decision making processes that pay attention to values, rules and knowledge can be highly effective, changing how decisions are made and increasing options available. This is particularly the case for making decisions under a changing climate.

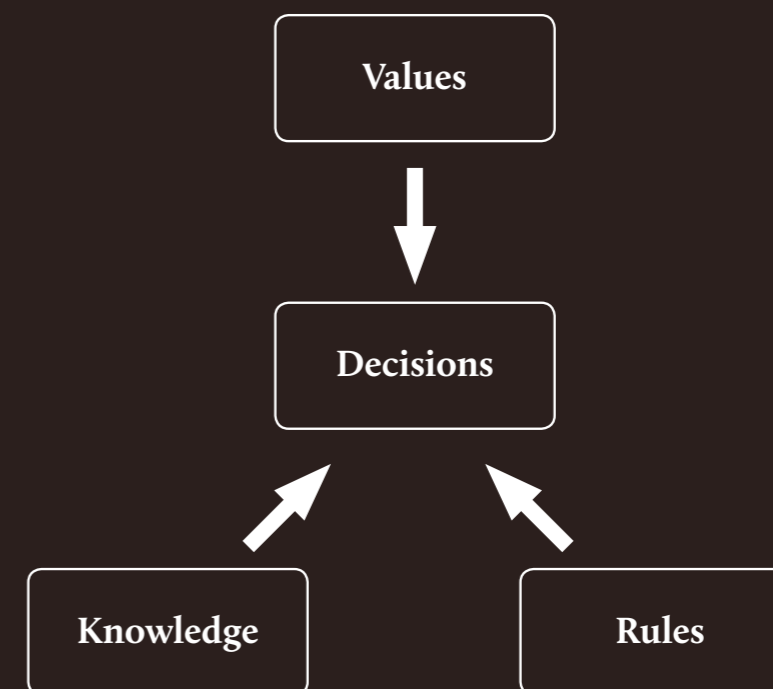
### Two perspectives on decision-making

**A)** "From the decision-making perspective, values, rules and knowledge are independent sets of variables and constraints to be considered when selecting an option;

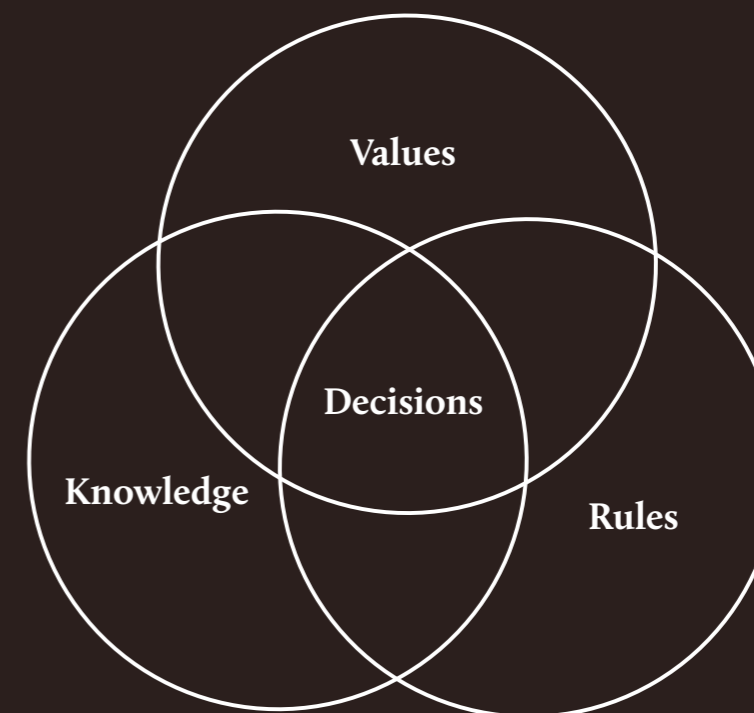
**B)** "From the decision-context perspective, values, rules and knowledge are interconnected systems that define a decision process and enable the construction and evaluation of options. Interactions between values, rules, and knowledge systems limit the set of practical or permissible options; the types of values, rules, and knowledge that can influence the decision and the potential for change in the decision context".

*Source: Russell Gorddard, Matthew J. Colloff, Russell M. Wise, Dan Ware, Michael Dunlop. Values, rules and knowledge: Adaptation as change in the decision context. Environmental Science and Policy 2016, 57, 60-69.*

**A**



**B**



# 7

## We have to learn to change

### *From incidental reporting to intentional learning systems*

Our rapidly changing world means we face social and environmental conditions that have no precedent. In this context history is now less able to anticipate or guide the future. At the same time an increasingly connected and turbulent world means we have less control over many aspects of the world around us.

A world of less certainty and less control requires a different approach. Working in complexity means there are many challenges and surprises – expertise alone is not sufficient – we need a different mind-set, one based on learning our way forward. It also means we have to admit we don't have all the answers without fear of reprisal. We have to be prepared to be surprised, to fail and to accept other points of view about some of the 'truths' we hold dear in conservation. With a learning mind-set, every action becomes a mini experiment, one that can fill a knowledge gap, check an assumption, test a new approach or reveal where our evidence is strong and where it is weak. Building a learning mind-set means a shift in the way we think about, plan and implement actions.

The current system of project funding and reporting is a major barrier for learning. The current project reporting approach is a learning dead end. Funders are reluctant to allow experimentation, while those seeking funding

overstate the impact and likely success they will have, applying for less risky projects, so a slow feedback of smaller safer projects is set in train. Bigger landscape-scale change, the type required under a changing climate, is less likely under small-scale, fragmented projects. Similarly when reporting, no organisation wants to report their project failed; that would mean reduced funding in the future; so we report that every project was a complete success. There are few incentives anywhere in this system for genuine learning.

We need to celebrate learning as an achievement, even if projects 'fail'. A well-designed project, one that is set up to learn, will always be successful if we learn something to inform future work. Redefining what success looks like – that learning is the most valuable thing we can do – might be one of the most critical shifts we can make in nature conservation.



## Theory

# Complex and complicated but in control?

If we think about two axes that are critical for achieving an outcome, control and certainty, in the bottom left-hand corner, where we have high control and high certainty, we are operating in a simple space, we know what to do and we have the control we need to achieve it.

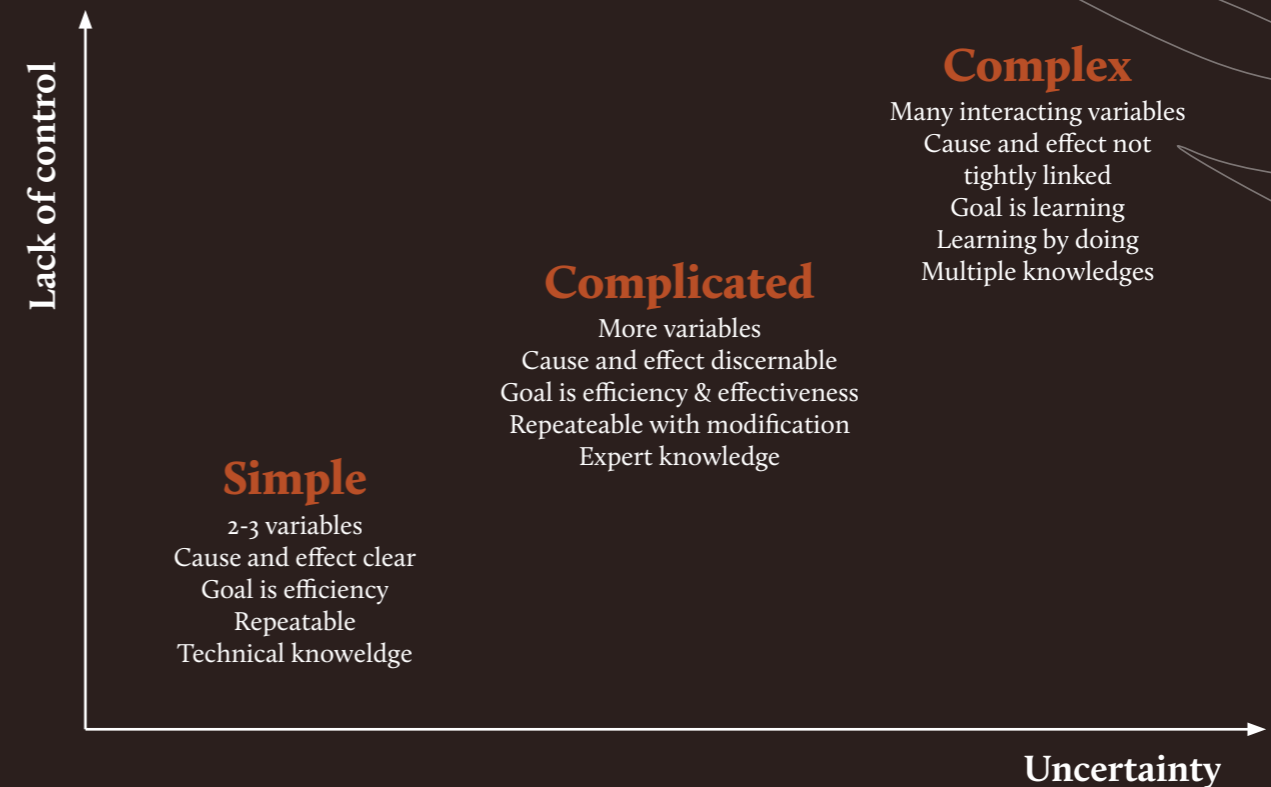
In this space we can rely on technical expertise to design the most effective solution, the best management practice for that problem. Cause and effect are clearly linked. The only real question is how efficiently can we undertake the task—i.e. optimisation. And, once we have worked out the most efficient method, we can teach others how to do it, we can write a guide or prescription for others to follow. Or vice versa, if we have similar simple circumstances, we can observe what others have done and apply it to our situation. Think baking. Once you have worked out a recipe to bake a cake, you reproduce that cake consistently and you can share with others how to bake the same cake.

If we have less control and less certainty, things get more complicated. The difference between complicated and simple is that there are now multiple possible ways to achieve the desired outcome. The question is not just how efficient can we be? But also what is the most effective way to achieve the desired outcome. Cause and effect are still fairly discernible, we may need to experiment, but we can find a solution

that works for our context. We can still rely on expertise, those that have observed patterns of cause and effect over time can identify a way to work in this complicated space.

We can learn from others working in similar complicated settings, but we will probably have to make adjustments for our context. Building a rocket is complicated, but there is a lot of existing knowledge to draw on, there is lots of expertise that can be applied. Cause and effect in jet propulsion is known. You may have to experiment a bit, but eventually you will find something that works for your context and from there it is possible to predict outcomes. This process of adapting and learning in complicated spaces produces lots of variations. For example, think of all the different methods for revegetation across the country, a multitude of solutions to the same problem, based on context.

When control and certainty are very low, the situation is highly complex. Cause and effect are not tightly linked and it is hard to discern patterns in complex systems. We can't just take what has worked elsewhere; our context is unique. Because there are not clear patterns of cause and effect, expertise is less potent here, you need other types of knowledge and you need to experiment, a lot, to learn your way through.



The frustrating aspect of working in complex problem spaces is that you often really only know you have succeeded in hindsight. It is almost impossible to predict what the outcomes of any action will be because there are so many seen and unseen linkages, the breeding ground for unintended consequences.

The best approach here is to design 'fail safe' experiments, small scale, minimum resources, and low potential for spread of unintended consequences. You can then upscale what works, but being watchful for changed circumstances that mean the new 'solution' is no longer the best fit. A good analogy is raising teenagers. Every teenager is different, each day is different and just because you raised one 'successfully' doesn't mean the next one will be a success! Similarly you can't write a prescription for someone to follow to raise a teenager.

The best you can do is suggest some guiding principles, then go with gut feel and intuition. The upside of working in complex spaces is there is great potential for transformation, new opportunities for changes in direction arise often, sometimes abruptly.

In nature conservation things are rarely simple, they are mostly between the complicated and complex space, sometimes morphing from one to the other and back again depending on how the context changes. The challenge for us all is to recognise the context we are working in and shift our thinking and practice accordingly when we often are locked into ways of operating by our own thought process, our institution and our history.

Source: Paul Ryan, Australian Resilience Centre  
[www.ausresilience.com.au](http://www.ausresilience.com.au)





## 8

# A resilient conservation sector is critical

*From accepting burn-out as normal to a healthy workforce with strong and diverse capabilities*

The conservation sector needs to regard its people as its most important asset. Workforce and capability reviews are commonplace in other professional sectors to ensure sufficient and suitably qualified employees will be available to meet future needs and identify where training, development, recruitment and investment is required.

Despite the high vocational standards required to join the conservation workforce and the talent and professionalism on which it relies, the profession is rarely regarded or supported in the same way as many of its peers.

The Nature of SA has identified a plethora of skills required to take carriage of the nature conservation and resilience agenda and it

will be important that the sector, tertiary and other training providers build upon these to adequately prepare the professionals of the future.

The sector also needs to see itself as a much broader church. Everyone has a stake in protecting nature and there are so many different skills, perspectives and roles available to collaborate on this challenge.

We need to explore workforce, volunteer and ambassador models that embrace and utilise these differences and reach more effectively while maintaining the core technical expertise required to guide delivery, strategy and decision making. Tertiary educators should also build on the integrated foundations laid

by the national school curricula to ensure all vocations better understand the benefits of nature to their professional goals and their respective duty of care.

Like many other community service sectors the conservation workforce, which includes a strong volunteer contingent, is often exposed to prolonged periods of high stress and at times trauma. Stress reduces a worker's ability to concentrate, work collaboratively and think creatively; all skills essential in the modern workplace. Unfortunately this stress is also often taken home leading to other more significant and personal consequences.

Other service agencies, such as health and social services, are now implementing

professional and self-care plans to ensure their workforce remain healthy and productive and it will be important that we follow their lead. Perhaps just as importantly, we need to be more aware and deliberate in looking after ourselves and each other.

Collaborating better with other organisations, partnering with our interstate and international counterparts and sharing knowledge will be beneficial to the sector's resilience and provides an opportunity to strengthen relationships with the broader community. A sector that has robust capacity, is well connected, healthy and shares a common vision is likely to be more resilient and effective in the long term.

## Case study

# Trees For Life: Growing Communities project

Trees for Life has recognised the need to build capacity to adapt and innovate so they can activate new audiences to connect with nature and contribute through volunteering. A specific project was developed to build the capacity of Trees for Life staff in human centred design and innovation methods. The new knowledge was applied to increase understanding of how and why people in Adelaide connect with nature, participate in nature-based volunteering and plant natives in their gardens. Trees for Life wanted to know what they could do to create new programs or experiences, or update existing experiences for new audiences.

The capacity building workshops trained staff in human-centred design, how to undertake in-depth interviews and how to design and implement prototype projects.

A human-centered mindset helps you to see things from many different perspectives, to be curious and open to other people's thinking and ideas to build deeper insight into their motivations and aspirations so you can create better experiences for them. This is essential to really hear what the community has to say about connecting to nature, and to unlock innovation.

Following in-depth interviews, insights obtained were collated and interrogated to identify themes and opportunities for prototype projects.

Three prototype projects were implemented: designing and running workshops to promote use of native plants in gardens, exploring value propositions for why organisations undertake 'corporate volunteering' and two nature nights aimed at connecting people who have recently arrived in Australia with our wildlife.

Evaluation of prototype projects is a critical step in the process. As a result of the program three areas of work will be followed-up with ongoing prototyping and action. An 'Innovation Guide' has also been developed through the process to help embed the innovation culture at Trees for Life.

*The Growing Communities Project was funded with a grant from the Myer Foundation and training and support was provided by the Australian Centre for Social Innovation and Hinterland Innovation. The project was undertaken with project partners Cities of Onkaparinga and Tea Tree Gully and natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges.*



*Growing Communities project staff visited community members' homes and gardens to perform in-depth, ethnographic interviews to understand their many and varied relationships with nature.*

# 9

## Remember what we **love** about nature and start there

*From loss and utility to starting with love and connection*

We all have our own personal story about how we came to be connected to nature. Typically, it involves being in nature as young kids, and being amazed and excited by our experiences.

As we pursued our passion for nature we gained a knowledge and understanding of the problems it faces. Today, in a world hungry for stories and news, it is easy to be overwhelmed by the ongoing loss of nature occurring globally, and the ‘doom and gloom’ portrayed through the media can make us feel genuinely depressed and disempowered.

Despite this effect, our natural tendency is to appeal to people with facts and figures about species in decline, habitat being lost, the impacts of pests and weeds, and the risks posed to their lifestyle in the hope it will motivate them to take action in some way. However, modern science of the human brain and psychology tells us that this approach may have been counter-productive, and clearly points to a more effective approach.

When we use evocative words and images and simply reflect the very things about nature that enchanted us in the first place, we are much more likely to motivate people to take action. This is the basis for the global love not loss campaign.<sup>5</sup> The whole process becomes more uplifting for us too, partly through



reconnecting with our first love of nature, and also by focussing more on hope ourselves.

In contrast, when we hit people with all the problems, and place little or no emphasis on providing hope or tangible ways that people can help, we simply encourage them to switch off. It all seems too hard and people feel like the problems are too big or complex for them to make a difference. This is our natural human response.

This does not mean we simply ‘spin’ positive stories. Of course, we still need to be honest and communicate the problems and threats to help people understand; however, we need to couch this with messages of love and hope, and a call to action to evoke their intrinsic love of nature and values of fairness, benevolence, responsibility and unity with nature.

5. <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/commission-education-and-communication/our-work/love-not-loss>

## Case Study

# Common Cause for Nature

### Story behind Common Cause for Nature

*“Creating and maintaining a sustainable, wildlife-rich world requires active, concerned citizens and a political system capable of rising to the challenge. Governments, businesses and the public will need the space and motivation to make the right choices.*

*A large body of psychological research demonstrates that values – the things we consider important in life – are vital in creating this space and motivation. The values we hold are shaped by institutions, communications and experiences; the conservation sector inevitably shapes them too.*

*Thirteen UK conservation organisations with a broad range of remits came together in 2012 to explore the values the sector promotes in its communications, campaigns and other activities. Original linguistic research was supplemented by numerous workshops, interviews, and a survey with those in the sector. By learning from what works and reforming what does not, the sector can ensure the work it carries out cultivates the values that inspire action.”*

For much more information visit:  
Common Cause Australia: [www.commoncause.org.au](http://www.commoncause.org.au)  
and Common Cause UK: [www.valuesandframes.org](http://www.valuesandframes.org)

Source: <http://valuesandframes.org/download/reports/Common-Cause-for-Nature-Full-Report.pdf>



In summary the findings suggest when communicating about conservation:

### Try to

- Show how amazing nature is and share the experience of wildlife;
- Talk about people, society and compassion as well as the natural world;
- Explain where and why things are going wrong;
- Encourage active participation: exploration, enjoyment, and creativity.

### Avoid

- Relying on messages that emphasise threat and loss;
- Appeals to competition, status, money, or frames that imply a transaction between an NGO and its supporters;
- Economic frames;
- Attempts to motivate people with conflicting intrinsic and extrinsic values;
- Segmenting audiences based on values.

Communicating in this way encourages all of us to reconnect with the feelings and experiences that led us to connect deeply with nature. Communicating through this perspective is much more powerful than focussing on ‘doom and gloom’, as it helps to propagate hope within us and others.



where  
next?

# Where next?

SA's No Species Loss (state biodiversity strategy) was a reflection of biodiversity conservation planning and action in 2006/7, when it was written. Fast forward to 2017, and the paradigm that underpins nature conservation has shifted significantly. We are working in ever changing landscapes, climate and culture, and the Nature of SA set out to foster thinking and practice that would serve our nature conservation efforts well in this challenging context.

One of the critical tenets of the Nature of SA as we work with such uncertainty is to bring a 'learning mindset'. Much of the change we have experienced and expect in future is likely to be rapid, complicated and unpredictable. It will be difficult to plan precisely for the outcomes we want and calculate the exact pathway to achieve them. Testing and learning as we act will allow us to adapt to our understanding as it builds and as circumstances change. We need to learn our way forward. The only certainty is that if we do not take urgent action to halt the decline of biodiversity then we will lose many more species in the coming decades and see the erosion of South Australia's natural capital with consequences for all South Australian endeavours.

The Nature of SA process has been a pivotal and collaborative process to guide key South Australian stakeholders such as state agencies, eNGOs, primary producers and local government on the journey to becoming modern biodiversity conservationists. While the Nature of SA process has led from the front globally in terms of our discussions it reflects many strong contemporary themes in scientific literature and debate. The Nature of SA reflects a mind shift the global conservation community will ultimately need to make.

Now, as we move to implement the Nature of SA, building from our collective learning is essential. A series of new projects are being developed and rolled out with partners across the State to test the nine shifts, learn more and hone our skills. Over time these projects will be showcased and brought together with related case studies and emerging literature to strengthen practice and highlight further opportunities to learn or test new approaches. A community of practice will underpin this work to share learnings, build momentum and capacity.



We also need to increase the support of the wider community, to ensure that the work we do has broad support, and is adequately resourced. Engaging new 'actors' is a focus of several Nature of SA shifts and a key next step to improve conservation of nature in South Australia. These shifts build on the understanding that connecting people to nature builds on an innate care for nature shared by most South Australians that will have mutual benefits.

For example, we know farmers play a critical role in conservation as a large proportion of our biodiversity exists on the land they manage and value. We share many values with farmers and the agricultural sector and the Nature of SA promotes opportunities to better reflect this common ground and opportunities to do more together. The Amongst It project (see case study on page 28) for urban areas will

provide lessons to inform future iterations of this work. Amongst It encourages people from all walks of life to celebrate and share their relationship with nature as a way of promoting our collective connection to nature in our everyday life as South Australians. Amongst It has inspired many small but powerful actions and brought new interest groups to the table. We will look to expand this work.

Nature of SA's shifts will inform a set of principles being developed to guide our future nature conservation efforts that can be applied at any scale. The principles will be critical to inform strategic policy, decision-making and program development to shape the way we talk about nature and inform future investment strategies, including programs funded by the Australian Government.

# Get involved

To continue the conversation or find out more we invite you to get in touch with one of the following people:

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We look forward to your participation in the process.

# Thank you

*First and foremost, thank you to all those across the conservation sector and beyond who have fully engaged in the myriad of rich, heartfelt, open and, at times, quite difficult discussions that has enabled this work thus far.*

## Nature of SA Sponsors

Sandy Pitcher *CE DEWNR*  
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Paul Dalby, *NRM innovation strategy*  
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