



Auspicing environmental management

Gawler River Riparian Restoration (GRRR)

GRRR is a group of landholders and volunteers who are working to return part of the Gawler River Corridor to a state of biodiversity approaching the ecosystems in place prior to colonial settlement. This involves the removal of exotic species and re-establishment of locally-endemic species; principally plants that form the basis of various ecosystems. This work is done consciously with the intention of bringing the public to its rivers and understanding how vital they are for the health and well-being of both landscapes and humans. GRRR works with Gawler and Light Councils and the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board.



Submission to The SA Planning System Implementation Review 2022

The group has spent a decade working on about 2 kilometres of the north and south banks of the Gawler River and has had success in re-establishing healthy ecosystems and notes that the land adjacent to the river channel is critical to the success of the riparian ecosystem. The river channel, by itself, is not capable of supporting a balanced ecosystem. This is borne-out by numerous academic research reports. **The floodways and billabongs are most important but land up to a kilometre from the channel is important for the total river corridor ecosystem.**

In order to care for the WHOLE river corridor, suburban development should ideally be kept at that distance. Issues such as invasion by garden exotics, damage to fauna populations by pets, un-natural run-off and detritus from drains and hard surfaces contaminate waterways. Herbicides and pesticides cause a range of chronic and acute problems, light and noise upsets fauna bio-rhythms. That said....it is amazing how small, quiet parks with adequate vegetation can support wild ecosystems.

The Adelaide parklands are generally busy and highly modified, and offer poor opportunities for the restoration of complex ecosystems but parts of the Gawler River and its tributaries travel through National Parks and Rural land apex species like raptors can live and breed.

Our group submits that it is critical for rare and endangered species and vital for biodiversity of Northern Adelaide that farmland be protected and farmers rewarded for maintaining or restoring suitable flora and aquatic features of the landscape. The concept of a series of second generation parklands to girdle Adelaide, particularly using the river systems, is **good planning for the future**.

Farmers understand biological cycles and assets, are familiar with pest control, fencing and animal care and are perfect people to care for these 'fat' biodiversity corridors.

This land should be protected for decades or centuries, so the current EFPA status is insufficient and it seems the status of the Protected Districts is the only current effective solution. Whilst individual landholders can become involved in Biodiversity Offsets (which has merit), they provide only a piecemeal effect.

Ironically, the mining of loam along the river has created numerous 'artificial' wetlands and some this abandoned loam pits are now over 50 years old and bursting with biodiversity. One such area near Gawler has had some 95 bird species recorded and is visited by nature photographers regularly. Despite some dangerous slopes etc left by the loam miners, it is also used as a walking area for local people.

The work of GRRR's landholders and volunteers has seen steady and sometimes spectacular landscape improvements, but such efforts can be quickly undone, as evidenced by inappropriate subdivisions (old and recent) along the Gawler River, virtually right to the channel edge.

GRRR urges the Expert Panel to provide a mechanism for permanent protection of rural land along the Gawler River , particularly with respect to the southern Gawler area where our group is active.

GRRR can provide evidence of success and visits to our sites. We win grants regularly from the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board for the work we do, and, as an example, have planted some 7500 locally endemic plants on the floodway downstream of the Gawler Bypass Bridge in the last two years.





The Precinct is an important link in the Metropolitan Open Space System, part of the proposed Gawler-to-Sea bike/hike trail and can easily be linked to the major bike trail (Stuart O’Grady bikeway) from Adelaide to Gawler, which in-turn links to Angaston via the Barossa Bikeway. It also provides access to the river corridor for rapidly-growing urban populations north and south of the Gawler River and incorporates the Murray Hillier Reserve, home of the Gawler River Pony Club. It is close to the location of the expanding Sports Park at Karbeethan Reserve.

