



## Murray Mallee Regional Plan

### Overview

Between 25 March 2025 and 17 June 2025, communities, councils, state agencies, industries, interest groups and other key stakeholders were invited to have their say on the Murray Mallee Regional Plan (the Plan).

The Plan is the one of seven regional plans for South Australia developed in a 100% digital, dynamic, and interactive Regional Planning Portal. This will allow for real-time updates which will ensure the plan remains contemporary and provides users easy access to the regional plans via the accessible interface.

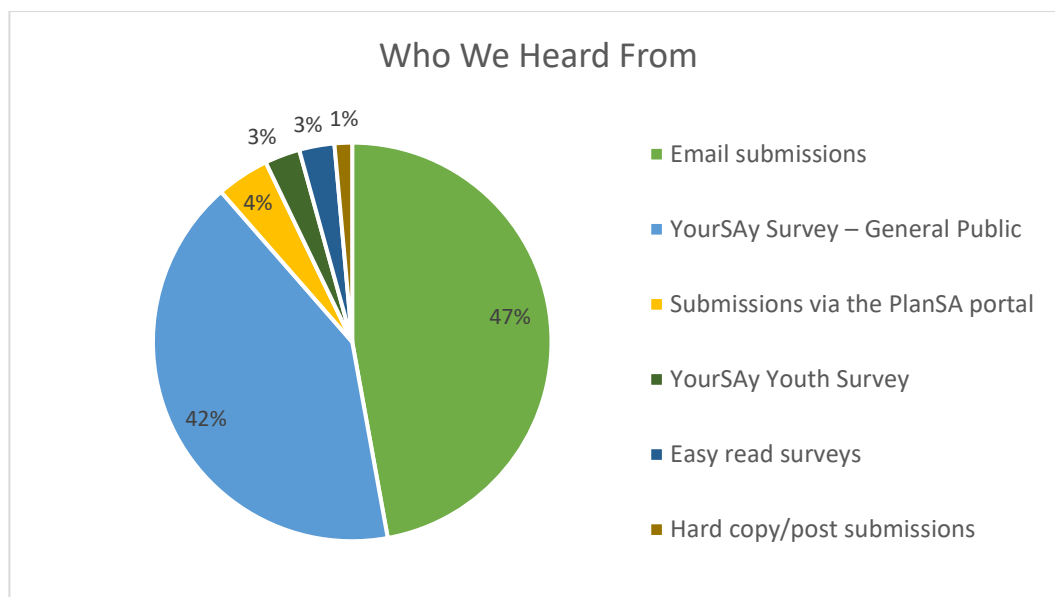
The Plan sets out a vision for sustainable growth across the region, with an additional 28,000 residents expected by 2051. Growth will be concentrated on the Regional City of Murray Bridge and key service centres including Renmark, Loxton, Waikerie, Mannum, Tailem Bend, Berri and Barmera. The Plan supports economic resilience through strategic land use, job creation in tourism, agriculture, viticulture and renewable energy, and by ensuring access to affordable and diverse housing. It prioritises integrated planning that safeguards water security, biodiversity and natural landscapes, while addressing climate change, natural disasters and an ageing workforce. Ensuring liveability, resilience and economic opportunity will be central to delivering a prosperous and sustainable future for the Murray Mallee.

This document provides an overview of the engagement activities undertaken and a short summary of the main themes of feedback received during the engagement process.

### Who we heard from

Submissions and survey responses were received from a range of stakeholders including members of the public, landowners, industry, community groups and government. We received 70 responses via online and hard copy submissions and YourSAy survey responses.

Many individuals and organisations provided detailed and comprehensive feedback on the Plan, and we are grateful for their contribution.



## What we heard

Whilst the feedback received from the survey and submissions covered a diverse range of topics and viewpoints, the key areas of feedback can be categorised under the following five themes of the Plan:

- People, housing and liveability
- Productive economy
- Natural resources, environment and landscapes
- Transport and infrastructure
- Delivery and implementation

Feedback was well spread across all themes, with people, housing and liveability, transport and infrastructure and productive economy as the three most highly rated or commented on themes.

Each theme had key subthemes when grouped as part of consultation analysis. The key subthemes across consultation were:

- Housing supply and diversity
- Primary industry
- Strategic transport networks

## People, housing and liveability

Key feedback relating to this theme included:

- There is a strong call for diverse and affordable housing to meet population growth needs, with particular emphasis on aging populations, older renters, seasonal workers, and key workers. Specific targets and measurable commitments for social and affordable housing were key issues for respondents.
- Many respondents highlight housing affordability as a pressing issue, noting that high costs and limited availability restrict workforce attraction and retention, especially in health and community services sectors. This in turn affects quality of living standards with access to health and community services lessened.
- Concerns about housing quality, with calls for improved design standards that promote sustainability, thermal efficiency, and integration of green infrastructure to support well-being and climate resilience, particularly for older people.
- Respondents highlight workforce accommodation shortages, particularly for agricultural, tourism, and healthcare sectors, urging planning to enable workers' housing near employment hubs. Tourism and workforce accommodation then 'compete', placing a strain on housing availability for both sectors.
- Protection of town character and regional identity, with emphasis on maintaining the heritage, aesthetic values, and distinctive rural or small-town feel of communities such as Renmark, Loxton, Tailem Bend, and Murray Bridge.
- Some respondents highlighted that Aboriginal cultural heritage recognition and integration into planning processes is inconsistently addressed. Respondents urge meaningful engagement with Traditional Owners - including detailed cultural and language group mapping - and embedding Aboriginal ecological knowledge and heritage protection into land use, development policies and all plans moving forward.
- Challenges of balancing residential expansion with the preservation of productive agricultural land and ecological values are noted; support exists for infill and well-planned growth within existing township boundaries to minimise "zone creep" to maintain township character.
- Some respondents express concerns about loss of liveability due to overdevelopment, traffic growth, and infrastructure strain, with calls for planning to consider community well-being, mental health supports, and provision of accessible public spaces and community facilities.
- There were a number of individual submissions looking to rezone specific parcels of land.

## Productive economy

Key feedback relating to this theme included:

- Primary production remains a key issue for respondents in relation to the regional economy, with strong support for protecting high-value agricultural land, including irrigated horticulture zones and dryland farming areas, to ensure long-term economic sustainability.
- Respondents emphasise the importance of safeguarding productive land from rezoning pressures and infrastructure encroachments, such as renewable energy developments, and recommend mapping and protection frameworks for productive agricultural areas.
- Recognition of renewable energy projects (solar, wind, battery storage) as important emerging industries, with calls for spatial identification of suitable “go zones” and integration of mining and energy infrastructure corridors to support economic diversification.
- Tourism is identified as a key growth sector, with particular emphasis from multiple respondents on the River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve as a unique asset capable of driving tourism, science-based careers and regional visitor economy growth.
- Recommendations include updating tourism data, facilitating tourism-related development aligned with landscape character, and improving policy coordination through proposed Tourism Development Code Amendments that include Aboriginal consultation.
- Mineral and energy resources are significant to regional economic development. Mining and exploration industry bodies seek inclusion in planning processes and updated recognition of key projects, while advocating for preventing resource sterilisation and balancing coexistence with other land uses.
- Retail and local business growth are tied directly to transport infrastructure and workforce availability, with calls for coordinated economic strategies that integrate land use, employment zones, and infrastructure investment.
- The economic inclusion and empowerment of Aboriginal communities are perceived as underdeveloped, with recommendations to strengthen support for cultural tourism, arts, and economic participation.
- Several submissions highlight the importance of supporting emerging and diverse economic drivers beyond traditional sectors, such as social enterprises, local manufacturing, creative and digital industries, and circular economy initiatives.

## Natural resources, environment and landscapes

Key feedback relating to this theme included:

- Protecting biodiversity and natural heritage is a key feature of responses, with strong support for increased habitat protection, native vegetation retention, and incorporation of threatened ecological community mapping in planning tools. A number of respondents do not want growth at the cost of the environment.

- Respondents link healthy natural environments to regional liveability, economic sustainability (particularly tourism and agriculture), and community well-being.
- Climate change considerations require strengthening; many respondents call for updated, longer-term climate risk projections (to 2100 and beyond), integrated climate adaptation strategies, and inclusion of climate resilience criteria in all planning.
- Calls for greater emphasis on urban greening, tree canopy targets, and green infrastructure to mitigate heat exposure and enhance climate resilience.
- Coastal and riverine environments need protection from inappropriate development, erosion, flooding, and pollution. Several submissions recommend recognition of “blue” and “teal” carbon ecosystems and incorporation of nature-based solutions for coastal defence and habitat restoration.
- Natural hazard management, including floodplain avoidance, bushfire risk reduction, and emergency planning, is highlighted as essential. Several respondents noted outdated levee systems and incomplete hazard mapping needing updating and policy integration.
- Emissions reduction and pollution management, including concerns about spray drift, dust storms, and industrial contaminants (e.g., PFAS), are raised in relation to agricultural practices and infrastructure developments.
- Cumulative environmental impacts of multiple developments (renewable energy infrastructure, land clearing) need to be better assessed and managed through a coordinated regional approach.

## Transport and infrastructure

Key feedback relating to this theme included:

- Transport network reliability is a critical concern. Improvements to public transport, active travel infrastructure (cycle lanes, walkability), and community transport options are advocated to enhance accessibility, especially for older people and those without private vehicles.
- Submission highlights include congestion, safety issues (notably heavy vehicle traffic near schools), and infrastructure backlog, such as maintenance needs on the Sturt Highway and safety on freight routes.
- Support exists for strategic transport projects like the Greater Adelaide Freight Bypass, duplication of key highways, and sealing of major freight roads, but with calls for alternative routes that minimise community disruption.
- Digital connectivity was identified a number of times as a major limitation, particularly due to the shutdown of Telstra’s 3G network, and is critical for modern farming, education, health access, and economic participation.

- Integrated Water Management (IWM) is supported as a sustainable approach encompassing supply, demand, stormwater, and recycled water, with calls for the regional plan to recognise constraints such as groundwater depletion and the impact of climate variability.
- Social infrastructure deficits, including health services, aged care, childcare, emergency services, and community facilities, are flagged as barriers to growth and liveability, requiring greater coordination and funding support.

## **Delivery and implementation**

- There is broad support for cross-government and inter-agency collaboration, with submissions requesting clearer roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms across state agencies, councils, utilities, and community stakeholders.
- Monitoring and reporting frameworks are sought to track progress on housing supply, infrastructure delivery, environmental outcomes, and economic development.
- Several councils request integration of their Growth Strategies into the Regional Plan and alignment of Code Amendments to support land supply and growth objectives.
- Transparency and accessibility of planning data and digital tools (mapping portals) require improvement, addressing usability issues and ensuring that data layers are clear and up to date.
- Engagement with Aboriginal groups, local communities, and industry representatives is highlighted as critical to successful implementation, with calls for structured frameworks enabling meaningful participation and early involvement in rezoning and development processes.
- Reviews of planning policy instruments, including the Planning and Design Code and overlays (e.g., Native Vegetation Overlay, Character Preservation Districts), are recommended to enhance flexibility, enforceability, and consistency with environmental and heritage objectives.
- Five-year review cycles for the Regional Plans and related strategies are supported to ensure adaptive management in response to emerging data, climate change challenges, and community needs.
- Calls for infrastructure strategies that prioritise coordinated delivery, funding models aligned with growth, and proactive planning to unlock zoning potential are recurrent.

## Townships

A range of useful and specific feedback was received relating to key areas in the regions, with some of the key commentary listed below. The areas below were not the only areas in responses, but where the areas mentioned most by respondents.

### Murray Bridge

- Recognised as a major growth centre with significant opportunities for residential and employment expansion, but infrastructure constraints - particularly in water and wastewater services - pose challenges to development delivery.
- Strong advocacy for coordinated infrastructure strategies, including integrated urban design frameworks and the need for affordable housing solutions considering existing service limitations.
- Desire to elevate Murray Bridge's status as a satellite city distinct from Greater Adelaide, ensuring regional planning documents reflect its strategic economic and demographic role.

### Renmark and Paringa

- Support for residential growth in Renmark, aligned with local Growth Strategy targets, alongside strong emphasis on protecting irrigated horticultural land to maintain agricultural viability.
- Calls for expanded community facilities and infrastructure to accommodate population growth and sustain township liveability.
- Employment growth supported in Paringa and Old Calperum, with proposed rezoning to facilitate diversified land uses.

### Loxton and Waikerie

- Endorsement of planned growth with expanded township boundaries, contingent on essential infrastructure upgrades in water, wastewater, energy, and digital connectivity.
- Emphasis on balancing growth with protection of primary production zones, particularly Environment and Food Production Areas, to avoid fragmentation of agricultural land.
- Recognition of renewable energy and bioenergy innovation as vital sectors, with recommendations for compatible zoning and integration into local economies.

### Berri and Barmera

- Urgent need for affordable and worker housing to support essential services workforce retention and respond to underrepresented population growth projections.
- Infrastructure limitations in water, power, and telecommunications identified as key barriers to unlocking zoned land and enabling growth.
- Calls for greater integration of local growth strategies into the Regional Plan with clear recognition of Berri's role as a principal service centre.



## Next steps

All feedback received during the 12-week consultation will be reviewed and considered for inclusion in the final version of the Plan.

Once updated, the revised Plan will be submitted to the State Planning Commission for endorsement. Following endorsement, it will be submitted to the Minister for Planning for approval.

We anticipate the finalised Plan will be publicly released by late 2025 and made available via the [Regional Planning Portal](#).

## Contact

Enquiries relating to the Murray Mallee Regional Plan can be directed to:

Contact: PlanSA

Telephone: 1800 752 664

Email: [plansa@sa.gov.au](mailto:plansa@sa.gov.au)

Visit: [regional.plan.sa.gov.au](http://regional.plan.sa.gov.au)