



## Far North Regional Plan

### Overview

Between 12 February and 7 May, communities, councils, state agencies, industries, interest groups and other key stakeholders were invited to have their say on the Far North Regional Plan (the Plan).

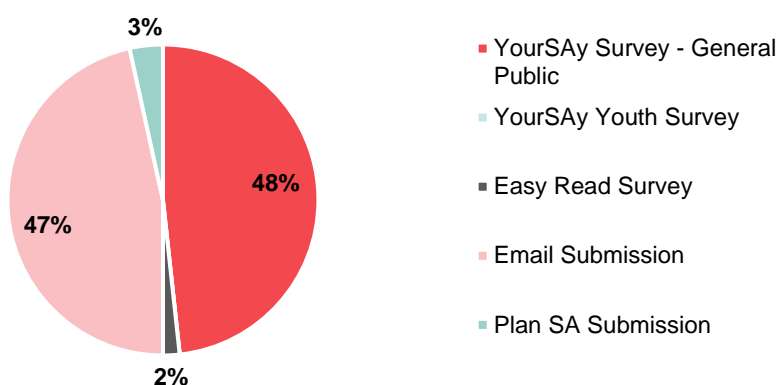
The Plan is one of seven new regional plans for South Australia to be developed in a 100% digital, dynamic, and interactive Regional Planning Portal. This will allow for real-time updates which will ensure the plan remains contemporary and provides users easy access to the regional plans via the accessible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

The Plan addresses key priorities for the Far North, such as promoting economic prosperity, ensuring there is enough housing and preserving the region's cultural heritage and natural resources. The Plan is a visionary 30-year roadmap aimed at fostering a resilient, prosperous, healthy, and connected future for the Far North communities. Climate change mitigation, convenient transport infrastructure, and diverse housing options will be integral to achieving this vision of sustainable growth and community well-being. The Plan delivers on these key outcomes.

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 56 responses via online and hard copy submissions, YourSAY survey responses, and Easy Read 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
- Implementation and delivery.

Feedback was well spread across all themes, with People, housing and liveability, and Natural resources, environment and landscapes as the two most highly commented on themes.

### People, housing and liveability

Key feedback relating to this theme included:

- Lack of appropriate housing was seen as a barrier to attracting essential workers such as police, nurses, teachers, and aged care staff, particularly in remote towns. Feedback emphasised the need for housing that better reflects evolving community needs, including aged-friendly, affordable, accessible, and climate-resilient homes.
- Some respondents noted that supply of housing is not the core issue, particularly for some locations where large numbers of homes remain vacant or uninhabitable. Respondents would like to see existing housing restored before further development is pursued. (
- People value the lifestyle of the Far North and want to remain in or return to their communities. However, cost of living pressures, unreliable services (such as water, power, and transport), and limited health and education opportunities were identified as barriers to staying. Respondents stressed the need for better services, community infrastructure, greener public space and active transport connections to enhance liveability.
- Local pride in heritage buildings and the unique character of towns like Coober Pedy, Blinman and Beltana was evident, with calls to protect these assets while adapting to future needs. Some respondents expressed their preference for enabling infill development that fits within the character of towns, rather than developing new growth areas. =
- Respondents felt the current planning system makes it too difficult to build or renovate homes, particularly where native vegetation laws or zoning constraints apply. Some people expressed frustration at a lack of clear, timely advice from authorities and called for more localised decision-making.

## Productive economy

Key feedback relating to this theme included:

- Respondents want economic growth in the Far North to benefit local communities, calling for profits from mining, tourism and other industries to stay in the region, helping to improve services and infrastructure.
- There was feedback suggesting that economic growth must go hand-in-hand with caring for Country, protecting Aboriginal culture, and valuing the unique landscapes that attract visitors.
- Tourism was seen as a major economic opportunity, particularly in places like Coober Pedy and Port Augusta. Some respondents shared ideas to grow tourism, such as upgrading roads, improving visitor facilities, and promoting unique local stories.
- There was support for renewable energy development, with suggestions to leverage the sun and space to become a powerhouse for solar energy. However, some respondents raised concerns about renewable energy developments in residential or rural living zones proceeding without proper consultation.
- Respondents are eager to see more job and training opportunities for young people, and support for industries that keep wealth in the region. Agriculture, health care, aged care and tourism were all identified as sectors that can offer lasting local employment in remote areas.
- Some participants suggested that valuable agricultural land must be protected from development, and voiced support for stronger planning controls that protect grain production areas.

## Natural resources, environment and landscapes

Key feedback relating to this theme included:

- Strong feedback was provided about the importance of protecting Country and respecting the cultural, spiritual, and environmental significance of the Far North. Respondents emphasised the need for decisions, particularly those involving major projects with environmental impacts, to be informed by the lived experience of local communities and First Nations people.
- Feedback highlighted the need for vegetation recovery in degraded areas, especially in and around towns. Buffel grass and invasive weeds were raised as key concerns that need long-term, funded management.
- Responses urged future development to avoid harm to sacred landscapes, native flora and fauna, and underground water sources like the Great Artesian Basin. There was concern that mining, fracking, and energy infrastructure projects are proceeding without enough regulation, consultation, or accountability.
- Feedback supported action on climate change, suggesting inclusion of clearer objectives and updated targets that align with South Australia's net zero ambitions. There were calls for more guidance on tracking emissions, and climate-resilient planning that considers extreme heat, drought, and severe weather events.

- Some respondents raised the need for green infrastructure like tree planting for natural cooling and regenerating the landscape. People were passionate about “greening the desert”, drawing on comparisons to international desert restoration projects.
- Water quality and access were top priorities for respondents, with calls for better wastewater treatment, seagrass restoration, and water-sensitive design in future development. Some urged government to avoid desalination and instead focus on nature-based water solutions.

## Transport and infrastructure

Key feedback relating to this theme included:

- Respondents called for safer roads across the region, including better lighting, signage, rest stops, shoulders, and overtaking lanes, particularly on key routes like the Stuart Highway. There was strong support for sealing and upgrading unsealed roads and flood-proofing low-lying sections to ensure safe, all-weather access.
- Many towns, including Coober Pedy and Andamooka, have no access to buses or taxis. Feedback highlighted the need for more frequent community transport and support for new models such as ride-share, driverless vehicles, and on-demand transport services. Affordable transport to attend medical appointments was also raised as a critical issue.
- Heavy vehicle traffic on regional roads was a concern, with some suggesting tolls for freight operators to help cover maintenance costs. Other responses highlighted the high cost of freight and fuel increasing the cost of goods in remote communities, and called for subsidies to help reduce the cost of living.
- Upgrades to regional airstrips were strongly supported, including sealing surfaces, improved lighting, and infrastructure to enable 24/7 and all-weather access. There were calls to introduce or expand passenger flight services, particularly from Port Augusta, to improve connectivity for residents and visitors.
- Transport infrastructure was seen as vital for emergency response. Feedback included calls to improve Royal Flying Doctor Service access, install clear signage and lighting for night landings, and strengthen local capabilities for responding to incidents.

## Implementation and delivery

Key feedback relating to this theme included:

- Some respondents expressed concern that the Plan feels too distant from their daily lives. Respondents noted that implementation should reflect the realities of remote communities, and that improvements to health, education and basic services need to be prioritised over new developments. Several contributors questioned whether decision-makers in Adelaide truly understand the needs of remote communities.
- There was strong feedback about the need for more genuine community involvement in delivering the Plan. Some respondents called for local knowledge and lived experience to be included at every stage of implementation, alongside digital systems. Others suggested the plan should be co-delivered with local organisations to reflect community priorities.

- Feedback highlighted a need for clear roles and responsibilities in delivering actions. People want those in charge to be held accountable for delivery, including environmental and social impacts. There were calls for stronger legislative frameworks and an updated Environment Protection Act to better protect communities.
- Some respondents noted that the data used to forecast changes in the region, such as Australian Bureau of Statistics census data, does not accurately represent Aboriginal communities and underrepresented groups in remote communities
- We received some feedback on the presentation of the Plan on the Regional Planning Portal. Some noted issues with the mapping interface when viewing spatial information across a large area with sparse settlements. Other comments sought to improve the transparency of data, how multiple layers and data sets can be used together, and how to improve the experience for those who may have low bandwidth/connectivity or less accustomed to using this type of online tool.

## Townships

A range of useful and specific feedback was received relating to the main towns in the Far North, with some of the key commentary listed below.

### Port Augusta

A shift from holiday to permanent living in areas like Shack Road is putting pressure on infrastructure (power, **roads**, waste, internet) without **corresponding** planning updates.

- Seen as a key hub for tourism, transport, and rail. Respondents called for passenger rail revival and tourism investment.
- Respondents noted shortages in hospital staffing and facilities and called for improved emergency response.
- Desire for more walkable, pedestrian-friendly planning and improved amenities.

### Coober Pedy

- Over 300 homes and many shops are vacant. Respondents stressed desire for repurposing and maintaining existing housing over new development.
- Noted reduction in health, aged care, and banking services, weakening the town's role as a regional service hub.
- Strong support for celebrating and investing in the town's unique identity and attractions to boost tourism.
- Suggested upgrades to transport, airport, health, and local energy systems.

### Roxby Downs

- Respondents stressed the desire for reusing vacant housing before expanding the township.
- Mining and renewable projects are expected to drive housing and infrastructure needs.
- Calls for proactive coordination of transport, utilities and housing to support workforce expansion.
- Suggestions to improve pedestrian infrastructure and public realm design.

### Quorn

- Strong support for rezoning Rural Living land to support new housing, especially for commuters to Port Augusta.
- Calls for a broader mix of housing types, including affordable and social options.
- Feedback called for better road maintenance and upgraded infrastructure to support growth.
- Feedback included a need for improved mapping and local structure planning to guide development.

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

## Contact

Enquiries relating to the Far North Regional Plan can be directed to:

Contact: Plan SA

Telephone: 1800 752 664

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

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