

Town of Gawler

Environmental Management Framework 2026–2028



The Town of Gawler has developed this Environmental Management Framework to guide environmental management performance across Council for the period 2026–2028.

Gawler



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Statement of Acknowledgement

The Town of Gawler acknowledges the Kaurna people as the Traditional Custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kaurna people today.

We acknowledge their deep spiritual relationship with their Country and pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations people and their connections to Country.



Abbreviations and Definitions

- **Aquifer Storage and Recovery**..... ASR
- **Climate Emergency Management Plan**.....CEAP
- **Environmental Management Framework**..... Framework
- **Environmental Management Plan**.....EMP
- **Greater Adelaide Regional Plan** GARP
- **Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme** NAIS
- **Town of Gawler**..... Council
- **Urban Heat Island** UHI



Executive Summary

The Town of Gawler Environmental Management Framework is an important plan, guiding the efforts of all Council operational areas to deliverable measurable on ground actions for the period 2026–2028.

Overall six (6) areas of priority are identified for specific attention, these being:

- **Priority Focus Area 1:** Integrated Water Management
- **Priority Focus Area 2:** Urban Heat Island Mitigation – Greening of Gawler
- **Priority Focus Area 3:** Embedding Climate Resilience into Design Thinking
- **Priority Focus Area 4:** Northern Adelaide Parklands and Gawler River
- **Priority Focus Area 5:** Climate Risk Management
- **Priority Focus Area 6:** Sustainable Management of Council Assets and Operations

Within each priority area there are a series of actions specified, as set out in section 4 of the Framework (Action Plan).

In addition, it is proposed to revoke the existing Environment Policy found on Council's website (see Policy Template) and substitute with an Environment Statement as set below. Achieving the intent of the new Environment Statement will occur by delivering on the actions specified in this Framework. A copy of the Environment Statement is set out below.

Town of Gawler Environment Statement 2026–2028

Council aims to respect and nurture the environment through strong civic leadership and leading by example to protect and enhance the environment, with consideration of innovative practice and affordability for the community.

To enact this Policy, Council commits to addressing the following priority areas:

- **Priority Focus Area 1:** Integrated Water Management
- **Priority Focus Area 2:** Urban Heat Island Mitigation – Greening of Gawler
- **Priority Focus Area 3:** Embedding Climate Resilience into Design Thinking
- **Priority Focus Area 4:** Northern Adelaide Parklands and Gawler River
- **Priority Focus Area 5:** Climate Risk Management
- **Priority Focus Area 6:** Sustainable Management of Council Assets and Operations

Scope

This Policy guides Council's environmental performance by specifying the actions required to be delivered to facilitate measurable and specific outcomes related to the priority focus areas set out above.

Legislation and References

This Policy ensures Council complies with legislative requirements specified within State and Commonwealth Acts, including but not limited to the legislative obligations set out within the Environmental Management Framework 2026–2028.

Figure E.1. Town of Gawler Environment Statement 2026–2028

1 Introduction

The Town of Gawler (Council) has developed this Environmental Management Framework (the Framework) to guide environmental performance within Council's operational practices and planning activities. Delivery of proposed actions ensures Council has a clear workplan to address key issues currently facing the organisation in meeting its legal and broader community commitments.

In 2016 Council adopted the Town of Gawler Environmental Management Plan (EMP), a comprehensive plan with 93 specific actions (see **Figure 1**). During August 2025 an elected member workshop was held to reflect on the future needs. At this workshop it was agreed that a higher level Framework was needed with clear focus areas and acknowledgement of environmental management needed to be an organisation-wide focus.

Five focus areas were broadly identified, being built environment, resource management, climate change, riverine and natural environment and community culture.

Based on these focus areas, the direction proposed for the Framework is to identify existing responses to environmental management and identify where additional attention should be provided. Whilst the Framework has been expanded now to six focus areas, the underpinning philosophy of the Framework is consistent with the feedback received.

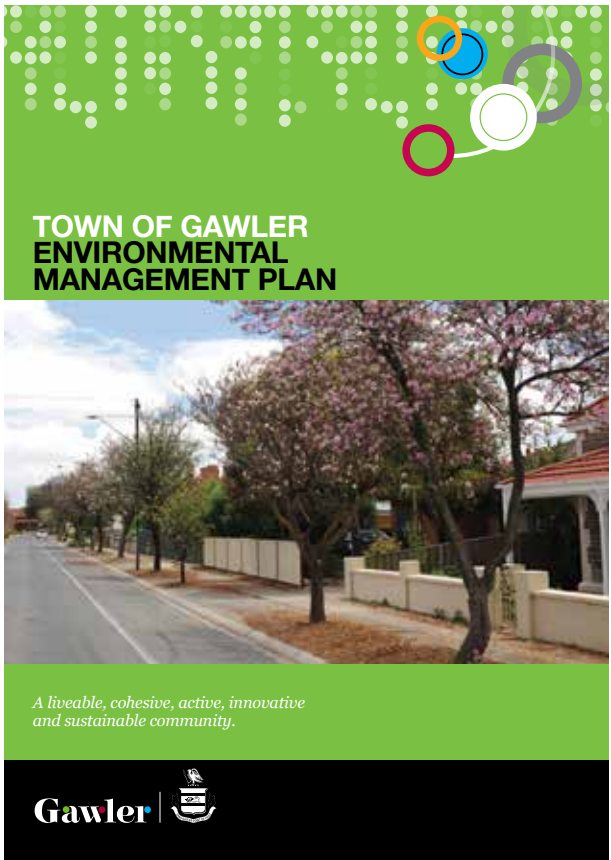


Figure 1. Current Environmental Management Plan (Source: Town of Gawler)

1.1 The Purpose of the Framework

The Framework sets out Council's responses to how it will achieve its commitments set out in Goal 4 'Our Environment' of the Gawler Community Plan 2035.

The purpose of the Framework is to provide a coordinated and strategic approach to protecting, enhancing, and sustainably managing the natural environment across the Council area. Specifically, the Framework seeks to guide decision-making, policy development, community action, and investment to support biodiversity, climate resilience, sustainable growth, resource efficiency, and environmental stewardship.

It aims to balance environmental protection with social health and wellbeing, economic development and ensuring that Gawler remains a healthy, resilient, and liveable community for current and future generations.

To achieve this Council will incorporate sustainability principles in our decision-making processes (see policy statement at **Attachment A**). This will deliver value for money outcomes that improve the quality of life for the Gawler community both now and into the future. Council's Framework comprises the following elements as set out in **Figure 2**.



Figure 2. The Environmental Management Framework should address legal obligations as well as inform project priorities

1.2 Scope and intent of the Environmental Management Framework

The Framework identifies key focus areas, each supported by a series of actions for Council to achieve measurable change and delivered outcomes within the area identified in **Figure 3**.

At the outset it should be clearly stated that this document's core audience is inward facing – Council's work teams. The Framework has a narrower scope than the EMP it replaces.

It is substantially an operational plan to guide Council administration for the next two years pending a wider review of priorities linked to future growth being planned for in Kudla, Northern Parklands, Gawler Town Centre and Concordia. Each of these initiatives will individually and collectively reshape Gawler in ways difficult to foreshadow today.



Figure 3. Town of Gawler administrative boundaries (source: Town of Gawler, 2016)

Notwithstanding, a rigorous literature review of Local, State and Federal legislation, strategic documents and environmental issues has been completed. The Framework contains clear aspirations, aligned to issues frequently cited in the Environmental Management Plan. This process in turn has identified common themes and issues in six (6) key environmental areas:

- **Priority Focus Area 1:** Integrated Water Management
- **Priority Focus Area 2:** Urban Heat Island Mitigation – Greening of Gawler
- **Priority Focus Area 3:** Embedding Climate Resilience into Design Thinking

- **Priority Focus Area 4:** Northern Adelaide Parklands and Gawler River
- **Priority Focus Area 5:** Climate Risk Management
- **Priority Focus Area 6:** Sustainable Management of Council Assets and Operations

1.3 Council's Role

Council has a clear leadership role in delivering effective environmental management. To deliver these commitments, we will act in various roles (**Table 1**):

Council recognises that achieving meaningful climate adaptation and emissions reduction outcomes requires collaboration across all levels of government, industry, and the community.

Where Council's capacity, funding or ability to directly deliver programs and initiatives is limited, advocacy will remain an important tool for progressing priorities, securing external support, and enabling broader environmental action.

Council role	Role Obligations/Description
Statutory Authority	Council is obliged under SA legislation to ensure compliance and delivery of environmental services. While performing this role, Council will use its powers to ensure compliance or to regulate activities of residents and businesses to deliver environmental outcomes. Refer to Section 2 of report and Appendix B
Service Provider	Council plays a key role in providing important services that protect its surrounding environment. These services will ensure that the environment remains healthy for the community, and that development occurs in a sustainable manner
Partner	Where Council cannot provide the services needed to fulfil its environmental commitments, Council will partner, work with and share its responsibilities with other organisations to help deliver environmental outcomes for the community
Advocate	In situations where Council has no direct environmental responsibilities, Council will assess the impact of the plan or activity on its environment. Where applicable, Council will act as an advocate for the community, lobbying other levels of government and other stakeholders to help inform policy decisions

Table 1. Role of Council in Environmental Management

Meeting Our Legislative and Regional Commitments

Local Government in South Australia operates within a defined legislative framework that assigns significant though shared responsibility for environmental management. Under the *Local Government Act 1999* (SA), councils are required to promote the health, safety, and welfare of their communities and to manage natural and built environments in a sustainable manner.

This broad mandate is complemented by more specific obligations under instruments such as the *Environment Protection Act 1993* (SA), the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* (SA), and planning laws administered through the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* (SA). Collectively, these establish councils as key delivery agents for environmental stewardship at the local scale, including waste management, stormwater control, biodiversity conservation, and land-use planning.

Whilst there is no specific legal obligation to have an environmental management plan (or Framework) under legislation in South Australia, there is a general statutory expectation that councils integrate environmental considerations into governance – hence the proposed updated policy and this Framework.

These matters are further explored below with a full summary provided in **Appendix B**.

2.1 Legislative Obligations

AT A NATIONAL LEVEL:

Environmental and climate priorities are outlined by key legislative frameworks, strategies and administrative arrangements including (but not limited to):

- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999) or EPBC Act*
- *National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy (2021–25)*
- *Threatened Species Action Plan 2022–2032*

AT A STATE LEVEL:

Environmental and climate priorities are outlined by key legislative frameworks, strategies and administrative arrangements including (but not limited to):

- *Local Government Act 1999* (SA)
- *South Australian Government Climate Change Action Plan 2021–2025*
- *Biodiversity Act 2025*
- *South Australia Public Health Act 2011*
- *Environment Protection Act 1993*
- The Statewide planning system, set out in the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* (and associated Regs) also applies to land use, land clearance and vegetation removal. See **Figures 4–5**

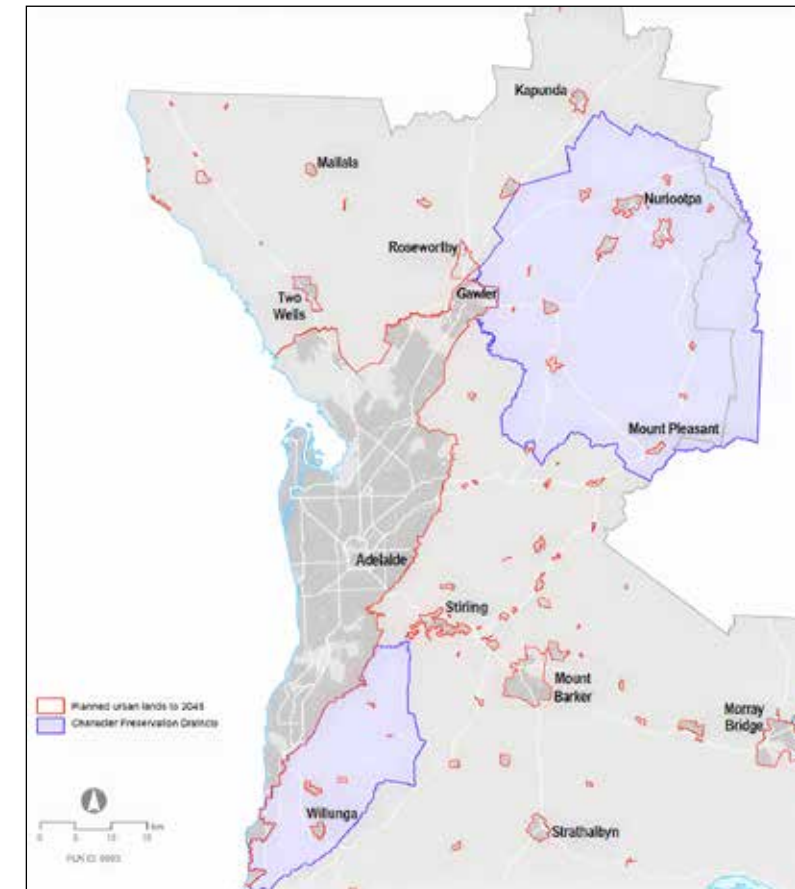


Figure 4. Character Preservation Districts Map (Source: Plan SA)



Figure 5. Hillface Zone has been a key tool to protect landscapes against unsympathetic housing development (Source: ABC 27.4.26)

AT A REGIONAL LEVEL:

Environmental and climate priorities are outlined by key legislative frameworks, strategies and administrative arrangements including (but not limited to):

- Regional Growth Plans issued by the SA Planning Commission (see **Figure 6**)
- Northern Adelaide Waste Management Authority (NAWMA)
- Landscape Board context – Northern York Landscape Board and Green Adelaide
- RDA Barossa Gawler Light and Adelaide Plains



Figure 6. The location of urban growth areas is strongly influenced by the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan with its housing targets. Some 26% of all new housing to 2050 will be delivered in the NE growth corridor with Gawler in the centre of it.

The Northern Parklands administered by a newly established Trust is proposed in Kudla. This was a key recommendation from the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan (**Figure 7**).



Figure 7. Northern Parklands is a regional scale initiative (Source: DHUD, 2026)

AT A LOCAL LEVEL:

- A typical Council budget in 2026-2027 is \$~45M p.a, with a capital works budget of greater than \$10M p.a, spent on road upgrades, bridges, buildings, reserve maintenance (see **Figure 8**) and asset management. All of these have a highly visible landscape footprint
- Council activities, procedures and policies have a significant impact on our environment – additional sphere of influence that can have significant impact, whether it be:
 - Management of reserves as places of passive or active recreation
 - Tree planting initiatives in road reserves
 - Land use decisions involving new development



Figure 8. Council are a key partner in on-ground environmental management (Source: Town of Gawler Annual Report 2024-2025)

2.2 Key Documents Considered in Framework Action Plan

A full list of documents considered in developing the Framework is provided in **Appendix C**.

3 Priority Focus Areas

The Environmental Management Framework supports regular reassessment of risks and opportunities for improvement to occur when considered necessary on any aspect, and for the Administration to undertake an annual workshop to review all environmental risks, aspects and potential impacts.

For 2026–2027, Council has proposed the following six (6) Priority Focus Areas as set out below.

3.1 Priority Focus Area 1: Integrated Water Management

3.1.1 Focus Area

Integrated Water Management (IWM) is a holistic approach to planning and managing all parts of the urban water cycle together – drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, groundwater, and recycled water – rather than as separate systems. In simple terms, IWM aims to use water more efficiently and sustainably. The goal is to deliver social, environmental, economic, and cultural benefits while keeping water systems reliable and adaptable over the long term.



Figure 9. Ornamental lakes at Orleana Waters are part of a significant scale IWM project overseen by Council (source: Town of Gawler, 2025). Due to the challenges in staging of land releases between different owners as well as local geology, IWM concepts have been scaled back with each land release now to address stormwater impacts at the individual land division scale

3.1.2 Situation

Effective catchment water management is critical to achieving many goals set out in this Framework – from meeting greening targets (canopy cover of trees for instance) to urban amenity and environmental custodianship. Given climatic conditions in the outer north and summers where rainfall can be scarce for months on end, the challenge is to develop robust and realistic water management strategies.

As Council prepares for rapid population, there is a need to plan for the optimal management of water supply sources and systems in an integrated manner. Currently, Town of Gawler:

- Enjoys only limited connections into recycled water schemes from the Bolivar recycled supply that service nearby horticulture areas such as Virginia and the nearby Barossa Valley (see **Figure 10**). In some cases this means Council is using potable water for irrigation of reserves for example, only relatively short distances from recycled water schemes such as the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme (NAIS)
- Has local constraints in delivering complex stormwater recycling schemes in some locations such as Kudla for cost effective Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) due to greater leakage and migration in the cracked rock aquifer where Gawler sits at the base of the hills

- Does not have an integrated system of stormwater harvesting, surface storage and use. Relatively complex deeds and land management agreements such as Southern Urban Areas have sought to address stormwater harvesting in new housing land release areas. These efforts have been hampered by uneven rates of development and the impact this has caused on catchment infrastructure
- Has scope to develop a clearer position on whether it wants to capture/purchase water licenses from landowners in Kudla, noting that this land is earmarked for urban growth and the licenses are otherwise captured on open market for use elsewhere in catchment

3.1.3 Framework Response

Effective IWM enables Council to manage future urban growth and harness water resources appropriately to achieve a host of beneficial outcomes. These water resources for instance can be integrated with greening strategies and the land division process to secure better urban design outcomes (for instance better managed and watered green areas) in new estates.

In this sense the IWM action proposed in Priority Focus Area 1 is also integral to achieving a number of outcomes such as Priority Focus Area 2 – urban heat mitigation/greening of Gawler; and Priority Focus Area 3 – embedding climate resilience into design thinking (better land division and open space outcomes).



Figure 10. A number of recycled water schemes operate within the northern growth corridor sourced from Bolivar treatment plant, including the Virginia Pipeline Scheme and the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme (Source:6.-NAIS_Information-brochure.pdf)

3.2 Priority Focus Area 2:
Urban Heat Island Mitigation – Greening of Gawler

3.2.1 Focus Area

Urban Heat Island (UHI) is the phenomenon where urban areas are significantly warmer than surrounding rural areas due to heat-absorbing surfaces (like concrete and asphalt), limited vegetation, and human activities. Combatting the effects of UHI through urban design, expanding the tree planting program and other strategies is an increasingly important priority (see **Figure 11**).

3.2.2 Situation

The Town of Gawler has set an ambitious target of achieving 30% canopy cover by 2045 (Goal 11 – Climate Emergency Action Plan) across the local government area to address UHI and climate change more generally. The scale of that task is set out in **Table 2**.

These targets mirror similar targets in the GARP (2025), of 30% tree canopy cover by 2055. That Plan recognises that as Greater Adelaide accommodates substantial population and housing growth over coming decades, urban greening will be critical to reducing heat, improving biodiversity, enhancing public health, and maintaining the character of established neighbourhoods.

URBAN HEAT ISLAND EFFECT



Figure 11. Tree cover dramatically changes temperature at ground level in urban areas (source: Chat GPT image)

Year	Tree Canopy Cover Percentage	Number of street trees	Additional trees required
2023	17%	11,600	
2045	30%	20,470	8,870

Table 2. Tree data (Source: Town of Gawler, 2026)

Council supports a range of activities to expand and maintain the street tree network. This includes the annual planting of approximately 300 street trees that includes both Council-planted trees and approximately 230 street trees handed over annually through new land developments. The result being a net gain of approximate 380 street trees per year, a 3% annual increase in Council's tree canopy cover.

Data shows that in Gawler in new residential areas as well as in some more established commercial areas, the canopy achieved to date in many of our urban environments has been historically much lower than the above figures suggest. **Figures 12–13** provide examples of the shortfall – in a main street and suburban context.

Reasons for these shortfalls in canopy cover are varied. In some cases, as in commercial main streets such as Gawler, it relates to the width of road reserves and limited available land. Civic upgrades often focus on pavement upgrades, parking and hard surfaces but less on maximising tree planting. More broadly:

- Urban infill and smaller residential lots with high site coverage (buildings as percentage of total site area) often give little room for tree planting to occur
- Until May 2024 South Australia had some of the weakest urban tree protection laws in the country e.g. removal of trees within 10m of houses impacted established suburbs where more mature trees are found
- Greater Adelaide Regional Plan (2017) required a 20% canopy cover by 2045, a figure below typical benchmark standards in metropolitan cities today. Some councils saw this as a 20% increase on existing canopy cover, not a net 20% coverage, resulting in under-planting
- Preference for small or low risk trees in urban setting
- Unequal investment across Adelaide by local government
- Major infrastructure upgrades often see loss of canopy cover

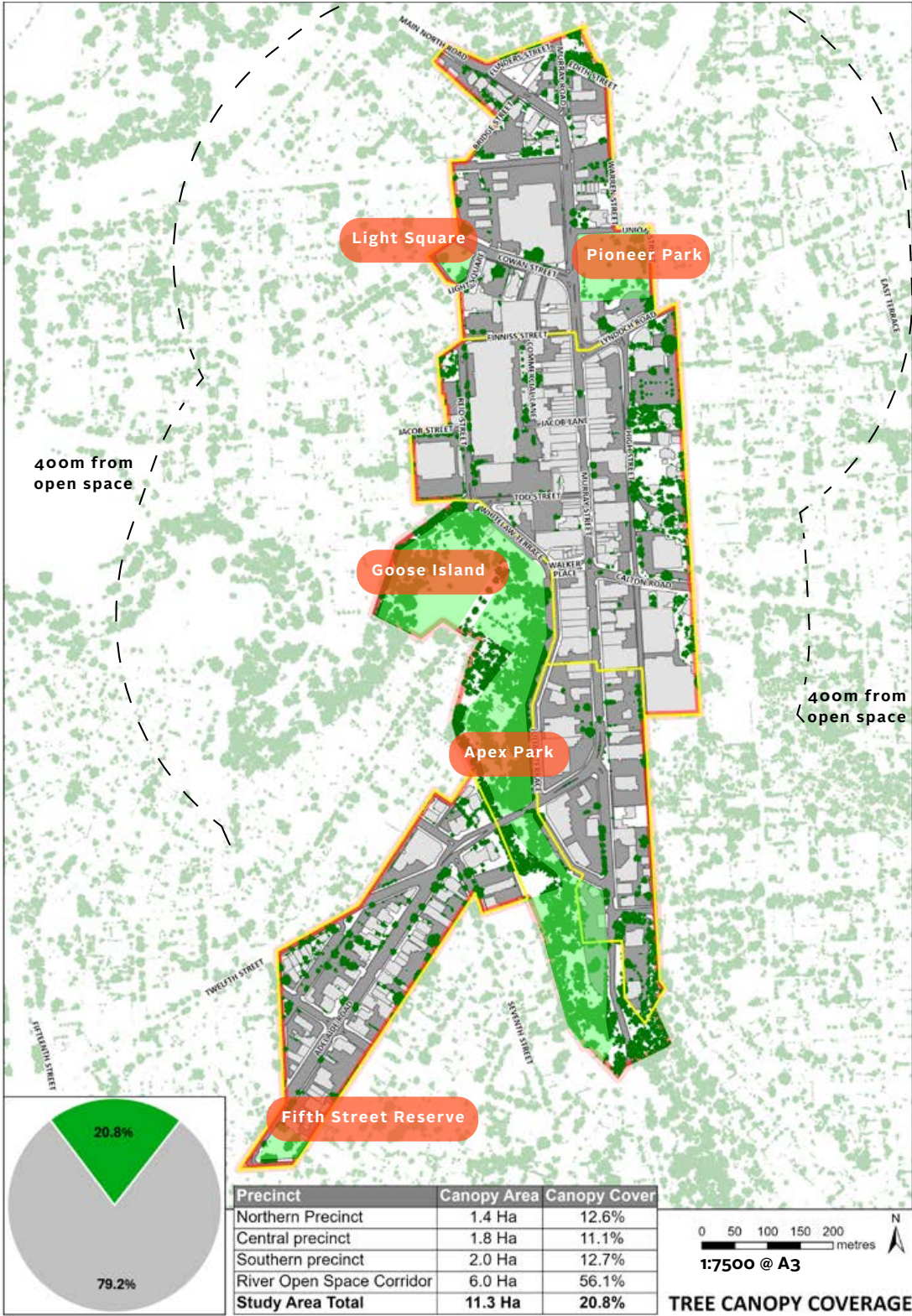


Figure 12. Canopy cover calculations in Gawler Town Centre (Source: Jensen, 2026)

The Tree Canopy Coverage Map shows approximately 20% canopy cover across the Gawler Town Centre. Excluding the river corridor, the town centre canopy cover is 12%.



Figure 13. Aspire Stage 1, Evanston South substantially completed by 2022 with 8.2% canopy cover including reserves (Source: Town of Gawler). Over time this cover should increase with vegetation maturity reached – dependent on trees selected

3.2.3 Framework Response

A core element of the response within the Action Plan is to prepare an overarching greening plan, identifying the locations suitable for additional tree planting, the extent of planting required, the support services to install and maintain tree assets (resource capacity) and a realistic costed timeline to deliver this outcome.

3.3 Priority Focus Area 3: Embedding Climate Resilience into Design Thinking

3.3.1 Focus Area

Embedding climate resilience into design thinking means planning buildings and housing estates so they can better handle climate impacts (heat, storms, drought, flooding) from when they are first established. It draws on climate risk management and applies it directly to how we design places.

3.3.2 Situation

The built form of settlements provides challenges and opportunities for building community resilience to extreme heat and cold conditions.

There is a large variation across the current built form in Gawler relating to a high proportion of historic buildings and various age classes.

Older buildings if poorly sealed and/or with poor insulation, are costlier to keep cool or warm, especially if not fitted with efficient heating and cooling appliances. Canopy cover and roof performance also have a strong influence in relation to the heat entering households and other occupied structures.

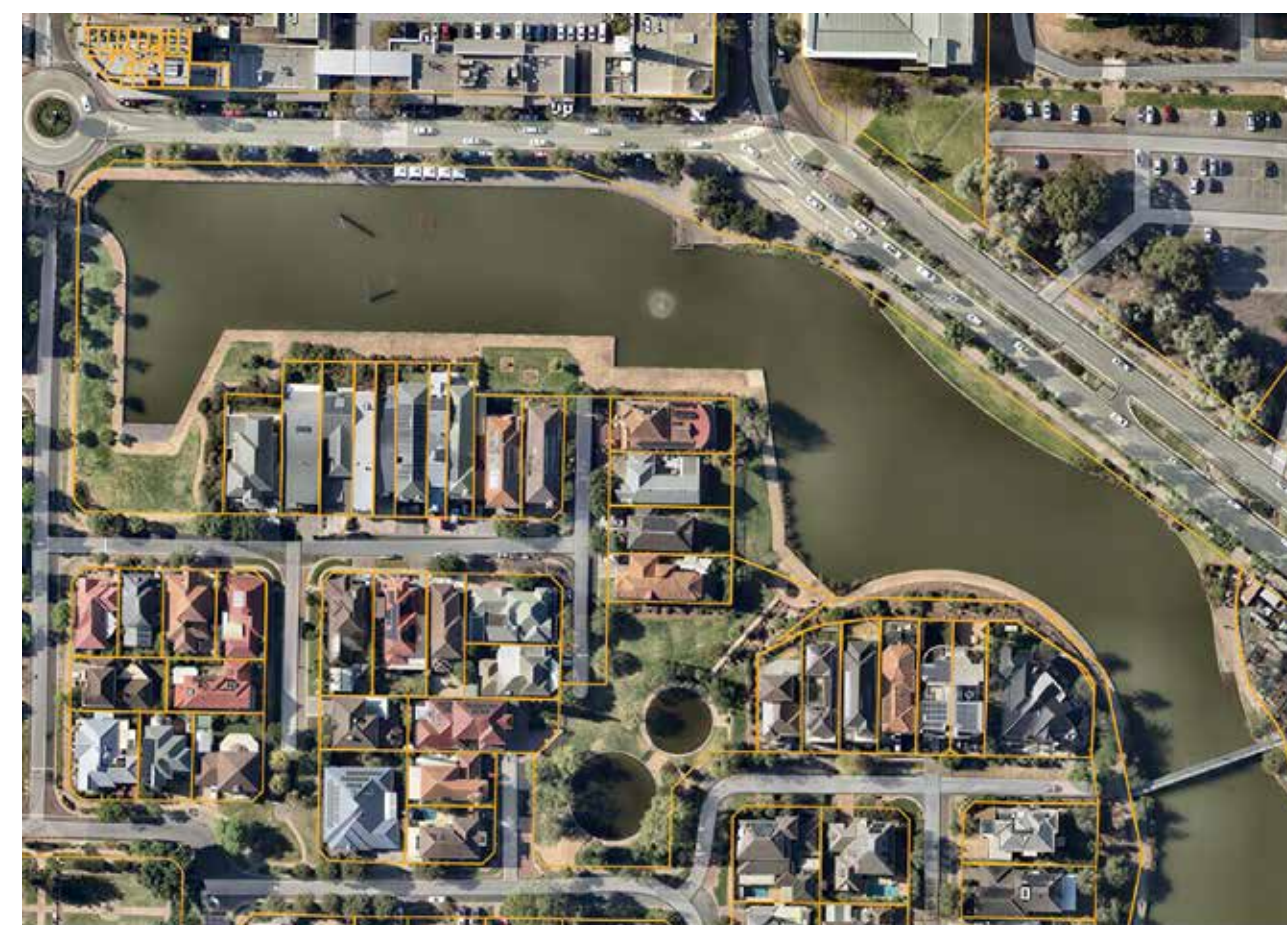


Figure 14. Integration of land division with water features, pocket parks and solar orientation of new housing lots creates more resilient communities such as Mawson Lakes, South Australia (Source: Nearmaps 2026)

Notwithstanding Council's interest in sustainable design, there is often limited scope to shape this conversation in new estates. Provided new buildings meet Australian and State building standards, local government cannot dictate energy efficiency outcomes. The planning system is also based on regulating new development, which means existing buildings are not required to achieve present day energy star ratings. A different approach is therefore required – educational focused for households within existing urban areas (modifying homes or rebuilding) and land division focused in new estates (regulatory).

Viewed holistically, climate resilient buildings incorporate many elements of passive and active sustainable design to minimise energy use, optimise sustainable water use and promote greener places for people and to support urban biodiversity. Lot layouts set out through the land division process are critical to the outcomes on ground. So is public domain landscaping (streets/reserves), the inclusion of water elements and tree regulation. It is a three-dimensional package of issues (see **Figure 15**).



Figure 15. Climate resilient homes at North Wright Sustainable Precinct (Source: ACT Government Suburban Land Agency 2025). Use of common party walls provides better insulation outcomes, solar roof arrays for energy collection and scope within lot layout for solar access into living spaces and landscaping are key elements

3.3.3 Framework Response

A range of tools exist for Council to facilitate outcomes in this focus area are addressed in the Action Plan. These range from preparation by Council of best practice material or links to sites that provide suitable advice such as the Heart Foundation (see Healthy Active by Design | Urban Health Resources), the Planning Institute of Australia (see PIA Foresight).

In addition, there is scope to integrate other actions set out in this Framework to achieve multiple objectives. Simply planting more trees in specific areas (greening initiatives), delivering Integrated Water Management (IWM) initiatives in new estates, and facilitating more efficient land division design (solar orientation of lots, road layouts, open space proximity) provides scope to considerably enhance climate resilience outcomes. This approach also supports the delivery of demonstration projects and practical on-ground outcomes, potentially on future Council-identified surplus land or other housing projects.

Design guidelines for new town centres in areas such as Kudla provide yet further scope to see clearer policy informing built form outcomes.

3.4 Priority Focus Area 4: Northern Parklands and Gawler River

3.4.1 Focus Area

The Northern Parklands is a State driven project to deliver a major regional scaled networked open space, operated by a State appointed Trust in Kudla. That project is expected to deliver sporting facilities, trails and biodiversity enhancement of Gawler River as well as regionally significant open space.

3.4.2 Situation

The State Government has via the GARP (2025) announced its intent to rezone significant areas of land (around 1380 ha) in Gawler centred on Kudla for residential development. Behind the Roseworthy investigation area to the near north of Gawler, Kudla is the largest land release proposed for Adelaide for the next 30 years.

These decisions and the process to follow (background studies, structure plan, infrastructure plan) will result in the transition of Concordia and large areas of Kudla from a mixed farming and rural living landscape to a residential area.

The State Government has also announced its intention to establish the Northern Parklands, recently formalised through the *Northern Parklands Act 2025* which aims to provide high quality open space for communities and to support biodiversity near the northern edge of Kudla, (see **Figure 16**). This initiative has its roots in post war planning for Greater Adelaide that provided for 'inter-urban breaks' or non-urban land between major settlements to be established.

The Town of Gawler recognises that the Parklands project provides a once-off opportunity to develop a Northern Parklands Masterplan that best meets human and environmental needs. Council's Chief Executive Officer sits on the Trust Board that will administer the Parklands and implement the masterplan.



Figure 16. Gawler River in 2025 between Angle Vale and Port Wakefield Road
(source: Green Adelaide, 2026 – Gawler River Restoration Guide)

The Northern Parklands Masterplan will be delivered in two stages being:

- **Stage 1:** proposed sporting hub and Gawler River upgrades to the southern boundary with City of Playford (as set out in **Figure 17** and land parcels gazetted via Parliament)
- **Stage 2:** various other links. Exact alignment to be determined. Timeline for planning of this element is post 2030

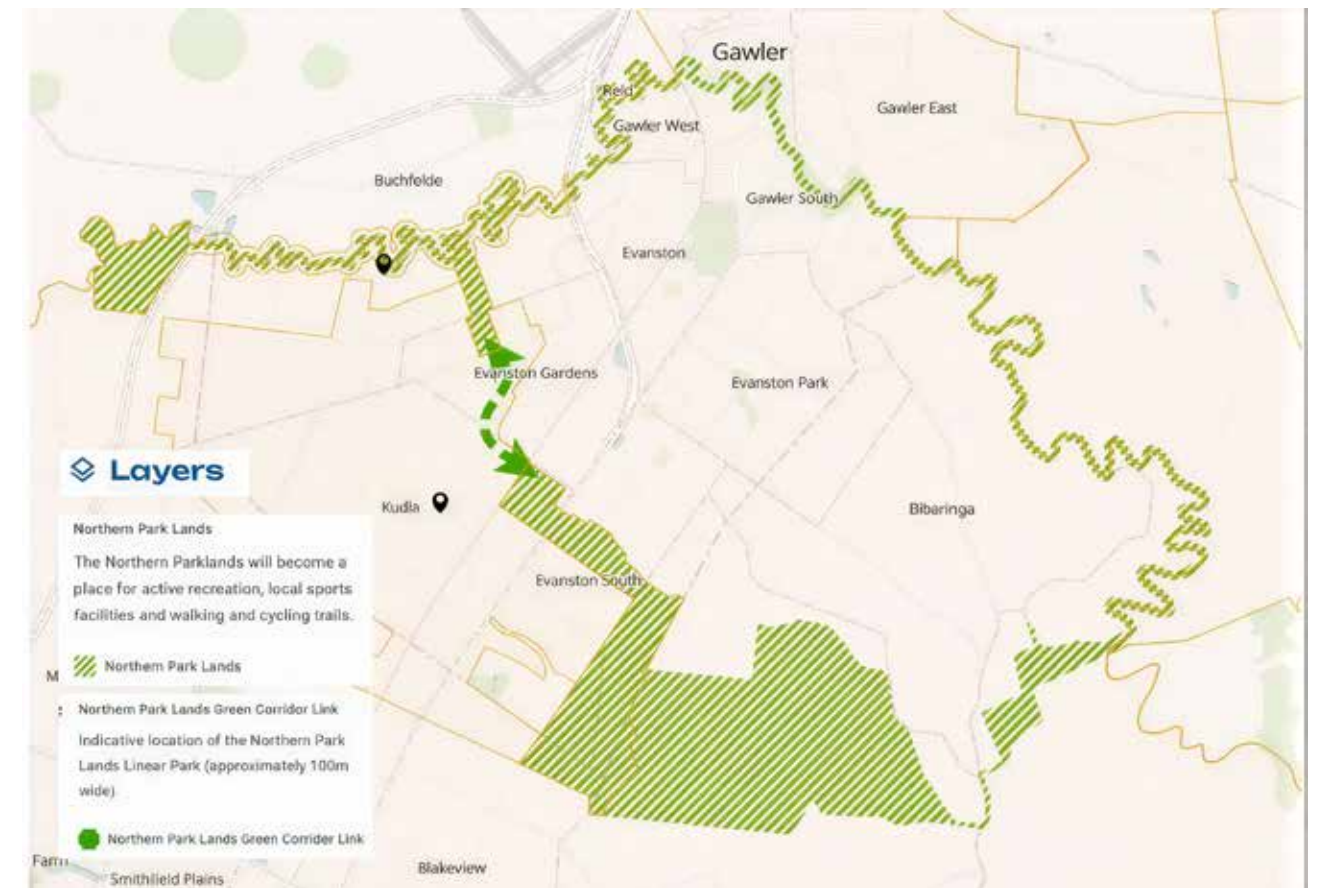


Figure 17. Northern Parklands (Source: DHUD, 2026)

3.4.3 Framework Response

The Framework through the workplan identifies that the Northern Parklands Master Plan can provide the following benefits:

- A clearly documented access and movement plan that defines where additional public access may be achieved by different modes (cycling, walking, vehicle)
- Clearly defined areas of the Parklands that may be suitable for community-based development (bird watching, rehabilitation projects, eco-tourism focused) and those areas where development should not occur
- A walking and cycling plan for new pathways and routes that connect to existing pathway networks across and beyond Gawler (catering for both scenic and rapid travel preferences of active transport users)
- Spatially documented opportunities for story telling of the natural and cultural histories across the Parklands
- A strategy to integrate water, stormwater and recycled water management across the Parklands. It is expected that these outcomes will require close alignment with the Kudla Structure Plan which sits on the direct edge of the Parklands
- Targeted advocacy and direct input into the Masterplan design process are key tools to secure these outcomes

3.5 Priority Focus Area 5: Climate Risk Management

3.5.1 Focus Area

Climate risk management is the process of identifying, assessing, and reducing risks caused by climate change. It involves:

- Understanding hazards (e.g. heatwaves, floods, droughts)
- Evaluating impacts to public health and wellbeing, including how vulnerable people, critical infrastructure, and ecosystems are exposed to climate-related risks such as extreme heat, flooding, drought, and environmental impacts
- Taking actions to adapt (e.g. better drainage, urban cooling) and mitigate (reducing emissions)

The Town of Gawler is vulnerable to climate risk as set out in the Climate Emergency Management Plan (CEAP). Whether this be bushfire events, floods or extreme heat with associated risk for vulnerable residents, climate risk management is a priority for Council to address (**Figure 18**).



Figure 18. Extreme heat events including bushfires are a specific risk in Gawler (source: Town of Gawler Climate Emergency Action Plan)

3.5.2 Situation

Extreme heat is one of Australia's deadliest natural hazards. It doesn't always arrive with warning, but its impact can be serious — sometimes fatal. A Code Red is an extreme hot weather response activated by the South Australian Department of Human Services (DHS). It triggers emergency life-saving measures and extra support for people sleeping rough during periods of dangerous, prolonged heatwaves.

Extreme heat affects everyone, but some people are at greater risk, including:

- people sleeping rough or experiencing homelessness
- older people
- children and babies
- people with disability or chronic health conditions
- people experiencing social isolation

Heat stress can escalate rapidly and may not always be recognised until it becomes dangerous. Climate related risks are increasing as the impacts of climate change continue. The trends include higher temperatures, warmer spring temperatures and more dangerous fire events (see **Figure 19**).

Risks can be considered in two main categories:

1. Physical risks including

- Direct risks to people, infrastructure and the environment
- Cost of response and recovery to climate extreme events

2. Transition risks, as policy and economic changes take place to adapt to climate change

- Insurance premium increases and coverage limitations
- Mandatory Climate Financial Climate Risk Disclosure
 - This is a legal or regulatory requirements for organisations to identify, assess, and publicly disclose the financial risks and opportunities associated with climate change opportunities and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Information on how Local Government will be impacted is still to be determined
- Cost of building more climate resilient infrastructure and building to higher standards and safety margins

	Higher temperatures	Maximum, minimum and average temperatures will increase
	Warmer spring temperatures	Warming in spring is likely to be greater than in any other season
	Hotter and more frequent hot days	The frequency of very hot days will continue to increase, and periods of hot weather will get longer and hotter
	Fewer frosts	The frequency of frost events will remain comparable until 2030. In the longer-term, frosts are expected to decrease as the climate warms
	Declining rainfall	Average annual rainfall will decline
	Lower spring rainfall	Spring rainfall declines will be greater than any other season
	More drought	Time spent in drought will increase
	More intense heavy rainfall events	The number and intensity of heavy rainfall events will increase
	Increased potential evapotranspiration	Potential evapotranspiration is projected to increase across all seasons
	Wind	Wind speeds will remain comparable until 2030. In the longer-term, a pattern of winter wind speed decrease is likely
	More dangerous fire weather	Harsher fire weather will be experienced, and fuels will be drier and more ready to burn
	Rising sea levels	Sea levels will continue to rise
	Warmer and more acidic ocean waters	Sea surface temperatures will continue to rise, and acidity will continue to increase

Figure 19. Summary of climate change trends
(Source: Town of Gawler Climate Emergency Action Plan 2022, p18)

In January 2026, the State Government released the 2024 Statewide Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment for South Australia (Deloitte, 2025).

This is a comprehensive document designed to “help kick-start further action to understand and manage climate risks and opportunities across the state”. Gawler is mentioned thirty times in the Assessment, particularly around flooding risks. Risks in Gawler due to extreme heat events are shown in **Figure 20**.

Eleven high-priority physical risks are specified as requiring immediate action within the next five years, along with opportunities for economic growth, improved recycling, and environmental outcomes (**Appendix D**). Key findings include:

- Extreme rainfall and flooding increases pollution, sediment transport and habitat degradation on Gawler River. Increase in intensity of rainfall of 12–15% by 2050
- Gawler River floods typically once every 10 years. Impacts on buildings and structures are significant
- Gawler River levees failed in 2016 leading to \$51M in damages to horticultural sector
- Levees need to be raised significantly to withstand the 1 in 100 year flood events

The paper acknowledges that South Australia is well positioned to take advantage of opportunities associated with adapting to climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

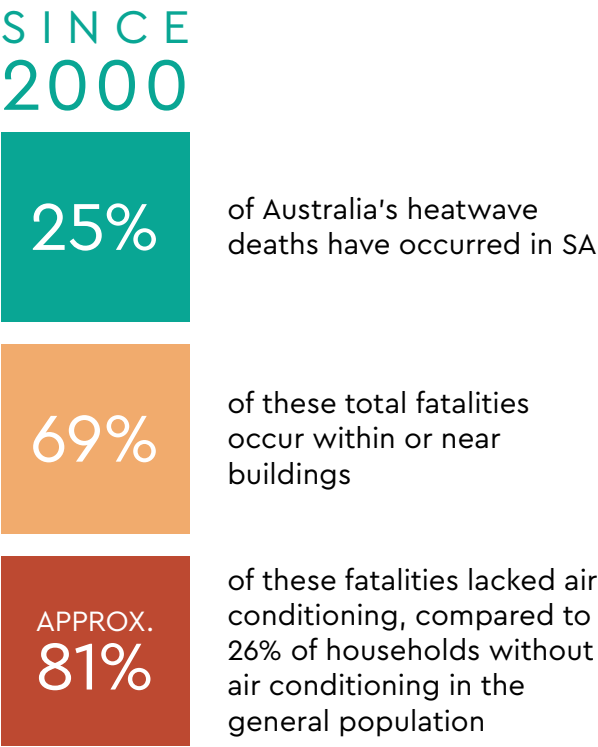


Figure 20. Impact of heatwaves on the SA population (Deloitte, 2025)

Local government has a critical role because it is the level best equipped to support local communities. It is likely that councils will be called upon to step up their efforts in managing and mitigating climate change risks to address their own operational risk exposure, as well as playing a key role to support community in planning for and responding to climate risk.

3.5.3 Framework Response

Whilst the Town of Gawler has made progress across many aspects of climate response, there is more that can be done. The first is an audit of actions and priorities set out in CEAP, including the degree of progress and the ongoing relevance of actions proposed. Ideally this should commence in financial year 2026–2027.

A watching brief for mandatory climate risk disclosure and reporting is also recommended, noting these initiatives are already being expected of public service agencies in South Australia.

3.6 Priority Area 6: Sustainable Management of Council Assets and Operations

3.6.1 Focus Area

Sustainable management of Council assets and activities is about ensuring public infrastructure, services, and operations meet current community needs without compromising future generations. Integrating circular economy principles strengthens this approach by reducing waste, extending asset life, and maximizing resource efficiency.

3.6.2 Situation

The goal of delivering sustainable assets and activities covers all aspects of Council operations. This Framework outlines a focus towards key areas that Council has direct control or influence over, including:

- Improving climate resilience of built assets and infrastructure during construction and/or renewal projects
- Pursuing opportunities during project procurement to select products and services that will result in a lower environmental footprint
- Utilising established procedural checklists to guide and inform the design of projects towards sustainable outcomes
- Review and identify improvements for existing assets and activities that result in better long-term environmental outcomes
- Demonstrate sustainable outcomes across Council operations and management of assets
- Advocate stakeholders to strive for and deliver sustainable outcomes that will benefit the Gawler community, particularly during rapid urban growth

Council Assets (by type) 2025	➤ 474 ha of open space	➤ Admin Centre (former TAFE site)
	➤ 26 playgrounds	➤ Including building structures, toilet blocks and civic buildings council has 117 building assets.
	➤ 7 walking trails	➤ Maintenance of 215 km or roads (198km sealed)
	➤ 50m outdoor aquatic centre	➤ Over 30 vehicles in light fleet
	➤ Gawler Sports and community Centre	
	➤ Civic Centre (Town Hall)	

Challenges may include:

- Higher up-front capital costs, noting that whole of life costs should be considered to provide a full cost benefit analysis
- Opportunities being missed at the design stage of capital asset projects to incorporate enhanced environmental outcomes, which can make retro-fitting solutions less effective
- Established procedures, policies and cultural norms that may slow transitions to more sustainable outcomes
- High-cost projects, such as extending access to recycled water schemes, and sustainability in new community sporting facilities may be beyond the capacity of Council to fund. These opportunities depend on external partnerships and funding
- Existing and aged assets may not provide feasible opportunities for improvements that are required, delaying upgrades until renewal projects are undertaken

3.6.3 Framework Response

A number of actions are identified in the Framework to address the issues and opportunities raised above. As foreshadowed under earlier Priority Focus Area 3 for instance, Council has scope to build sustainability principles into any contract of sale on surplus land sites.

Council can and should incorporate sustainability principles into service reviews when community expectations change, or as funding or capacity allows.

A key area of action will be a review of existing asset management plans to ensure these are suitably informed by climate risk assessment – noting the impact of climate change on assets (eg flooding on roads and bridges, heat impacts on specific asset classes).

As an owner and builder of many assets within the town, there is significant scope for Council to examine life cycle costs of buildings it operates or is about to deliver to ensure efficiency in energy consumption, water and resource usage.



4 Action Plan

The action plan addressing the six focus areas is set out below.

Priority Focus Areas	Action	Action Responsibility (Unit)
Priority Area 1: Integrated Water Management (IWM)	- Review current asset management plans as to how these address IWM principles, especially drainage asset planning - Model water harvesting scenarios for new urban growth areas and new green assets eg reserves - Develop position on water license purchases within catchment as opportunities arise - Development an IWM Plan. Input into updated drainage asset management planning - Focus on business cases for internal and external funding	Community and Growth Growth team
Priority Area 2: Urban heat mitigation – Greening of Gawler	- Identify Council champion to co-ordinate cross-organisation greening efforts - Develop costed plan to increase Town of Gawler canopy cover to 30% with delivery timelines and budget estimates - Provide input into structure plans for greenfield areas e.g. Kudla, Gawler East as well as securing canopy cover in existing urban areas e.g. via Town Centre Structure Plan - Examine opportunities for advocacy and funding joint efforts with developers, State agencies, neighbour councils in new planting efforts - Critically revisit bonding and landscape delivery policies and procedures in new housing estates to ensure species selection, timing of planting, positioning of landscaping creates more liveable estates and is not a secondary consideration in the land division process	Community and Growth Environment & Regulatory Services team

Priority Focus Areas	Action	Action Responsibility (Unit)
Priority Area 3: Embedding climate resilience into design thinking	- Council Planning team to provide direct input via statutory process where land divisions are lodged to consider the integration of open space, drainage and lot layout - Facilitate greater open space quantity and quality, especially for medium density solutions (townhouses, villas etc) where greenspace may be limited) - Provide online material on Council's website that provides links to best practice land division and housing solutions - Consider utilising Council owned surplus sites, where appropriate for achieving more sustainable housing design (conditions of contract) - Seek partnerships with SA Housing Trust and other service providers (including Renewal SA) to demonstrate the principles of climate resilience in the housing and land delivery area for new estates and infill housing opportunities	Across directorate working group led by the Growth team
Priority Area 4: Northern Parklands and Gawler River corridor	- Provide input to the Northern Parklands masterplan, especially stage 1 - Seek to maximise awareness and design responses relating to the following: - First Nations related story telling - Rehabilitation opportunities on Gawler River as a key biodiversity hotspot - Canopy cover targets of Council and the role of the Northern Parklands - Access and movement opportunities along Gawler River as a riparian corridor - Continue to input via Council's CEO as Board member of the Trust on issues relating to biodiversity management and service levels to manage these landscapes	Community and Growth coordinated Working group design solution needed

Priority Focus Areas	Action	Action Responsibility (Unit)
Priority Area 5: Climate Risk Management	- Audit and report back to Council on outcomes achieved through the Climate Emergency Action Plan - Keep a watching brief for mandatory climate risk disclosure and reporting	Community and Growth coordinated Responsibility to be confirmed but monitored by Governance team
Priority Area 6: Sustainable Council Assets and Activities	- Stress test projects to cope with extreme events and meet community needs - Be energy efficient, water efficient and resource efficient generally. This should be a key element of new asset builds especially new community buildings in Kudla as part of the structure plan process - Support the greening of Gawler and biodiversity – as outlined in area of focus 2 - Scope with Northern Parklands Trust shared principles for the delivery and management of assets and services on land within the Northern Parklands (e.g. Karbeethan) - Build criteria into service planning by Council that addresses the sustainability of assets as integral elements of service delivery (typically the venue where services are delivered) - Incorporating sustainability principles into any contracts of sale where Council resolves to dispose of land or proceed with joint ventures, leveraging off Council's ownership and the need to demonstrate industry best practice - Climate change being reflected in the asset management plan process	Across directorate working group led by Growth and Development and Environment & Regulatory Services team

Table 3. Action Plan Priorities

References

- Deloitte (2025). 2024 Statewide Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment for South Australia, Department for Environment and Water. Australia. Retrieved from <https://coilink.org/20.500.12592/1chjt27> on 25 May 2026. COI: 20.500.12592/1chjt27.)
- Green Adelaide (2026) Gawler River Restoration Guide, unpublished
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- Town of Gawler (2016): Environmental Management Plan, unpublished, accessed 28 May 2026 from emp.pdf
- Town of Gawler (2022): Climate Emergency Action Plan, unpublished, accessed 10 April 20256 from Climate Emergency | Town of Gawler Council
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- Town of Gawler Annual Report 24/25, accessed 18 June 2026 from Endorsed-November-2025-Town-of-Gawler-Annual-Report-2024-2025.pdf

Appendix A

Town of Gawler Environment Statement

Town of Gawler Environment Statement 2026–2028

Council aims to respect and nurture the environment through strong civic leadership and leading by example to protect and enhance the environment, with consideration of innovative practice and affordability for the community.

To enact this Policy, Council commits to addressing the following priority areas:

- **Priority Focus Area 1:** Integrated Water Management
- **Priority Focus Area 2:** Urban Heat Island Mitigation – Greening of Gawler
- **Priority Focus Area 3:** Embedding Climate Resilience into Design Thinking
- **Priority Focus Area 4:** Northern Adelaide Parklands and Gawler River
- **Priority Focus Area 5:** Climate Risk Management
- **Priority Focus Area 6:** Sustainable Management of Council Assets and Operations

Scope

This Policy guides Council's environmental performance by specifying the actions required to be delivered to facilitate measurable and specific outcomes related to the priority focus areas set out above.

Legislation and References

This Policy ensures Council complies with legislative requirements specified within State and Commonwealth Acts, including but not limited to the legislative obligations set out within the Environmental Management Framework 2026–2028.

Appendix B

Legislative Obligations

AT A NATIONAL LEVEL:

Environmental and climate priorities are outlined by key legislative frameworks, strategies and administrative arrangements including:

- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999) or EPBC Act*
- *National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy (2021–25)*
- *Threatened Species Action Plan 2022–2032*

Relevance to local government

- **EPBC Act** over-rides state legislation and requires that proposals that impact matters of national environmental significance are referred to the Commonwealth for assessment
- **The National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy** is embedded in South Australia's planning system and reinforces expectations that Councils consider climate risks in development assessment, guide climate-resilient land use (e.g., avoiding flood-prone or coastal hazard areas), incorporate urban heat and resilience measures into planning policies
- The **Threatened Species Action Plan** identifies 100 priority species and 20 priority places. It does not create direct legal obligation, however councils must align local biodiversity strategies and environmental plans with these national priorities

AT A STATE LEVEL:

Environmental and climate priorities are outlined by key legislative frameworks, strategies and administrative arrangements including:

- *Local Government Act 1999 (SA)*
- *South Australian Government Climate Change Action Plan 2021–2025*
- *Green Industries SA Framework (GISA)*
- *State Planning Policies (SPPPs)* – see *State-Planning-Policies-for-South-Australia-Version-2.pdf*
- *Biodiversity Act 2025*
- *South Australian Public Health Act 2011*
- *Environment Protection Act 1993*
- *South Australian 20 Year Infrastructure Strategy*
- *The Statewide planning system, set out in the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016 (and associated Regulations) also applies to land use, land clearance and vegetation removal*

Relevance to local government

- **The Local Government Act 1999** requires that councils must act in accordance with principles of sustainable development and environmental protection (embedded in their functions and decision-making framework). Council's must also consider environmental issues in operational decisions (e.g., vegetation management must account for environmental impacts)
- **The SA Govt Climate Change Action Plan** is a key state policy that outlines actions to reduce emissions, build a climate resilient economy and adapt to climate change. Councils are expected to align policies and strategies with the 68 actions listed in the Plan
- **The Green Industries SA Framework**, or GISA was established under the Green Industries SA Act 2024 and is a comprehensive plan aimed at accelerating South Australia's transition to a circular economy. Its relevance for local government is in waste management practices and for Town of Gawler relates to its contractual expectations of NAWMA with green bin waste and recycling initiatives
- **State Planning Policies** must be met by local government when preparing code amendments, new strategies and in planning assessment. Of the 16 current policies specific policies include SPP4 Biodiversity, SPP5 Climate Change and SPP 14 Water Security
- **The Biodiversity Act 2025** sits within planning legislation and obliges local government to assess impacts of land clearing and similar proposals and introduces a mitigation strategy
- **The South Australian Public Health Act 2011** aims to protect individuals and communities from risks to public health and to ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, a healthy environment for all South Australians. It encourages individuals and communities to plan for, create and maintain a healthy environment. It confers to Council the function of assessing activities and development, or proposed activities or development, within its area in order to determine and respond to public health impacts (or potential public health impacts)
- **The Environment Protection Act 1993** promotes principles of ecologically sustainable development that will enable people and communities to provide for their economic, social and physical well-being and for their health and safety. This Act includes measures to address climate change adaptation and climate change mitigation whilst seeking to prevent, reduce, minimise or eliminate environmental harm
- **South Australian 20 Year Infrastructure Strategy** identifies priority infrastructure investments across the State. For local government the implications are essentially in the land use and planning context where infrastructure decisions on water, roads, bridges etc shape the land use opportunities on ground
- A range of overlays apply under **State Planning legislation** which have effective expression at the regional and local level – whether it be planning zone controls that apply to agricultural land, hill faces and escarpments

AT A REGIONAL LEVEL:

Environmental and climate priorities are outlined by key legislative frameworks, strategies and administrative arrangements including:

- Regional Growth Plans issued by the SA Planning Commission
- Northern Adelaide Waste Management Authority (NAWMA)
- Landscape Board context – Northern York Landscape Board and Green Adelaide
- RDA Barossa Gawler Light and Adelaide Plains

Relevance to local government

- **Regional Growth Plans** are given legal status under Section 64 of the Planning Development and Infrastructure Act 2016, are informed by State Planning Policies and identify opportunities and priorities at scale within a regional for local government to consider and align with in local planning decisions. Growth area planning is a specific example of where new areas for new communities are identified at a region for local government to consider and align with local planning decisions. Growth area planning is a specific example of where new areas for new communities are identified at a regional level and are implemented at the local level through the structure plan. Council's role is to manage infrastructure co-ordination and ultimately the land division process

- **NAWMA** are responsible for waste management practices and service delivery for its three constituent councils – City of Salisbury, City of Playford and Town of Gawler. The Councils have direct and indirect impacts on the circular economy as well as in land use terms with supporting/processing infrastructure

- **Landscape Boards:** The Northern and Yorke Landscape Protection Board (NYLB), established under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019, has important legal, operational and strategic implications for the Town of Gawler. NYLB has a referral role on planning applications, provides local advice and grants for local initiatives and is funded via a landscape levy incorporated into Council's rates and charges

- **RDA Barossa Gawler Light and Adelaide Plains** is a regional level economic development focused organisation. Tasked with industry development, employment growth and infrastructure investment, the RDA advocates for the interests of its member Councils and is an important entity for advocacy to State and Federal governments for project delivery outcomes

AT A LOCAL LEVEL:

- A typical Town of Gawler Council budget in 2026–2027 is \$~45M p.a, with a capital works budget of greater than \$10M p.a, spent on road upgrades, bridges, buildings, reserve maintenance and asset management. All of these have a highly visible landscape footprint
- Council activities, procedures and policies have a significant impact on our environment – additional sphere of influence that can have significant impact, whether it be:
 - Management of reserves as places of passive or active recreation
 - Tree planting initiatives in road reserves
 - Land use decisions involving new development

Relevance

- The relevance of local decisions on the environment cannot be isolated from the Federal/State and especially the regional policy and legislative agenda
- It is at the local level that the cumulative impact of decisions made, whether through planning approvals, infrastructure decisions, land use zoning or broader asset management are visible

Appendix C

Key Internal and External Documents and Regional Commitments

Key Town of Gawler Internal Documents

- Animal Management Plan 2025-2030
- Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2024 (under review)
- All Asset Management Plans including Strategic Asset Management Plan
- Willaston Cemetery – Conservation Management Plan 2024
- Gawler Urban Rivers Master Plan
- Essex Park & Gawler Showgrounds Master Plan
- Open Space Guidelines
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Survey of the Gawler, North Para and South Para Rivers
- Biodiversity Management Plan
- Tree Management Plan 2024–2034
- Walking and Cycling Plan 2018-2028
- Procurement Policy
- Playspace Strategy 2024
- Open Space, Sport & Recreation Plan 2025 (under review)
- Gawler Economic Development Strategy (under review)
- Gawler Town Centre Car Parking Strategy 2023–2028
- Gawler Growth Framework 2046 and Integrated Transport Strategy 2046

External Engagements and Documents

- Northern and Yorke Landscape Board (and Northern and Yorke Landscape Plan)
- Green Adelaide Board (and Green Adelaide Landscape Plan)
- Gawler Environment and Heritage Association
- NAWMA – service agreement and Board participation
- Gawler River Floodplain Management Authority (and Asset Management Plan 2023–2032)
- Barossa, Light and Lower Northern regional Public Health Plan 2022-2027

Appendix D

2024 Statewide Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment

The 2024 Statewide Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment for South Australia identified 11 high-priority physical climate risks (Tier 1 risks) that require new or stronger adaptation action within the next five years:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Significant loss of biodiversity and ecosystems | 7. Insurance becoming unaffordable or unavailable |
| 2. Increased coastal erosion and inundation affecting coastal structures and ecosystems | 8. Disruption to supply chains and logistics, including access to raw materials |
| 3. Damage to flood and coastal protection infrastructure, such as levees, seawalls and beach replenishment systems | 9. Impacts of extreme weather on employment and financial wellbeing |
| 4. Disruption to transport networks, including roads, rail, ports, aviation and public transport | 10. Increasing physical and mental health impacts from climate change and extreme weather |
| 5. Impacts on water availability, quality, supply and demand | 11. Reduced capacity of emergency services to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies |
| 6. Reduced agriculture and forestry production and profitability | |

(Source: Deloitte 2025)

Appendix E

Sustainable Council Assets and Operations

Area/Theme	Key Actions and Achievements
Recent Sustainability Upgrades	• Transition of most public lighting to LED technology, reducing energy use, emissions and operating costs by more than 30% • Lighting upgrades at the Gawler Administration Centre and Finniss Street Car Park, significantly reducing emissions and energy costs • Installation of solar systems across six Council buildings to lower emissions and operational costs • Changes to electricity purchasing arrangements to support South Australian renewables, procure accredited renewable electricity, and reduce exposure to peak pricing periods
Future Sustainability Improvement Opportunities	• Improve building management systems and introduce energy storage solutions, such as solar batteries, to reduce energy use and costs • Expand planning and delivery of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) initiatives • Increase greening, canopy cover and biodiversity across Gawler, including greenfield developments and existing urban areas such as the Town Centre • Continue transitioning Council's fleet to electric vehicles to reduce emissions and fuel cost exposure • Lead by example through the implementation and promotion of sustainable initiatives • Contribute to master-planning and structure planning processes to ensure sustainability remains a central focus in future growth areas
Climate Resilience and Sustainability Actions	• Stress test asset projects to ensure they can withstand extreme events and continue meeting community needs • Deliver energy efficient, water efficient and resource efficient assets, particularly in new developments and community buildings • Support greening and biodiversity outcomes across Gawler • Work with the Northern Parklands Trust to establish shared principles for asset and service delivery within the Northern Parklands • Incorporate sustainability criteria into Council service planning and asset management processes • Embed sustainability principles into contracts of sale and joint venture agreements to demonstrate industry best practice



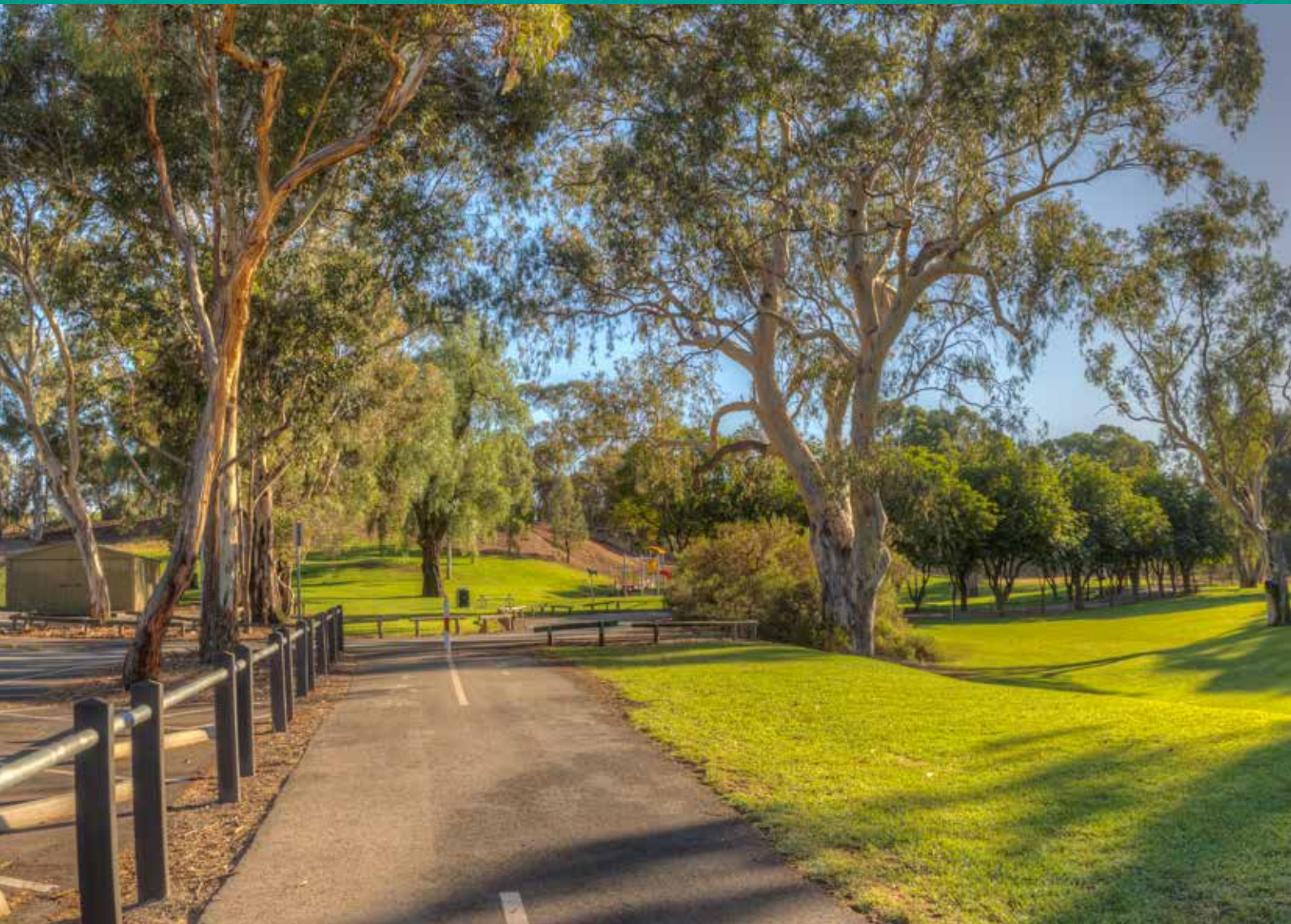
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Gawler