

# Greater Adelaide Environment Network Prospectus



## Introducing the Greater Adelaide Environment Network

**Working together for a more sustainable future.**

The Greater Adelaide Environment Network (GAEN) is a newly formed alliance of nine community-based Environment (or Natural Resource) Centres operating across the Greater Adelaide area.

The GAEN brings together a wealth of experience and local connections under a new collaborative and coordinated framework. We are excited about the impact that GAEN will achieve for our environment and our communities through this new collaboration and focus.

Our collective impact, which extends back over the past 25 years, has been significant, with over 20,000 participant attendances and over 400 events held annually. With a commitment to develop community skills and resilience, our centres conduct workshops and information sessions on everything from local biodiversity and sustainable land management practices, to recycling and waste diversion. We run annual native plant sales, coordinate revegetation projects, support community gardens, run sustainable living festivals and a wide variety of other innovative environmental and community development initiatives.

January 2022



**Our vision** is to collectively/collaboratively care for our environment into the future.

**Our mission** is for the connections and partnerships that we have formed between local communities and agencies to continue to attract investment, to foster gains in knowledge and drive actions that support sustainable development. Such work will lead to the wise use of natural resources, healthy ecosystems and resilient communities..

**Our aim** is to realise this through a model of delivery that supports and empowers communities to deliver the outcomes set out in state and regional landscape plans while simultaneously building community health, wellbeing, connections and resilience.

Investment in the GAEN will have a multiplier effect as we can leverage and harness collective impact.

## GAEN's value proposition

**As a collective, the GAEN members commit to:**

- providing direct connection and extension of agency to community through extensive, well established and trusted local and regional community networks;
- leveraging relatively small investments to create valuable and impactful local outcomes;
- building an agile and responsive system that, enables the rapid implementation of new initiatives;
- fostering knowledge transfer and build capacity;
- coordinating the collective community volunteer network to address environmental and social issues;
- informing, enthusing and leading behaviour change for environmental good and to underpin sustainable economic development; and
- encouraging and supporting stronger connections with Traditional Owners.

## What we can offer – the beginning of a new alliance and partnership

- a) A partnership with government that balances financial prudence and accountability alongside community independence.
- b) Our volunteer-based organisations seek and promote partnerships that mobilise and empower outcomes while providing direction. This will support innovation and independence while coordinating and encouraging efficient and effective delivery of services.
- c) Our focus is on continuing to provide services that promote knowledge, behaviour change, commitment and capacity within communities. These are all essential to effect changes towards more sustainable use of natural resources, conservation of biodiversity and living sustainably.
- d) Our network of environment centres encompasses significant community capacity, social capital and knowledge, having been invested in for many years via a range of funding partners. GAEN will harness its social capital and extension skills to provide a framework to achieve not only contracted deliverables and outcomes, but also significant economic and social outcomes.
- e) We add value to the wider land management sector by building relationships and networks at the local community level. These relationships and networks enable us to mobilise quickly to implement new initiatives, trial new ideas, assist in responding to disasters, and act as 'thought leaders'.
- f) By fostering the health and effectiveness of community networks and relationships, communities themselves can overcome challenges and problems and manage their natural resources in an effective and sophisticated manner. The GAEN does this by:
  - harnessing local volunteers to tackle local land management issues and conserve flora and fauna;
  - teaching people environmental management skills such as plant propagation, revegetation and weeding;
  - supporting stronger connections with Traditional Owners;
  - helping communities adapt to the impacts of changing climate;
  - promoting solutions to minimise waste and live sustainably.

# Highlights across the GAEN region

## Community nurseries

Local native plants grown by volunteers for revegetation and sustainable gardening projects.

- Barossa Bushgardens.
- Fleurieu Coast Community Nursery.
- Mount Pleasant NRC Nursery.
- Strathalbyn NRC: Alexandrina (Goolwa) and Mount Barker Community Nurseries.

## Biodiversity and nature education

- Gawler Understorey Project: over 55,000 native plants to restore regional vegetation.
- Aldinga Washpool project: YACCA youth working with Kaurna stakeholders to restore this significant site.
- Barossa Bushgardens: environmental education and activities for schools and kindergartens.
- Tree Trails in Willunga, Kangarilla and McLaren Vale: highlighting the importance of trees in our environment.
- Quiet Green Achiever Awards (Hills): acknowledges the dedication of environmental volunteers annually.
- Mount Barker Wildlife Gardening: subsidised plant packs supported by Strathalbyn NRC and Mount Barker Council.

## Sustainability and innovation

- Gawler Repair Café: skilled volunteers help community members to repair household items that would otherwise go to waste.
- Recreate: creative reuse centre, shop, materials depot and workshop space in Mount Pleasant.
- Sustainable Fleurieu Project: community education on reducing single use plastics and living sustainably.
- Hills Harvest Exchange: monthly community veggie swap with over 150 members – running for over nine years.
- Sustainable Living Mount Barker (Strath NRC) and Gawler Sustainable Living Festival (Gawler EC).
- Library of Things (The Joinery): enabling the community to access sustainable living items for a low-cost, reduce consumption and waste, and to show proof of concept for other organisations to start their own Library of Things.



- 1 — Barossa Bushgardens
- 2 — Gawler Environment Centre
- 3 — Mount Pleasant Natural Resource Centre
- 4 — Port Environment Centre
- 5 — Adelaide Sustainability Centre
- 6 — Hills Environment Centre
- 7 — Willunga Environment Centre
- 8 — Strathalbyn Natural Resource Centre
- 9 — Fleurieu Environment Centre
- Greater Adelaide Region

## Land management and climate change

- Bushfire response Cudlee Creek: Mount Pleasant, Hills and Strathalbyn centres growing plants, implementing on ground restoration projects, assisting Landscape Board staff and supporting land holders to rebuild after the fire.
- Eastern Fleurieu Community Environment Alliance (Strathalbyn): supporting 15 local on-ground volunteer groups from Mount Barker to Goolwa.
- On-ground revegetation, weed control and restoration projects across the region.
- Green roof demonstration at The Joinery: highlighting innovation in water sensitive urban design, urban cooling, local habitat provision, urban heat island mitigation and building insulation.

## Investment

**Continued investment of relatively small amounts of public funding will enable the GAEN to continue to leverage additional funds via other sources, including as co-contributions in cash or in-kind.**

This amplifies the value and return on investments beyond the transfer of knowledge and changes to behaviour resulting from direct delivery of actions within service agreements. These gains have generally been achieved with modest amounts of funding and increased levels of investment are likely to see corresponding increases in returns.

Investment in the GAEN will have a multiplier effect, generating further investment from industry, partner organisations and public and private stakeholders. Government investment will catalyse projects and processes, garner momentum and attract further investment and stakeholder buy-in. Investment in these types of volunteer-based organisations has been shown to provide returns of between two and five times the original investment.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to securing core funding, the GAEN seeks to attract investments from a diverse range of funding streams that align with the wide range of services we provide to address the priorities of organisations such as the Australian Government, South Australian Government, local government, industry bodies, philanthropic organisations and individuals.

## Social capital

**The GAEN represents significant social capital that plays a central role in the healthy functioning of the local communities that our centres support.**

In addition to enabling knowledge transfer and behaviour change to support better land management, our centres have notably contributed in many ways to fostering improvements in health and wellbeing. This includes directly supporting a number of Wellbeing SA policies. For example, volunteering and participating in activities based in natural and outdoor environments promotes physical activity and supports cultural, social, spiritual, emotional, physical, mental and financial wellbeing.

Our existing network is ideally placed to assist Wellbeing SA in achieving its mission to *“Build and maintain partnerships for investment and take action to reduce the preventable burden of disease and injury and promote health and wellbeing”*. (Wellbeing SA Strategic Plan 2020–2025 pg. 11)

We are closely connected with our communities. We are nimble and able to quickly mobilise participation in new initiatives. Our vital community network has grown through government investment over many years, demonstrating the value of strategic investment in local, community-based institutions. Top-down government stimulus can be a catalyst for bottom-up community development and the GAEN will welcome and support the development and participation of further community-led environment centres that may emerge or wish to participate in our alliance. Alliance members are actively supporting steps being taken to build on current initiatives occurring in Mount Barker for example.

Concepts such as bonding capital and bridging capital have been used to assist in identifying our strengths and how these can be harnessed to support the objectives of government agencies in partnering with us to connect with communities and to take advantage of strategic opportunities. In the process of forming the GAEN, the centres involved have embarked on a process of strategic business planning to identify opportunities to achieve multiple objectives, across sectors, and to diversify revenue streams and expand their reach and effectiveness within communities. This process has been supported with resources from the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board, Northern and Yorke Landscape Board and Green Adelaide.

## Further gains that will flow from investment in GAEN

**By facilitating greater sharing of current best information and preserving institutional memory and local knowledge, environment centres cultivate improved ‘land literacy’ and stewardship.**

This has translated into many centres being regarded by regional boards and state and federal agencies as ‘go-to’ organisations to facilitate the rapid roll out of crucial programs.

An increased understanding of and connection to land is also something that carries with it inherent value. We are also ideally placed to assist businesses in meeting corporate social objectives through community and environmental volunteering opportunities.

1. The Multiple Benefits of Landcare and Natural Resource Management. Australian Landcare Council. 2013.

## Government Policy Frameworks

The South Australian Government has implemented a new framework for managing the state's land, water, pest plants and animals, and biodiversity across the state.

*"A key priority of landscape boards is to support local communities and landowners to be directly responsible for sustainably managing their region's landscapes with an emphasis on land and water management, pest animal and plant control, and biodiversity. This includes providing greater funding and partnership opportunities with local community organisations to deliver on ground works and projects."*<sup>2</sup>

This commitment to place "community at the centre" and devolve responsibility to the local community level recognises that locals often possess a unique understanding and insight into their distinct circumstances, and thus know very well what solutions are needed.

A Regional Landscape Plan, prepared by each Landscape Board, identifies priorities and guides the strategic actions and investments in each region. The GAEN is ideally positioned to work with and support the three boards that span the Greater Adelaide area in realising their visions.

A particularly exciting opportunity exists for the GAEN to support the establishment of **Adelaide as a National Park City (NPC)** – a goal that Green Adelaide supports through its Regional Landscape Plan and Annual Business Plan. The GAEN is a complementary tool to realising the aims of the Adelaide NPC to increase community connections to nature and foster awareness of the importance of biodiversity and natural spaces in the urban context. As a movement rather than a static concept of a national park, the Adelaide NPC aims to enhance human wellbeing and connection between people in addition to improving the nature of our cities.

As highlighted in the map on page 3, our extensive reach, established networks and significant capacity provide a ripe platform to assist in bringing this bold vision to fruition. We are ideally placed to support the ongoing development of the Adelaide NPC concept, including across the Adelaide hinterland – the Barossa Valley, Northern Adelaide Plains, Mt Lofty Ranges and the Fleurieu – that provides Adelaide's framing bio-geographical landscape.

## National Park City nature experiences on the city fringe

National Park City London provides Escape Routes to nature experiences on the city fringe, and there is great potential for GAEN centres to develop similar projects based on our current work, providing opportunities to volunteer and to learn about local biodiversity, natural history, and Indigenous history and culture. A few examples are:

- **Gawler River Eastern Floodway Project:** After a decade of clearing major pest plants, 2500 locally indigenous seedlings have been planted to create new understorey for the red gum forest along the Gawler River. This precinct forms part of the proposed Gawler to Sea hike/bike trail.
- **Tree Trails in Willunga, Kangarilla, McLaren Vale and Yankalilla areas:** A number of volunteer-led Citizen Science projects where Information tags have been placed on selected trees within in these localities.
- **Coastal conservation and habitat revegetation:** Ongoing volunteer efforts to increase coastal vegetation and the habitat for important fauna along the metropolitan and Fleurieu coastlines.
- **Aldinga Scrub Conservation Park (with newly-included Washpool area):** About 340 hectares of land including one of Adelaide's last remaining coastal freshwater and estuarine lagoon systems, Aldinga Washpool. The washpool is a habitat for a wide range of native birds and swamp plants and is also of considerable spiritual and cultural significance to the Kaurana people, including significant archaeological sites.

2. <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/Landscape-SA>

3. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

## Sustainable Development Goals

Managing and conserving Australia's biodiversity and natural resources is at the heart of investments in conservation and land management.

The concept of *natural capital* describes a stock of natural resources – geology, soils, air, water, vegetation and living organisms that, through 'ecosystem services' provide people with benefits and value. The challenge that practices and systems of sustainable development aim to overcome is how to optimise the benefits of ecosystem services whilst preserving or improving the condition of the natural capital that underpins them.

Progress on Landscape SA objectives, which align broadly with UN Sustainable Development Goals<sup>3</sup>, requires cooperation and participation from landholders and communities. The GAEN, with its social capital and its knowledge dissemination faculties, provides the framework for achieving this.

## Disaster Resilience and Response

**In addition to taking action to improve the resilience of our environment, networks such as the GAEN contain important social capital, making communities more capable of responding to stressful situations such as disasters.**

They provide social infrastructure that assists in the effective and efficient delivery of disaster responses and recovery processes. The immediate and ongoing response to the Cudlee Creek fire is one example where GAEN member organisations have played an important role in this regard.

GAEN member organisations have been praised for their contributions to the individual and collective health and welfare of participants and communities. There are strong connections between resilience, health and welfare, relationships and community involvement. We look forward to continuing to make a significant contribution to the health and resilience of our environment and our local and regional communities.

## What our partners are saying

*"With over 22 years of experience, they are recognised as leaders in the protection and sustainable management of our local vegetation and natural resources; and their project outcomes speak for themselves."*

Alexandrina Council  
Strathalbyn Natural Resource Centre  
05/03/2021

*"As an organisation active in land management, climate change adaptation and sustainable living initiatives, GEC presents opportunities for young people to get active in building a secure and sustainable future."*

*"Through participation in GEC workshops, planting days, festivals, educational activities, and the GEC committee, young people are able to have their say and gain valuable community leadership skills."*

Gawler Youth Advisory Committee  
Gawler Environment Centre  
10/03/2021

*"The Barossa Bushgardens NRC has a rich history of environmental activism, community action and conservation/natural resources leadership. These community operated centres provide an integral resource to community across South Australia."*

The Barossa Council  
Barossa Bushgardens  
11/03/2021



For more information contact:

Matt Robertson

P 0427 070 796

E [mhrob58@icloud.com](mailto:mhrob58@icloud.com)



**GREATER ADELAIDE  
ENVIRONMENT  
NETWORK**