

Low native vegetation

Percentage cover

South Australia's

Environmental trend and condition report card 2018



STATEWIDE



Trend
Getting worse



Condition
Unknown



Reliability
Excellent

Trend

The statewide percentage cover of low native vegetation is getting worse.

This assessment uses data on low native vegetation (e.g. grasslands) from the South Australian land cover layers 1990-2015.

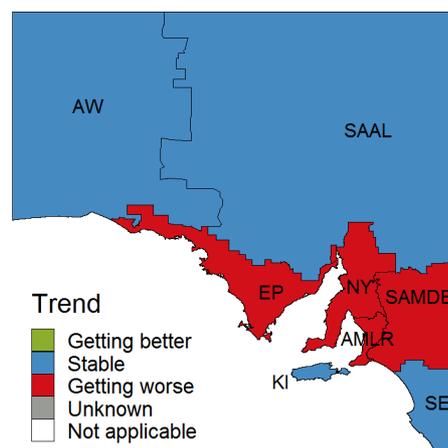
The trend in percentage cover of low native vegetation is stable in four natural resources management regions (Alinytjara Wilurara [AW], Kangaroo Island [KI], South Australian Arid Lands [SAAL] and South East [SE]) and getting worse in four regions (Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges [AMLR], Eyre Peninsula [EP], Northern and Yorke [NY] and South Australian Murray-Darling Basin [SAMDB]) (top figure). The loss of low native vegetation is largely attributed to clearance and gradual replacement by woody native shrubs.

Prior to 1990 the decrease in low native vegetation extent was even more extensive. For example, more than 60% of all native vegetation in the Mount Lofty Ranges has been removed.

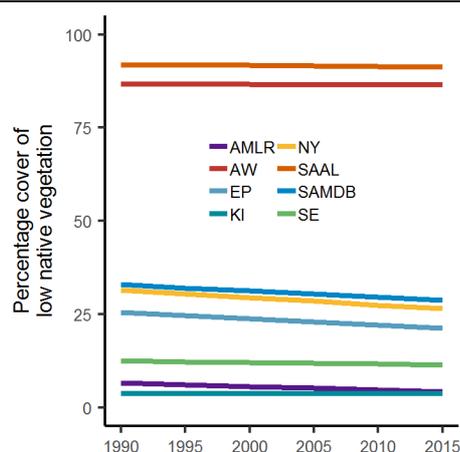
Condition

The condition of low native vegetation percentage cover is unknown because there are no agreed statewide benchmark.

Across South Australia, low native vegetation is estimated to be 75,698,700 hectares. At the regional level, estimates are 27,960 ha in AMLR, 24,245,010 ha in AW, 1,094,500 ha in EP, 16,080 ha in KI, 915,580 ha in NY, 47,477,680 ha in SAAL, 1,615,170 ha in SAMDB and 306,720 ha in SE (bottom figure).



Low native vegetation is transitioning to agricultural land and woody native shrubs in some areas of South Australia



Why is low native vegetation important?

Low native vegetation provides habitat for South Australia's plants and animals, including those that are threatened. Low native vegetation protects soils, coastlines and waterways from erosion and salinity, and provides habitat for predators of agricultural pests and pollinators. Most pastoral activity in South Australia depends on the sustainable use of low native vegetation (e.g. native pastures). Low native vegetation helps connect people with nature.

What are the pressures?

Low native vegetation (such as grasslands) is decreasing because of conversion to agricultural land and gradual replacement by woody native vegetation. The transition to woody vegetation – sometimes called shrub encroachment – is thought to be driven by a combination of factors interacting, particularly grazing, climate and fire regimes.

It can be very difficult to shift from woody native vegetation back to low native vegetation.

What is being done?

Native vegetation in South Australia is protected under native vegetation, protected areas and pastoral legislation. Approval to clear native vegetation can be coupled with conditions to provide an environmental gain over and above the clearing activity.

Native vegetation is also maintained by activities such as revegetation, fencing, managing grazing and fire regimes, and controlling pest plants and animals.

For further information see: [technical information](#)



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