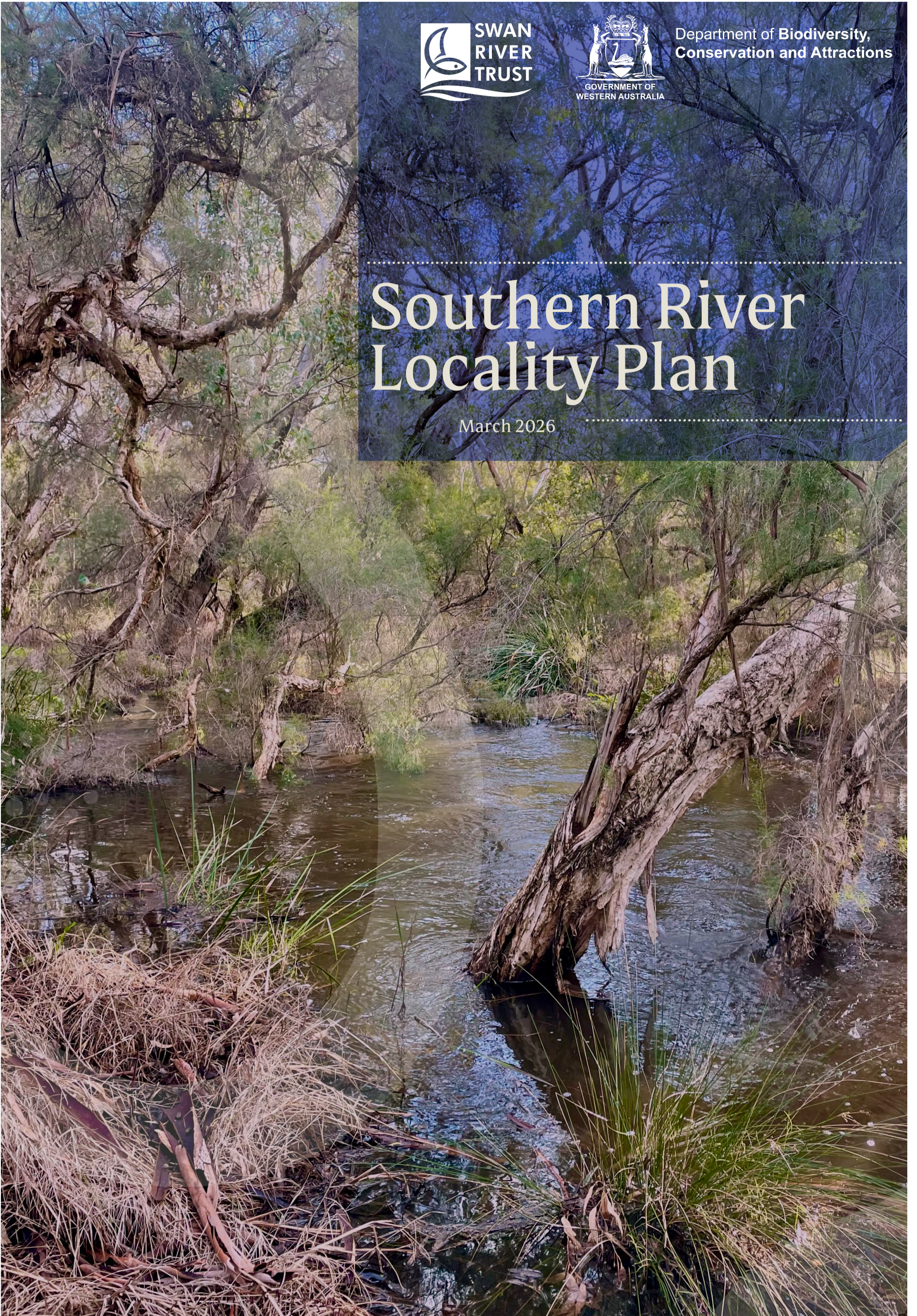




Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

Southern River Locality Plan

March 2026





The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and Swan River Trust acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people as the Traditional Owners of this land and their continued connection to land, sea and community.

.....
We pay our respects to them, their cultures and to their Elders past and present.

Introduction



Photo: Lane Gardens Park - DBCA

The Southern River Locality Plan

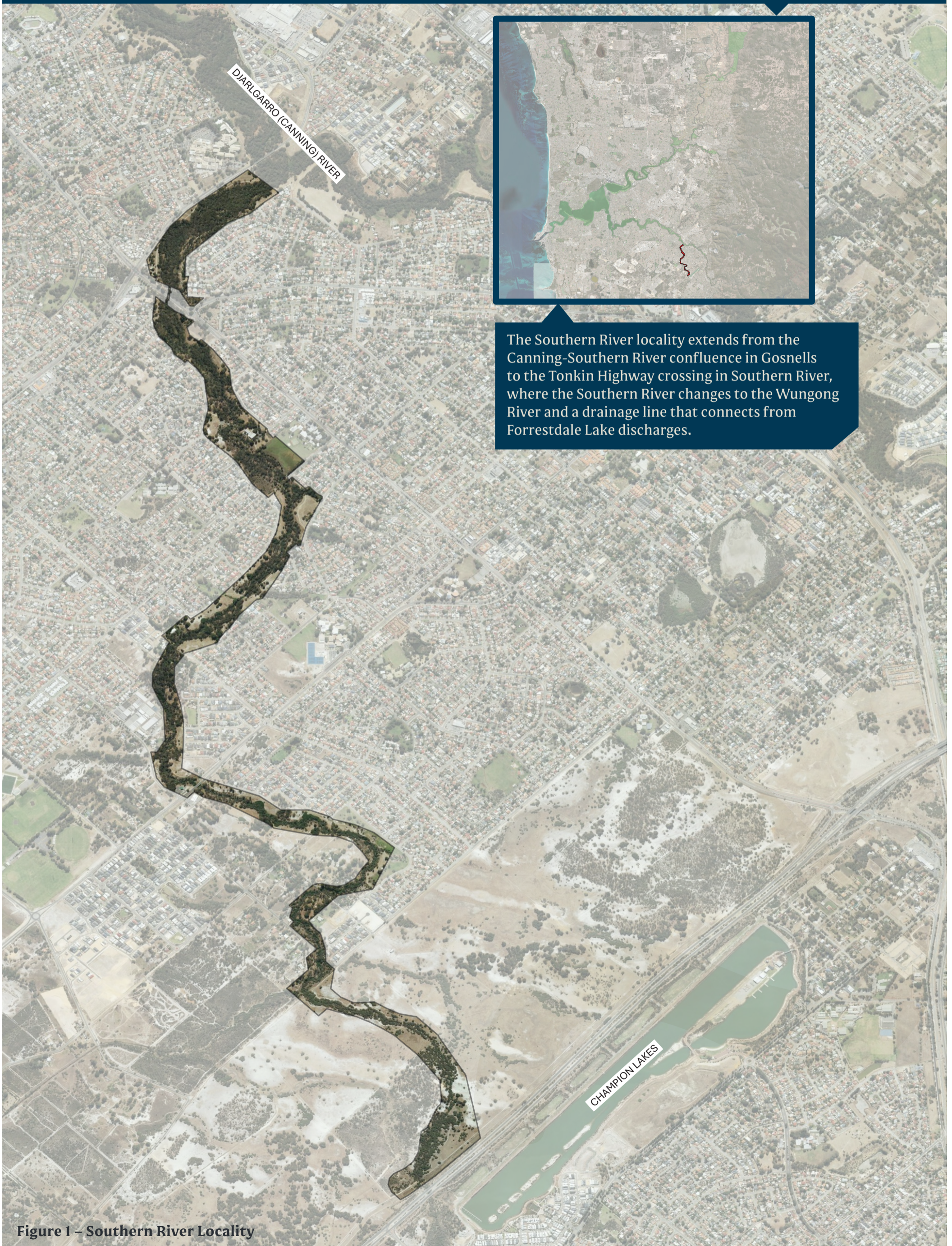
The Derbal Yirragan Djarlgarro (Swan Canning river system) is a complex and dynamic natural landscape. In addition to its fundamental ecological values and important floodplain function, it is valued for its landscape and scenic qualities, cultural and heritage significance, and focus for various recreation and tourism activities. While considering the river as this larger natural system, it is also acknowledged that its characteristics and identity change depending on the locality. To ensure the consideration and preservation of these unique attributes, locality plans have been developed for sections along the Swan Canning development control area (DCA).

The Southern River Locality Plan (the Plan) contains locality-specific policy statements to ensure that land use, design and development approaches responds to the environmental, cultural, heritage and social values of the Southern River section of the river system. The Plan also brings together 'on' and 'off' water considerations to direct appropriate protection, restoration and activation of the river and its foreshores.

The Plan has been developed to achieve the objectives and principles of the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006* (SCRM Act) and is policy developed and published pursuant to the SCRM Act to support consistent and integrated planning, decision-making and management outcomes in relation to the river system. It is to be read in conjunction with *Corporate Policy Statement No. 52: Planning for Localities along the Swan Canning Development Control Area*. The Plan is supported by a separate Southern River Action Plan that aims to guide planning and works in the locality. The actions should be delivered when opportunities present.

The extent of the Southern River locality is identified in Figure 1 (next page) and includes land within the City of Gosnells. The policy statements apply to land within, abutting and affecting (including ecologically and visually) the DCA and includes public and private land.

Policy Area



The Southern River locality extends from the Canning-Southern River confluence in Gosnells to the Tonkin Highway crossing in Southern River, where the Southern River changes to the Wungong River and a drainage line that connects from Forrestdale Lake discharges.

Figure 1 – Southern River Locality

Landscape Description



Photo: *Banksia prionotes*, Gosnells - DBCA

Parts of the Southern River are in a relatively natural state, with remnant vegetation present along the streamline. The river has declining water flows due to climate change and dams (e.g. Wungong Dam) in its upper reaches.

A built suburban landscape character is dominant along the Southern River foreshore, from upstream of the Southern River Road crossing to the Djarlgarro Beelie (Canning River) confluence. New suburbs have been built on the flat landform, with designated public open space adjoining some wetlands and the river. These are highly landscaped zones with areas of good remnant vegetation. A road reserve separates most of the developments from the river foreshore and provides public access to the foreshore reserve.

This locality has pockets of rural-residential landscape character adjacent to the river, predominantly in the section near Tonkin Highway (Gosnells/Southern River). Public access to the river and foreshore in this area is restricted by livestock fencing to the edge of the embankment.

There are areas of natural and parkland landscape characters in this locality. The natural landscape character is limited to a narrow strip along the river because of historic grazing and clearing for development. The parkland character includes areas of mowed understorey or lawn for recreational purposes. The remnant riparian vegetation is an important natural landscape feature in this locality.

Access to the Southern River is restricted in some parts due to the natural landform features of the foreshore reserve. Where dual use paths are available, they are built beyond the floodplain, which allows views down to the river and riparian vegetation. Public access points in the foreshore reserve are provided at the Fremantle Road Traffic Bridge, Mabel Davies Park, Richard Rushton Community Centre and footbridge, Southern Wood Park, Yilgarn Way Reserve and William Lane Park. Viewing platforms have been constructed within the foreshore area in Gosnells, which allow access to the narrow extent of natural landscape character and the attractive flooded gum-paperbark wetlands.

Locality-specific Policy Statements

The policy statements are locality-specific. They support achievement of the key principles and policies as outlined in *Corporate Policy Statement No. 52: Planning for Localities along the Swan Canning Development Control Area*.

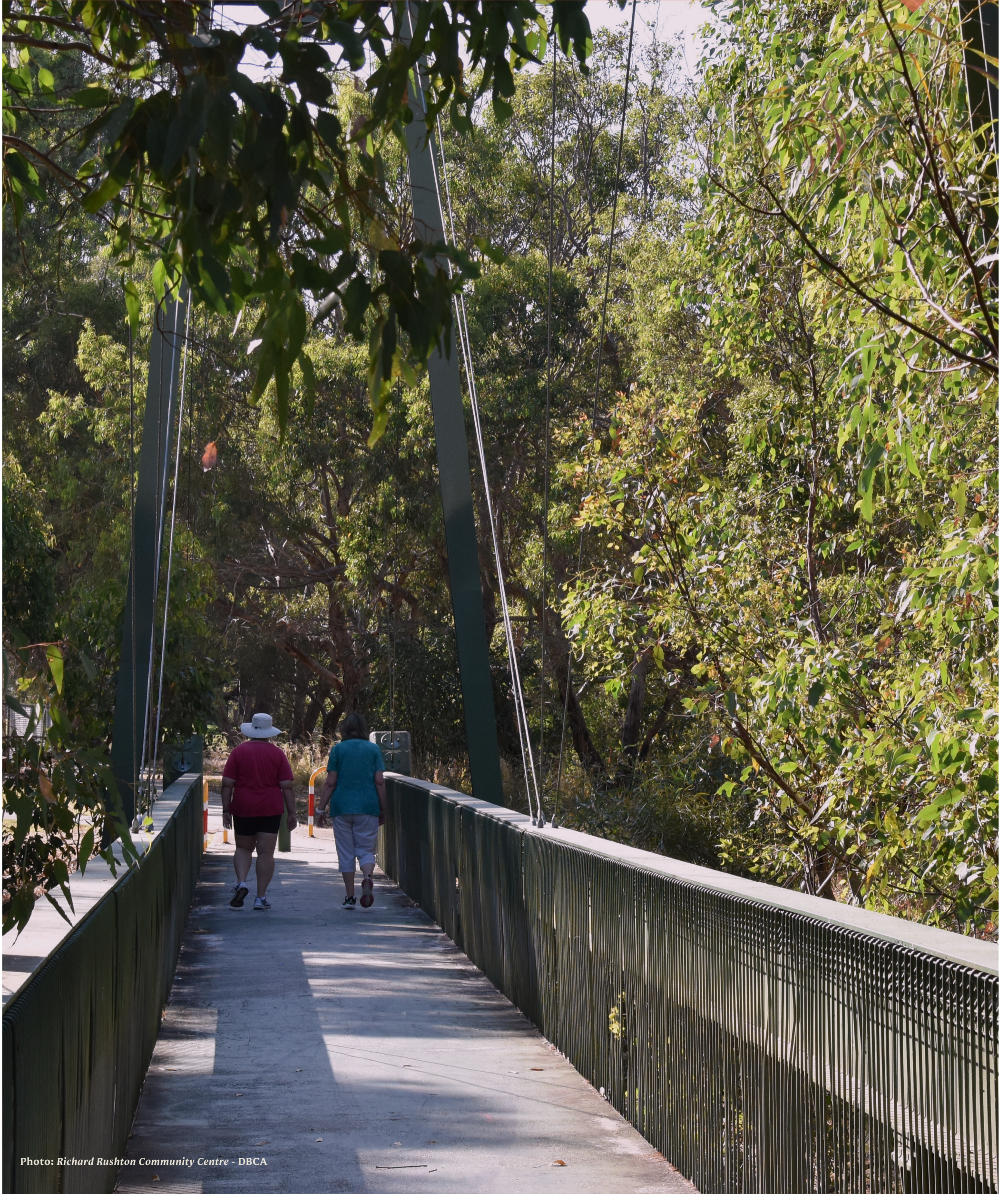


Photo: Richard Rushton Community Centre - DBCA



Photo: Thornlie River Park - DBCA

Protect and restore the river system

- 10.1 Maintain and restore natural landscape riparian elements, such as wetlands and flat floodplains, and natural hydrology, such as seasonal flooding.
- 10.2 Maintain and restore the foreshore to conserve its ecological values and protect riverbanks in their natural state. Where riverbank stabilisation is necessary in this locality, soft foreshore stabilisation approaches should be used.
- 10.3 Restore natural characteristics to drainage lines and tributaries that connect to Southern River, including by creating buffers of local vegetation along the waterway edge, particularly the drainage lines that flow from Forrestdale Lake.
- 10.4 Remove weeds and rehabilitate areas of degraded vegetation condition with local plant species.

Protect and restore foreshore vegetation

- 10.5 Retain and restore riparian vegetation, particularly where weeds and extensive historical clearing have degraded the vegetation. Restore structural complexity in the vegetation to provide diverse habitat for water-dependent species.

Establish and maintain foreshore reserves

- 10.6 Increase the total area and improve the environmental quality of foreshore reserves in this locality.
- 10.7 Provide foreshore reserves of sufficient width to protect waterway landforms and processes and riparian vegetation when land uses change from rural to urban, such as in the reaches near Tonkin Highway (Gosnells/Southern River).

Increase resilience to climate change

- 10.8 Direct clean stormwater runoff (that has been through water quality management systems located within the development footprint) from the urban zone to the river, where flood capacity within the river and its foreshore is sufficient, to address reduced flows due to climate change.



Photo: Southern River, Southern River - DBCA

Implement water sensitive design

- 10.9 Improve the quality of stormwater entering the foreshore. Consider the need to retrofit drainage inlets. Implement water sensitive urban design, with the aim of incorporating at-source stormwater management systems and overland flow through vegetated systems within the development footprint and within the catchment, instead of using end-of-pipe stormwater systems within the foreshore reserve.
- 10.10 Connect development or land use changes on a lot that will increase wastewater loads to the reticulated sewerage network, where possible, or upgrade the on-site system to manage nutrient outputs.
- 10.11 Ensure development and land uses adjacent to tributaries that connect to Southern River do not result in new sources of nutrient or non-nutrient contaminants to the river.

- 10.12 Implement nutrient, pesticide and irrigation industry best practice for grassed areas in proximity to the river, particularly active playing surfaces and where depth to the groundwater is less than 1 metre. Establish buffers of local vegetation between the waterway and active recreation areas, including the ovals adjacent to Richard Rushton Community Centre. Locate new active recreation areas outside of the DCA.

Minimise dredging and channel disturbance

- 10.13 Not support filling within the floodway or redirection of waterways, including for channel crossings. Culverts used for channel crossings are to provide for aquatic fauna passage.

Retain and conserve cultural significance and heritage values

- 10.14 Retain and conserve elements of heritage significance that contribute to the landscape setting of the Southern River, including places entered on the State Register of Heritage Places or in the Local Government Heritage List or Local Heritage Survey, such as Southern River Hall and Masjid Ibrahim Mosque.
- 10.15 Integrate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture and heritage into the foreshore design narrative.
- 10.16 Use Whadjuk Noongar names across the locality, with naming to be informed by appropriate Noongar knowledge holders.



Photo: Masjid Ibrahim - DBCA



Photo: Yilgarn Way Reserve - DBCA

Maintain the rivers and their foreshores as a community asset

10.17 Provide a road or dual use path interface between new urban lots and the foreshore reserve to enable public access, separate land uses, improve passive surveillance, and support appropriate bushfire protection. In some cases, such an interface will also be required for survey strata subdivisions.

Maintain a sense of place

10.18 Use local vegetation species within the foreshore reserve and within public open space and road reserves that abut the foreshore reserve to connect and contribute to the river landscape's sense of place.

Secure public access to the rivers and their foreshores

10.19 Provide a safe and accessible public open space network. Particular attention should be given to the following:

- i. incorporating pathways under bridges or via pedestrian crossings at the roadway, which are set back on the landward edge of the foreshore reserve; and
- ii. incorporating pathways at subdivision stage that are located within public open space that abuts the foreshore reserve, or the riverside of the road reserve that abuts the foreshore reserve.

10.20 Account for the environmental values, terrain and landscape amenity of the foreshore reserve when providing public access. Universal access (wheelchair accessible) paths are to be provided where possible and appropriate, based on site conditions. Access paths may not be possible if construction would result in unacceptable ecological impacts due to fill requirements.

- i. The design is to respond to the site and local context;
- ii. A trail is preferred in some areas due to environmental sensitivities, such as areas where the foreshore is heavily vegetated or steep and would require level modifications to provide formal access; and
- iii. Access to the water may not always be ecologically appropriate or practical.

10.21 Encourage the incorporation of a bicycle lane (or other appropriate facility) within road reserves adjacent to the foreshore, including as part of road pavement rehabilitation and resurfacing projects, where appropriate. Refer to *Planning and Designing for Active Transport in Western Australia: All Ages and Abilities Contextual Guidance* for recommendations on appropriate bicycle facilities based on road function.



Photo: Homestead Park - DBCA

Establish linkages and ecological corridors

10.22 Maintain or establish ecological linkages between natural areas, including connecting the Southern River to associated wetlands.

Complement the river landscape through sensitive design and built form

10.23 Avoid subdivisions and development that would result in abrupt topographical changes. Additional setbacks within the development area may be required to provide a gradual transition.

10.24 Avoid constructing retaining walls along the interface/ boundary between the foreshore reserve and public roads or private land. Retaining up to 900mm high may be accepted on constrained sites.

10.25 Integrate adjoining subdivisions and development with the river surrounds. Ensure that the private-public interface has high amenity when viewed from the foreshore reserve.

Activate the foreshores

10.26 Consider small-scale community and food and beverage development and temporary pop-up activation within existing parks adjacent to the foreshore, such as Southernwood Park and Rusthall Way Reserve, or at established community facilities, such as the Richard Rushton Community Centre or Southern River Community Hall, where it can be demonstrated to have a community focus, enhances the natural character of the foreshore, and ideally delivers multiple benefits or service.

10.27 Encourage enhancement of low-impact community amenities, such as nature-play and picnic facilities, within established foreshore parks, such as Cardington Way Reserve and William Lane Park. Recreational use in other areas should be passive, such as at-grade pathways, trails and interpretation, which may also be accepted within the floodway.



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

17 Dick Perry Avenue, Kensington 6151

Locked Bag 104, Bentley DC, WA 6983

Phone: (08) 9278 0900

Web: www.dbca.wa.gov.au

Email: rivers.planning@dbca.wa.gov.au