




EYES ON EYRE WHYALLA

A WAYFINDING,
COASTAL ACCESS AND
CAMPING OPTIONS
PROJECT

REPORT JUNE 2018

#EYREPENINSULA



The Barngarla, Nauo, Wirangu, Kokatha, Mirning,
Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and
Ngaanyatjarra
people are the traditional custodians of
Eyre Peninsula and the Far West and have been
for thousands of years.

Regional Development Australia Whyalla and
Eyre Peninsula acknowledges and respects the
traditional owners of Eyre Peninsula.
We acknowledge elders past and present, and
we respect the relationship Aboriginal peoples
have to country.

Barngala are the traditional owners of the
Whyalla district.

EYES ON EYRE

WAYFINDING > COASTAL ACCESS > CAMPING



FINDINGS OF EYES ON EYRE

BY REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA WHYALLA AND EYRE PENINSULA

“Sometimes an awful lot of money is wasted in regional tourism. When every town tries to do their own thing they end up looking like every other town. A better use of budget would be to advertise the journey and multiple destinations. It is the sum of your parts that makes you unique. In remote regions, local councils could make better use of their marketing budgets by joining forces to deliver regional campaigns and actions.”

- Tilma Consulting

WHYALLA'S ROLE IN THE EYRE PENINSULA

Whyalla is the beginning of the journey for our eastern travellers. Once an Adelaide visitor or any visitor for that matter realises that Whyalla is the place to stop overnight and enter the Eyre Peninsula with no more than a four hour drive or a 45 minute flight required from Adelaide, we will all of sudden take the pressure off and our 'too far away tag' falls away.

This we do not promote enough to our intrastate and interstate travellers.

Whyalla's key nature based experiences are Point Lowly, Fitzgerald Bay and its extraordinary town foreshore. All are underpinned by a fascinating industrial culture of ship building, steel making and mining surrounds.

The best thing about Whyalla whilst delivering Eyes on Eyre is it under promised and over-delivered once you hit the ground and poked around. Unearth is certainly an apt tagline.

EYES ON EYRE

WAYFINDING > COASTAL ACCESS > CAMPING

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL VISITOR STRATEGY 2020

Released in May 2018, the strategy now provides a clear direction through its strategic pillars.

The Eyre Peninsula is the only region with a declining visitor economy but with a growth potential second only to the Fleurieu Peninsula.

Another distinction for the Eyre Peninsula in the strategy is its local government partners. Most regions have half or less the number of local governments that govern the Eyre Peninsula - this presents challenges for collaboration, expediency, efficiency of resources and consistency in order to attract and deliver on investments.

As a collective, we need to move forward, embed the strategic pillars in each local government strategic plan and long term financial plan and then work annually on refining priority projects and actions in conjunction with other local governments, natural resource and regional development boards.

QUICK STATS

Regional tourism is a critical part of the South Australian visitor economy delivering:

- 87% of visitors in regions are self-drive
- \$2.6 billion in visitor expenditure
- \$1.3 billion of total visitor expenditure is derived from nature based tourism.
- 40% of all state visitor expenditure
- 13,000 tourism jobs in regions
- 36% of all state direct tourism-related jobs
- 44% of all state visitor expenditure by 2020 (\$3.55 billion).

VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Adequate and well-maintained infrastructure is critical for the sustainable growth of regions and a safe and enjoyable visitor experience. Improving and maintaining infrastructure can open up new possibilities and remove barriers to growth. Six regional infrastructure priorities have been identified in the SARVS 2020.

- 1 Roads
- 2 Air Access
- 3 Signage
- 4 Telecommunication black spots
- 5 Coastal and marine infrastructure
- 6 Trails

The work of Eyes on Eyre has only added to the weight of argument for improved infrastructure investment.

With a regional score of 2/10 for wayfinding and signage and coastal access and camping infrastructure that is over twenty years old and mostly beyond end-of life - there is significant work to be done.

The region must view its vulnerability as the birthplace of creativity, innovation and change. Already Eyes on Eyre is gaining traction in driving more strategic discussions with State and Federal governments and also private and corporate partnerships to lift the region to a market standard and afford sustainability protections to the natural assets that make it a world-class destination.

WAYFINDING

SIGNAGE IS OUR SILENT BRAND

Visitors don't like to be manipulated or take the wrong turn more than once, maybe twice. The Point Lowly turnoff for visitors needs advanced warning improvement and attraction listings.

We appreciate the theory of having visitors come to your visitor information centre first and then be redirected back to where they came from to navigate a poorly signed touring route but we think it is a fraught one in this digital and information age where most decisions are self-driven and independent of personal consultation.

Point Lowly and Fitzgerald Bay need a wayfinding overhaul. Visitors need to know the condition of Cuttlefish Drive (and what it offers) and suitably for vehicle types more than they need to know it is undergoing improvements. The Shingle Beach ridges will bring geo tourists from around the world but they need to be able to find them.

Refer to Wayfound Consultants Audit Report.

WHYALLA PRIORITIES

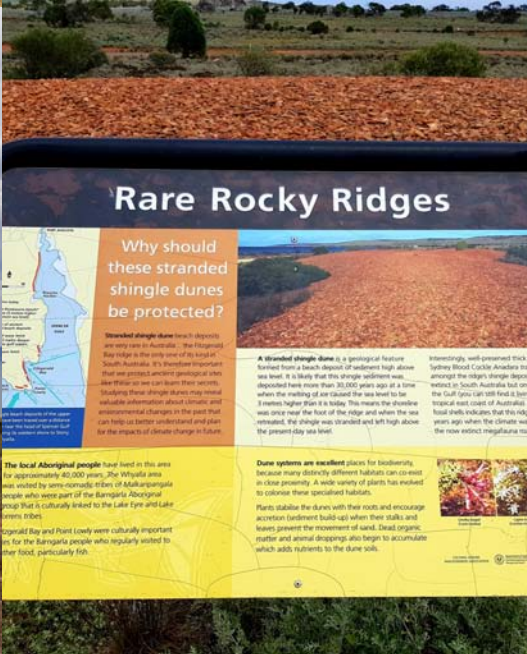
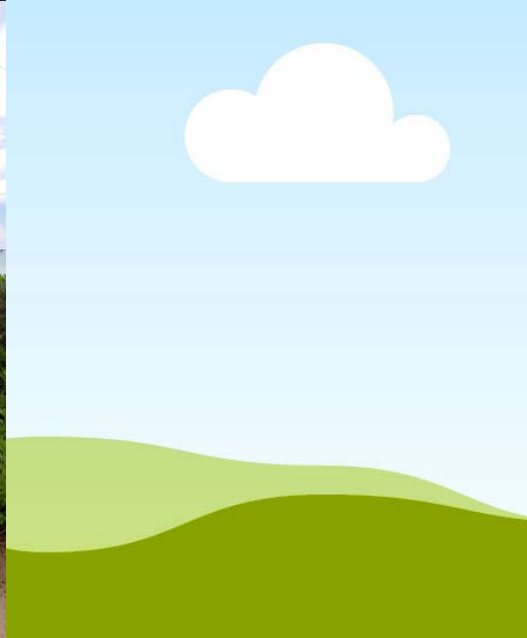
- Focus on Northern Coastline.
- Focus on Town Foreshore direction of traffic.
- Remove or repair dilapidated signage.
- Consider a regional QR Code node approach to reduce amount of signage, limit vandalism.
- 400m advanced warning notifications prior to attraction turnoffs require installation
- Could consider Point Lowly and Fitzgerald Bay Attractions (brown & white sign) to read: Cuttlefish, Lighthouse, Historic Cottages, Shingle Beach Ridges, Freycinet Trail, Lookout.



- Re-skinning of tourism commission signage installed in nineties.
- Re-skinning of Freycinet Trail and A Breath of Fresh Eyre signs (or replacement where condition warrants). Better yet, let's innovate with QR codes.
- Contribute to a regional gateway visitor information bays at the 'Tanks' and Border Village.
- Visitor pods rest stop information bays could be considered for Point Lowly and Whyalla Wetlands.
- Install standard coastal access signage to be developed region wide with advisory notifications and expected user behaviour.

ESTIMATED BUDGET: TBA





COASTAL ACCESS

STATE OF PLAY

The Eyre Peninsula is home to a precious way of life with a natural playground that locals rightly treasure and protect and will guard fiercely against change and intrusion. However, the scenic and recreational wonders of the Eyre Peninsula are now more accessible (more boats, more four-wheeled drives, more tour operators) and promoted more heavily than ever before (social media).

Patterns of internal visitation and demographic changes on the Eyre Peninsula have influenced coastal access as much as out of region visitation and tourism.

The Eyes on Eyre stocktake revealed a largely static investment into coastal access infrastructure with the last injection of catalyst investment in the late eighties and early nineties. As a consequence, the region has a majority of ageing infrastructure that is struggling to support the pressures applied by the local population let alone visitors from outside the region.

There are numerous examples of poorly signed, unconsolidated road and pedestrian tracks and mostly uncontrolled access from vehicles and off-road vehicles to most all beaches and sand-dunes.

It is widely understood that most of those wanting to interact with our coastal landscapes want to do so sustainably and will respond to engineered design infrastructure, advisory and even enforced regulations that set out behaviour expectations. Eyes on Eyre recommends that we prioritise those management actions over the



coming five years across Eyre Peninsula, with regulation the third and least desired tier of action.

The current status of coastal access infrastructure is leaving the Eyre Peninsula environment and community vulnerable, particularly economically. Outdated and dilapidated infrastructure places coastal communities, in particular, at risk from the increasingly frequent and intense coastal storm events and rising sea levels. Therefore, investments in coastal infrastructure are urgently needed to ensure community safety and prosperity; however, these investments should not jeopardise the ecosystems and natural resources that underlie economic wealth and human well-being.



COASTAL ACCESS

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

The Eyre Peninsula Coastal Action Plan is a detailed conservation study and action plan from Two Hummocks Point north of Whyalla to the eastern boundary of the Wahgunyah Conservation Park in the Far West. It provides baseline information for the protection and management of the coast and outlines the actions required.

The plan divides the coast into 85 coastal cells, each around 25 km in length. It provides detailed information on 56 of the cells, including a description of the geology, type of coastline, land uses, flora and fauna lists. Threats are identified for each of these 56 cells, such as potential climate change impacts, pest plants and animals, marine debris and the impact of off-road vehicles on beaches, samphire areas and beach nesting birds.

A Coastal Vehicle Access Decision Making Framework was also developed for local councils with clear recommendations, a suite of management options and consistent guidelines for the protection and use of coastal natural resource assets.

The current LiDAR Climate Change Modelling project will also be critical for future Eyre Peninsula coastal zone management and its subsequent integration into articulating a regional vision for coastal access, supporting the assessment of development and other proposals, including camping nodes will be crucial.

These scientific assessments and technical processes are of the highest standards but further work on the social and economic parameters influencing stakeholder engagement and decision making was required. The reports and framework delivered to date also depend on local government having the resources and capacity to interpret and embed into their governance systems and planning frameworks - resources which for many councils are simply not available.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

Eyes on Eyre set about engaging local government in coastal access management through social and economic lenses (to sit alongside and balance the scientific assessments) with a view to enhancing the visitor economy



whilst simultaneously layering environment protection through master planning and landscape architecture of camping nodes and high priority day-use locations. This approach has resulted in a list of coastal sites that stand-out for environmental, economic and social reasons as being of priority for action.

Eyre Peninsula local governments have thrown their support behind Eyes on Eyre and have worked cooperatively to understand the project's intent to advocate for external resources to boost visitor infrastructure which will sustain coastal access rather than prohibit.

NEXT STEPS FOR COASTAL ACCESS

As a result of Eyes on Eyre, a number of local governments have allocated resources to master planning for coastal camping nodes, township foreshore zones and day-use coastal visitation sites in 18/19 with most others looking to do the same in 19/20 and beyond. Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management are also seeking to match local government allocations and Regional Development Australia Whyalla and Eyre Peninsula will work to leverage these commitments for contributions from State, Federal and Private partnerships.

Three coastal access centered master planned sites are anticipated for 18/19 with learnings to be shared throughout the region over the coming years.

COASTAL ACCESS

WHYALLA TOP 5 PRIORITIES

- 1 Fitzgerald Bay North
- 2 Fitzgerald Bay
- 3 Point Lowly
- 4 Cowled's Landing
- 5 Murninnie Beach

VALUES

The shingle stranded beach ridges that run along Fitzgerald Bay are particularly rare and are valued for their cultural and geological significance (having recently been placed on the State's Heritage register). The lighthouse and cottages at Point Lowly are valued for their scenic and historic value and are popular visitor attractions. The coastline is used by locals and visitors to fish for snapper or crabs and all manner of water recreation such as kayaking and wind-surfing. The rich marine biodiversity is particularly valued as many people enjoy diving with the giant cuttlefish (the only known dense spawning aggregation in the world) or spotting dolphins. Further south, the community is becoming increasingly aware of the critical importance of local temperate samphire and mangrove habitats to sustain the areas unique marine biodiversity. Cowleds landing marks the start of the Upper Spencer Gulf Marine Park and the area is recognised as a Wetland of National importance. Here, the mangroves, samphire and tidal flats provide nesting and feeding sites for local and migratory seabirds.

Selected fauna, flora and vegetation communities of conservation significance include:

Australian Pied Oyster Catcher
Beach Slider
Bight Coast Skink
Slender-billed Thornbill
Dagger-leaf Wattle
Temperate coastal saltmarsh
Western myall low woodland

EYES ON EYRE ASSESSMENT

Whyalla and surrounds is recommended to form its own defined precinct for visitor economy marketing. Our suggestion is the 'Shingle Coast'. The geological formation and geographic location in Upper Spencer Gulf (an inverse estuary) gives it a clear definition from the rest of the Eyre Peninsula. Coastal access needs to reflect this unique positioning.



How can visitors access and interact sustainably with the upper reaches of an inverse estuary and ancient shingle coastline?

The Whyalla Northern Coastline Masterplan is in urgent need of implementation. The works underway at Stony Point to facilitate coastal access to Cuttlefish experience are commendable but could be scaled up. The next priority should be Fitzgerald bay camping areas through to Backy Point.

Point Lowly to Douglas Point stand to receive the greatest impact from visitors and locals, there are terrific examples of coastal access infrastructure already in the locality but there is still room for improvement, especially in the Fitzgerald Bay campground areas and north along the coast road to Douglas Point. There are a maze of roads leading to the shoreline and immediate surrounding coastal scrub that could be rationalised, acknowledging this is always difficult and a 'locals'track will often reappear.

Coastal boardwalks would be much desired in this location to allow sensitive interaction and viewing of the ancient shingle beach ridges. Similarly, coastal viewing platforms and lookout locations would be recommended along the coastal drive starting at Backy Point. Access steps and ramps could be valuable additions to these lookout/stopping nodes.

COASTAL ACCESS

EYES ON EYRE ASSESSMENT CONT.

Cowled's landing down to Murninnie Beach were considered to be largely impacted upon by local communities and unlikely to receive an influx of significant visitor pressure and thus are lower priority. This is not to say the locations are not worthy of coastal access investment. A good comparable example is the infrastructure employed around Arno Bay, Cowell and Garden Island boat ramp in the Barker Inlet Estuary north of Adelaide. A small jetty to facilitate fishing and rein in uncontrolled access.

Point Lowly and Fitzgerald Bay are an iconic destination on the Eyre Peninsula. A destination that will continue to grow in popularity for visitors and locals alike. The location is not currently primed for these connections and values to continue sustainably.

The sustainability of this site for the visitor industry and the natural features on which it depends will involve careful planning, management and sympathetic development and this these sites should receive the greatest priority.

MASTER PLAN PROGRESS AND CONSIDERATIONS

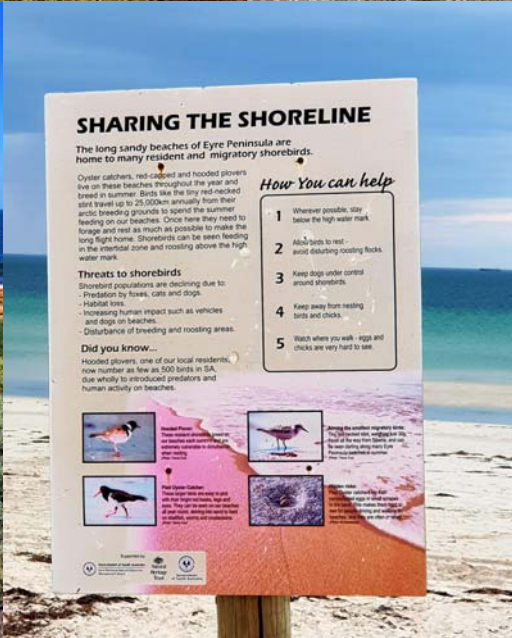
- Resolve land tenure: commence process to transfer management responsibility to Council from Crown Lands.
- Initiate engagement with Barngala Native Title Group.
- Procure landscape architect for master planning and design.
- Camping node development (for large recreational vehicles to camper trailers/tents along with supporting signage and visitor facilities such as toilets, showers, effluent pump out, bins). May involve some vegetation clearance;
- Controlled, defined and limited vehicular access (supported by designated parking, fencing, provision for 2WD drives and 4WD tracks,
- Controlled, defined and limited pedestrian movement through designated and potentially fenced paths/steps/boardwalk access tracks to beach. Shingle ridges must be afforded greater protection from vehicles and pedestrians. Consider a viewing platform built over ridge.



- Consider an engineered structure to consolidate boat launching;
- Revegetation for camp screening; and securing against beach recession.
- Develop access/traffic management plan – including review of existing access with a view to rationalise unnecessary tracks and car parks. Block access (eg. fencing/rocks) to tracks and car parks to be closed, rehabilitate (where appropriate) and maintain.
- Upgrade any tracks or car parks that are not well defined, or are causing water run-off erosion.
- Install directional /educational signage. Regional coastal access signage installation with standard environment, safety and behaviour expectations.

CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION

- Informal camping is contributing to: soil compaction, vegetation damage – trampling and removal, fauna disturbance, soil erosion, dune instability,
- increased fire risk, fire wood collection and weed introduction.
- Potential impacts on Aboriginal Heritage Sites
- Uncontrolled ORV potential impact on geologic formations, meiofauna, shorebirds and intertidal species and/or habitat.



CAMPING OPTIONS

CAMPING NODE(S) NORTHERN COASTLINE

Whyalla has one of the strongest caravan parks in our entire region located on the town foreshore. The park delivers the types of service facilities that are now top of most self-driving visitor lists and the standard of conveniences are high. Yes a refurbishment of cabins would be ideal within the next three years and the addition of a water park either within the grounds or along the foreshore would make a very worthwhile investment.

A camping node or two as detailed in the Eyes on Eyre Interim Regional Findings Report is strongly recommended for Point Lowly and Fitzgerald Bay.

Western Australia has proven that providing affordable and diverse caravan and camping experiences is one of the singular most powerful injections to boost visitor economy expenditure and control visitor impacts on natural resources. Their goal to make themselves the nation's most attractive caravan and camping holiday destination by improving the supply, delivery and promotion of the sector has worked (perhaps too well).

As Eyre Peninsula is WA's immediate southern neighbour we run the risk of eastern travellers bypassing us to get to them and our western travellers being so use to higher standards of product that disappointment soon overwhelms them.

Yes WA has Royalty for Regions funding that we can only dream about but is that an excuse for complete inaction or can we start to chip away



at building our own collateral and attraction of outside investment and grant funding.

One possibility is to jointly contract landscape architects and contractors to develop a camping node model template for use throughout the region, bulk purchase the necessary infrastructure and deliver efficiencies through that means.

Telecommunications entities, utility suppliers and developers looking for social license to operate within our communities are often looking for just such initiatives to get involved with.





WHERE SHOULD WE START?

REGIONAL WISH LIST

Refer to Regional Findings Report for further reasoning of actions below.

- Define and label sub-regional precincts, identify trails (driving/hiking/walking/biking)
- Two new regional gateway visitor information bays at the 'Tanks' and Border Village.
- Twenty two possible visitor information pods spread throughout Eyre Peninsula.
- Removal of dilapidated signage.
- Reskinning of regional priority signs
- A digital project to work with or in place of existing interpretative signage in region.
- Design Coastal Access sign templates for relevant coastal geoforms (e.g cliff, estuary, shingles, rocks, beach).
- Install new coastal access infrastructure via access to grant funding for coastal access improvements.
- Commission camping node concept plans with a focus on smart technologies, contractor selection for priority sites and budget estimates.



Eyes on Eyre drew us to the importance of Whyalla's northern coastline and how it could compliment the brilliant work already underway and proposed on Whyalla's town foreshore.

We think visitor information pods, camping nodes with new facilities and smart technologies at priority sites would be significant additions and fix immediate gaps for visitors.

We look forward to presenting and talking the Eyes on Eyre findings with Whyalla stakeholders.

