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Submission to the South Australia Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) on a statewide jetty management plan and investment in jetty infrastructure



Rapid Bay Jetty, Courtesy C. Charter, Experiencing Marine Sanctuaries

The Scuba Divers Federation of South Australia (SDFSFA) is pleased to submit our views to DPTI on what should be considered in a statewide jetty management plan. We have consulted with our Committee (the governing body of the Federation), with our members, our Facebook community and broader social networks. South Australia's jetties are iconic – many are of historical interest, all contribute to vibrant marine ecosystems as shelters for unusual species and protected areas for eggs and juveniles, and all have the potential to contribute significantly to economic development through dive tourism, in particular to the small communities of coastal South Australia. We hope that the development of Strategic Management Plans for each jetty will ensure their longevity for future generations.

Summary

- Jetties are important structures for the sports of scuba diving, freediving and snorkelling as locations for training, unique dive experiences, marine citizen science research, and underwater photography. They are also easy dive sites for those with disabilities, who take up water sports for the freedom of movement they may not otherwise experience.
- Jetties serve a South Australian diving community of 50,000 certified divers. The jetties have the potential to attract thousands more from a global community of 28 million active divers.
- Divers contribute significantly to local economies, especially in coastal regional South Australia where the most popular jetties are located. The town of Edithburgh, for example, is heavily reliant on revenues from diver accommodations, meals, etc. Across Australia, the estimated value of the dive sector is AUD 4.2 billion.
- The opportunity for growth in South Australia's dive tourism sector is significant due to increased interest from interstate and international divers, but the infrastructure needs to be in place.
- Diving is a life long activity enjoyed by both men and women, contributing to health and wellness. Jetties provide an excellent, easy and shallow dive experience for divers of all ages and abilities. We note that Adaptive Techniques training and diving for the disabled is an area of increasing development in the industry. But as divers age, and as more divers with disabilities enter the sport, more consideration is needed with respect to accessibility of jetty dive sites.

SA Jetties in order of importance and need for attention

Edithburgh
Port Hughes
Rapid Bay
Port Noarlunga
Second Valley
Kingscote, KI
Vivonne Bay, KI
Stenhouse Bay
The Bluff
Screwpile (Granite Island)
Wool Bay
Wallaroo
Port Giles



Edithburgh jetty: Courtesy D. Spraakman

Recommendations

1. Put in place a standard for a safe and useable jetty and maintain jetties to that standard.

That standard should consist of:

a. Safety and accessibility

- i. Good design of wide stairs with non slip treads and handrails, and subsurface platforms that allow divers and swimmers to enter and exit easily at all times (below lowest tide levels and in surge conditions), especially in an emergency and in locations where and when shore access is not feasible. Use the Rapid Bay stairs as a model for other jetties.
- ii. Presence of safety equipment (life saving buoys, etc.)
- iii. Discourage the potential presence of sharks by banning shark fishing near jetties and enforcing rules against dumping burley and unused bait off the jetties.
- iv. Clear signage and enforcement of rules on jetty use, in particular on the prohibition

of spearfishing.

- v. Additional consideration may be warranted on accessibility for disabled persons taking up the sport (eg, improved shore access near jetty sites).

b. Related amenities to support divers

- i. Improve accessibility by providing adequate parking near jetties, benches for gearing up and places to lock gear trolleys near jetty stairs.
- ii. Provide shade/sun protection, seating, toilets and fresh water sources.

c. Ecosystem protection considerations

- i. Enforce littering fines for those who damage the ecosystem by allowing plastic bags and other debris to blow into the water,
- ii. Consider ecosystem impacts of changes to jetties (damaging ecosystems through the removal of pylons; ensuring jetty surfaces allow light penetration below).

2. Priority jetties to address:

- a. Safety/stairs: **Edithburgh jetty** is considered to be in the most urgent need for attention with the addition of a subsurface platform to the existing stairs. Edithburgh does not have a beach to which an unconscious or distressed diver or swimmer can recover to. **Port Hughes and Second Valley** jetty stairs are also difficult to exit at low tides and in emergency situations.
- b. Amenities: **Edithburgh and Rapid Bay** already attract a significant number of tourist divers. Improving the amenities at Edithburgh and Rapid Bay will contribute to their promotion as world-class dive sites, including shade, toilets and fresh water access.
- c. In the interests of revitalizing tourism on Kangaroo Island, **Kingscote jetty and Vivonne Bay jetty** are also considered an excellent dive sites worthy of review for improving safety and amenities.
- d. Signage should be improved in all locations, but **Second Valley and Rapid Bay**, among the most popular sites, are examples of particularly poor quality and badly placed signage.

3. Address impediments to jetty maintenance:

- a. Repair jetties in a timely manner: The lengthy delays in repairing the Port Noarlunga jetty stairs are a source of ongoing frustration across the diving community as well as economic losses to local businesses.
- b. Consult with stakeholders when major works will be done on jetties that might irrevocably change their character (such as removing pylons that host incredible biodiversity).
- c. Put mechanisms in place for long term funding: It has been suggested that DPTI set up a futures fund with monies from taxpayers (and sponsors such as sporting goods chains BCF and others) specifically for ongoing maintenance and improvement of our recreational jetties. Investigate other pools of funding that may support improving

access for disabled persons.

4. **Invest in research** that will increase our appreciation of the value of the SCUBA industry to the State economy, and find ways to promote SA diving nationally and internationally.



Left: Edithburgh jetty, Courtesy D. Spraakman



Right: Port Hughes jetty, Courtesy H. Creech

Why invest in jetty infrastructure?

1. Building a dive tourism sector in South Australia

The economic value of SCUBA (and the related sports of freediving and snorkelling) is significant and underappreciated. South Australia's jetties are key dive destinations across the State: preserving and maintaining the jetties will contribute to the economy by attracting more dive tourists.

International and interstate tourist divers aren't just interested in the Great Barrier Reef and other tropical sites: Peer-reviewed research shows that highly successful diving destinations are also found in temperate waters with conditions similar to South Australia, such as Japan and Croatia¹. Furthermore, over a third of international divers in one study indicated that they are looking for new experiences – and some of the most unusual creatures on diver and underwater photographer bucket lists are found around South Australia's jetties.

Recent international promotions have the potential to drive tourist divers to South Australia:

- The Great Southern Reef (stretching from Victoria to Western Australia) has just been honoured as an international "Hope Spot" by the world-renowned marine scientist and diver Sylvia Earle and her organization "Mission Blue": <https://mission-blue.org/2019/12/the-great-southern-reef-of-australia-honored-as-new-hope-spot/>
- The longest running North American dive magazine "Diver" (www.divermag.com) Winter 2019/20 issue features a 6 page spread on diving South Australia.
- The largest UK diving magazine "Diver" ran a cover story on South Australia's leafy seadragons at the end of 2018: <https://divernet.com/2018/11/29/taking-care-in-the-dragons-lair/>
- The May/June 2019 issue of QantasLink spirit magazine has also profiled South Australia's sea dragons.
- The latest issue of SCUBA Diver, published by one of the world's leading diver certification agencies, PADI, includes a story on diving South Australia's jetties.

In light of the international attention brought to Australia by the tragic bushfires, and the current promotions to bring tourists back to Australia there is the potential to draw some of that tourism interest to South Australia, including divers. We strongly encourage DPTI to ensure that improved jetty infrastructure is in place (including on Kangaroo Island) so that dive tourists experience the best we have to offer, and encourage others to come.

¹ Neto, A., Scott, N., Lohmann, G., Dimmock, K. 2018. Attributes, consequences and desired end-states of a successful scuba diving destination. In: CAUTHE 2018: Get Smart: Paradoxes and Possibilities in Tourism, Hospitality and Events Education and Research, pp32-45: p.37.

2. The economic contribution of SCUBA

The overall size of the SCUBA sector is:

- South Australia: 50,000 certified divers (based on estimates of certifications of divers across the SA dive shops).
- Globally: Past research estimates that there are 28 million active divers around the world. An increasing number of divers are women, but the majority are men with high incomes. One third of those are European. Estimates suggest 3.34 million active divers in the US alone.

SCUBA is a multi-billion dollar industry. While there is no data specifically for South Australia, annual dive-related spending figures for Australia as a whole are impressive.²

- Club divers (expenditure in their home locations): AUD 125 million
- Domestic tourists (ie. divers travelling to other locations in their state or to neighbouring states): AUD 406 million
- International tourists coming to Australia: AUD 1.7 billion.
- Total annual direct spending on diving in Australia: AUD 2.2 billion
- Total annual economic contribution to Australia (using the tourism and retail multipliers): AUD 4.2 billion

SCUBA divers spend more than non-diving tourists: This is a high value sector. Research shows that domestic diving tourists spend almost three times as much as non-diving tourists. And international diving tourists spend almost 80% more than non-diving tourists.

What do divers spend money on? On training: And the jetties are premier training sites across the State. The sport has a culture of continuing education, and most divers invest in additional levels of certification and dive specialties, beyond their first level “Open Water” course – and most of those courses in South Australia take place at a jetty dive site. Divers also spend on tours and charters, equipment and dive gear hire; underwater photograph and video cameras and lighting; and on accommodation, transportation, shopping, food and beverages.

New local divers are an important sub-sector of the industry: according to research, they spend more than experienced divers on training and gear. The value of the jetties is that they are ideal for training and building the capacity of entry-level divers – who are high spenders.

It has also been noted that Marine Parks and protected areas (MPAs) (such as exclusion zones around jetties) can increase income for the local economies surrounding the MPA. One study in Italy confirmed that the scuba diving industry contributed to business development and income in the small towns surrounding the MPA³. In other words, SCUBA contributes directly to regional

² Centre for Conservation Geography. 2015. The Scuba Dive Industry in Australia: Towards Estimates of Economic Size and Impact. (<https://issuu.com/soml/docs/australianscubadiveindustryeconomic>)

³ Saayman, M., Saayman, A. 2017. Are there economic benefits from marine protected areas? An analysis of scuba diver expenditure. In: European Journal of Tourism Research 19: 23-39.

economic development, not just to urban areas. Jetty improvements will confer significant economic benefits to local communities along the Yorke, Fleurieu and Eyre peninsulas.

3. Attributes of a great dive destination

Research suggests that safety and environmental benefits are the principal attributes for a premier dive destination⁴. SA's jetties, if well maintained, can provide an excellent and safe dive experience for entry-level divers and disabled divers as well as more experienced divers and underwater photographers looking for longer dives at shallower depths with lots to see. Underwater fauna (variety and abundance) and good environmental conditions (visibility, unpolluted and undamaged dive sites) are also important to divers. Maintaining the jetties together with enforcement of rules of use (on littering and handling of fishing gear and waste) will protect the ecosystems below the jetty.

What should be considered in a jetty maintenance plan?

1. SDFSFA recommends that DPTI put in place a standard for a safe and useable jetty and maintain jetties to that standard. That standard should consider:

a. Safety and accessibility

i. Stairs and subsurface platforms

The SDFSFA considers that the most important safety feature needs to be good design of wide stairs with a handrail and non-slip treads together with a subsurface platform at the end of the stairs that allows divers and swimmers to enter and exit easily at all times (below lowest tide levels and in surge conditions). The stairs and platform at the end of the new Rapid Bay jetty are considered to be the model that should be used at all other jetties.

There are two reasons for this: first and foremost, should a diver or swimmer/snorkeller be in distress or unconscious, there needs to be a good way to bring the person out of the water for rescue and first aid. This cannot be done in circumstances of rough water or low tides where the water level is below the stairs, unless there is a subsurface platform available to stabilize and support the person. In some locations such as Edithburgh, there is no easy shore access if it is not feasible to rescue someone at the stairs.

Secondly, diving is not just a young person's sport: many divers continue to dive into their 60s, 70s and 80s. But as they age, accessibility becomes important. A subsurface platform provides a good stable location to remove fins; handrails help in entering and exiting the water safely and securely.

⁴ Neto, A., Scott, N., Lohmann, G., Dimmock, K. 2018. Attributes, consequences and desired end-states of a successful scuba diving destination. In: CAUTHE 2018: Get Smart: Paradoxes and Possibilities in Tourism, Hospitality and Events Education and Research, pp32-45.

ii. Life saving equipment

The availability of safety equipment on the jetties (life-saving buoys, etc.) should also be considered. The highly publicised incident in September 2019 of a 5 year old boy falling from Port Noarlunga jetty brought wide spread criticism of the lack of safety features and equipment on the jetty (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-02/boy-falls-off-end-of-jetty-that-council-hasnt-repaired/11469664>).

iii. Discourage the potential presence of sharks

Divers are aware of the risks of shark attack in South Australian waters, and take appropriate precautions. But it is a concern that behaviours on jetties and near jetties create conditions that might attract sharks. Shark fishing near jetties should be banned. There should be greater enforcement of littering rules on jetties, in particular the discarding of burley and unused bait off the jetties rather than using the bins provided on land near the jetty.

iv. Signage and enforcement

Larger and better-positioned signs advising the public that it is illegal to spearfish within 100m of all jetties will create safer conditions for all divers. Also, better signage advising fishers on casting of lines and traps will also serve to protect divers and swimmers from injury. Improved means for reporting infractions should also be considered.

v. Access for disabled persons

With growing interest in and service to disabled persons taking up the sport of diving, additional consideration may be warranted on accessibility (eg, improved shore access near jetty sites).

b. Related amenities to support divers

i. Accessibility:

Many jetty sites require a long walk (wearing heavy tanks, weights and often photographic equipment) from distant car parks to jetty stairs. Older divers will often opt to use trolleys to move gear, and then gear up at the stairs. We suggest that benches be provided for gearing up together with places to lock gear trolleys while the divers are underwater. Adequate parking closer to jetties would be appreciated.

ii. Sun protection, toilets and water availability

In order to encourage divers to remain for repeat dives during the day, shade areas and places to sit and review training procedures and the dive experience are important. Toilets and change rooms, as well as fresh water for drinking, outdoor showers and gear rinsing would improve the jetty dive sites.

c. Ecosystem protection considerations

Enforcement of no-littering rules may help to change behaviours of jetty users who allow plastic bags and other debris to pollute the ecosystem below and around the jetty.

Also, when working on jetties, ensure that the work does not adversely affect the ecosystem below. Edithburgh jetty has been badly affected by the removal of pylons that served as hosts to an abundance of marine life, and by its full cover resurfacing that has blocked sunlight to the waters below, contributing to the loss of large number of colourful sponges and some reduction in fish life.

2. Priority jetties to address

1. Safety/Stairs: **Edithburgh jetty** is considered to be in the most urgent need for attention, due to the large number of divers using the site and the poor safety and lack of amenities there. In particular, Edithburgh does not have a beach to which a distressed diver or swimmer can recover to. A subsurface platform at the bottom of the steps is needed in the event that an unconscious or panicking person needs assistance.

Port Hughes and Second Valley jetties are also difficult to exit at low tides and in emergency situations. Attention should be given to those stairs and an attached subsurface platform as well.

2. Amenities: Improving the amenities (shade, seating, toilets, fresh water access) at **Edithburgh and Rapid Bay** will contribute to their promotion as world-class dive sites.
3. In the interests of revitalizing tourism on Kangaroo Island, **Kingscote jetty and Vivonne Bay jetty** are also considered excellent dive sites worthy of review for improving safety and amenities.
4. Signage: **Second Valley and Rapid Bay** are examples of poor quality signage and easily missed positions of signage. Improve the signage there with respect to no-spearfishing rules, safe deposit of burley and unused bait, and littering.

3. Impediments to jetty improvements

Slow response times: Jetties should be repaired in a timely manner so as not to negatively impact the local economies dependent on revenues from jetty users, including divers. The lengthy delays in repairing the Port Noarlunga jetty stairs are a source of ongoing frustration across the diving community.

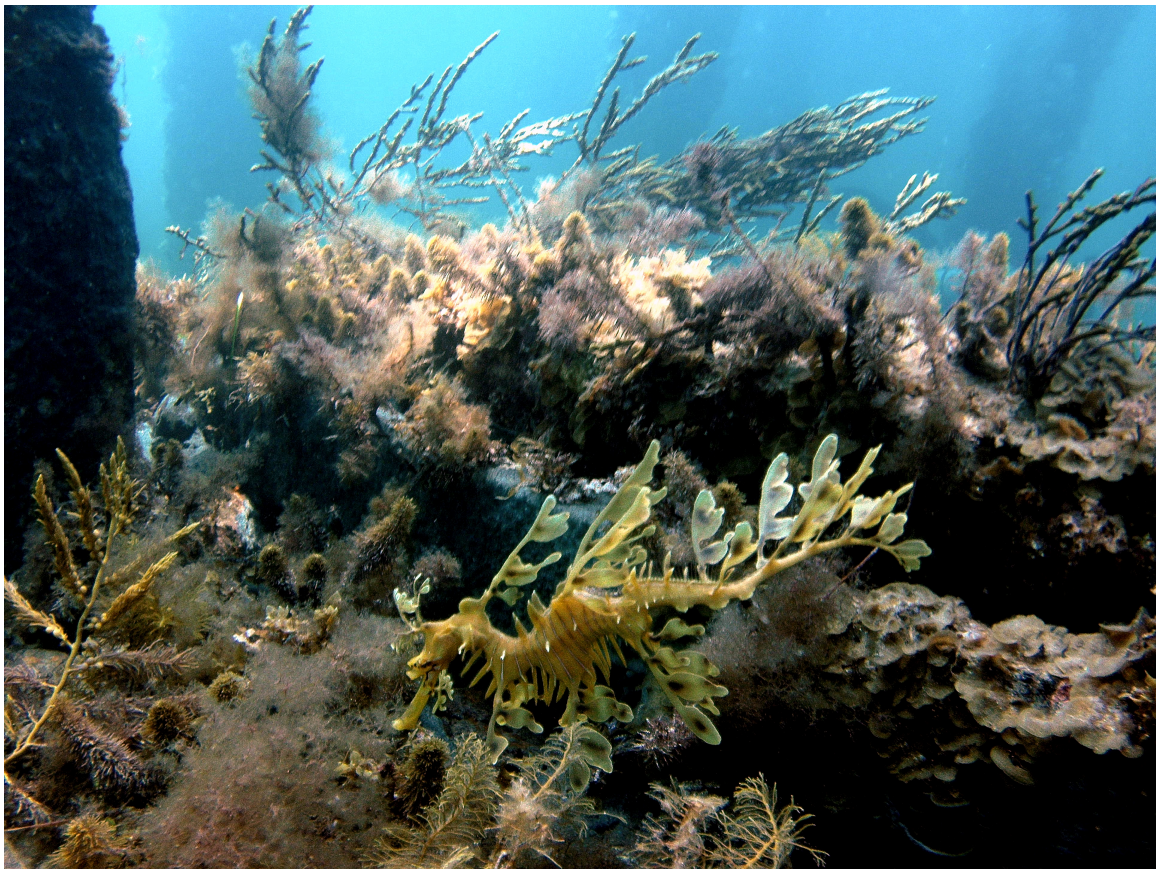
Lack of consultation: Consult with stakeholders when major works will be done on individual jetties that might irrevocably change their character (such as removing pylons or resurfacing a jetty in a way that blocks necessary sunlight to support the ecosystem below the jetty).

The need for long term, reliable funding: It has been suggested that DPTI set up a futures fund with monies from taxpayers (and sponsors such as sporting goods chains BCF and others) specifically for ongoing maintenance and improvement of our recreational jetties. Other sources of funding should also be considered: Adaptive Techniques training and diving is an area of increasing development in the industry, and projects that address accessibility for the differently abled can sometimes attract resources from distinct funding pools.

Research the economic value of the diving sector to South Australia

In preparing this submission, the Scuba Divers Federation of South Australia notes the lack of data specifically for South Australia on the size and economic contribution of the sports of SCUBA, freediving and snorkelling to the economy of the State. We strongly urge that the State invest in research that will increase the appreciation of the value of the industry to the State economy, and find ways to promote SA diving nationally and internationally.

An excellent VIDEO of diving the Edithburgh jetty can be viewed on Facebook, courtesy of D. Spraakman:
<https://www.facebook.com/851462301722052/posts/1235364063331872?vh=e&d=n&sfns=mo>



Leafy Sea dragon, Rapid Bay jetty. Courtesy: H. Creech