

SDFSFA Strategic Plan 2020-25 Final report

DRAFT

Prepared for the SDFSFA AGM, 2025

Background

At the 2020 AGM, SDFSFA members approved the Federation's first 5 year strategic plan to strengthen and expand the work of the Federation in support of the following mission, goals and objectives:

Mission

To promote South Australia as a world-class diving destination and contribute to the conservation, enhancement and rehabilitation of our marine and freshwater environments.

Goal

To act as the peak body representing all recreational scuba diving clubs, scuba divers, free divers and snorkellers in South Australia in all relevant matters, including the provision of information for decision making by government and / or the general public about our sport and SA marine and freshwater environments.

Objectives

- Promote and encourage scuba diving, free diving and snorkelling as recreational activities.
- Encourage the conservation, enhancement and rehabilitation of the marine and freshwater environments as essential to the enjoyment and promotion of our sport.
- Represent the interests of members in any matters that may arise.
- Notify members of any information in respect to scuba diving, free diving and snorkelling and the association's related interests.
- Promote understanding between the public and recreational divers and snorkellers.
- Liaise with other organisations and agencies that work on issues of interest and concern to the Federation.

The 2020-25 Strategic Plan was built around 6 strategies.

1. Build the membership.
2. Strengthen and expand our information, communications and engagement tools.
3. Increase promotion and marketing of SDFSFA and SA Diving.
4. Hold or participate in special events, advocacy campaigns and projects.
5. Strengthen the governance and management of the Federation.
6. Build the financial resources for the Federation.

The following report summarises what we have accomplished over the past five years.

Strategy 1: Build the membership

In the years leading up to developing the Strategic Plan, we had approximately 40 signed up members, not including shops and clubs. We wanted to build the membership base — the more members we had, the stronger our influence would be. We also wanted to include a broader representation of ages of divers, free divers and snorkellers. We set a target of 1,000 individual members and 75% of shops and clubs signed up as institutional members. We removed membership fees for individual members to encourage joining and participating in the Federation. During the pandemic, we suspended fees for shops and clubs and in 2023 eliminated institutional membership dues entirely.

Our achievements

- 651 Individual members, or 65% of the original target.
- Of the current 6 full service shops and 8 clubs, 4 shops and 6 clubs have joined as institutional members, achieving 71% against our target of 75%. However all committee members have been assigned the role of liaising and regularly communicating with all clubs and shops. We have also brought together a broader community of 3,707 divers, freedivers and snorkellers who have joined the SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions Facebook group (increased from 3,093 members in 2023-24), together with 953 followers of the SDFSFA Facebook page (up from 884 followers in 2023-24).
- We created the Lifetime Membership award to recognise those members who have contributed significantly to the work of the Federation and the promotion of diving in SA.

Highlights of our work over 5 years:

- Prepared the “case” explaining why people should join the SDFSFA, and ran several successful membership drives through Facebook, Splash Inn and through booths at Science Alive, our Bunnings sausage sizzle fundraisers and other events.
- Secured engagement from the freediving and snorkelling community in SDFSFA’s work through the SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions Facebook group
- Secured membership of nonprofit organisations in the marine sector, such as EMS, MLSSA, the Historical Diving Society, and ReLinkSA.
- We continue to attract new members of the SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions group from interstate and overseas who are using the group to explore the best places and times to dive in South Australia.

For future consideration:

- Strengthening our interaction with shops and clubs, to ensure their awareness of, support for and engagement in the work of the Federation.

Strategy 2. Strengthen and expand our information, communications and engagement tools.

We didn't just want to increase our membership numbers alone; we wanted to bring our community and stakeholders together in order to share information and increase knowledge, enjoyment and protection of the underwater world. That would include building content (photos, stories, videos) that would help to promote SA diving.

Our Achievements

- Our key achievement has been the successful launch and maintenance of the SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions Facebook group. Group members regularly share photos and information about diving conditions, alerts to problems, and joyful celebrations of diving experiences.
- We are also proud of the successful launch of Splash Inn in 2024 - designed to be a series of evening events with key speakers to bring together the diving community to socialise and learn more about our underwater world and how to protect it. (More on this under Strategy 4).
- We improved the design and expanded the content of the SDFSFA Newsletter to include lead stories on local issues such as jetty maintenance, protection of Giant cuttlefish and other marine life, and degradation of sites such as Piccaninnie Ponds. We also introduced occasional columns on gear maintenance and local diving history, while at the same time continuing our "Congratulations to" recognition column and Steve Reynold's science stories.
- Published the SDFSFA brochure to hand out at shops and events.

Highlights of our work over 5 years:

- Regular updates of the SDFSFA Facebook page and notices to the SA Dive Sites group.
- Contributions to dive magazines such as DiveLog Australasia and Scubadiver ANZ.
- Updated and expanded our SDFSFA website and prepared print handouts of the directory of SA dive shops, clubs, services and resources for use at events.

For future consideration

- We have discussed over the past year the need for a new brochure to:
 - Provide information on key dive sites in SA for new divers and divers new to SA
 - Provide a short directory of key services for new divers and divers new to SA
 - Promote the work of the Federation

Strategy 3. Increase promotion and marketing of SDFSFA and SA Diving.

While Strategy 2 focused on information and engagement for the diving community, we saw a need to promote our sport to those who are not yet divers or snorkellers. We also wanted to increase our profile across the State with government, local Councils and the general public in order to advocate for our issues with greater impact. Finally, we saw the value of promoting SA as a world-class dive destination. This would require an increase in promotion and marketing efforts as well as in person engagement with various government bodies.

Our Achievements

- We have solidified our recognition from the State and several local councils, including Onkaparinga, Yankalilla and Yorke Peninsula, as the peak body representing the interests of divers, freedivers and snorkellers. Our input is sought directly on jetties and other matters. We have been included in a number of major consultations, including the proposed desalination plant in the Upper Spencer Gulf, and the development of Whyalla's Cuttlefish Zone.
- We have expanded our marketing and promotion materials, with support from a grant — the SA Clubs Reboot program. Together with our original brochure prepared for the first Science Alive, we designed and purchased the SDFSAs marquee, the SDFSAs shirts, SDFSAs face masks and SDFSAs banners displayed in dive shops. We are now more "visible" in public spaces.
- We have promoted diving to high school students and the general public through our booth at Science Alive for several years. We are now a recognised community organisation by Science Alive and are granted free space, tables etc at the event.

Highlights of our work over 5 years:

- Regular meetings with DIT to provide input on jetty maintenance and dive site infrastructure, in particular on the deterioration of the old Rapid Bay jetty. DIT asked for our input to its business case for maintenance and upgrades to a number of SA jetties.
- Our excellent contacts with DIT and councils have allowed us to respond quickly and inform the relevant bodies when damage at jetties has been reported by divers.
- Because of Covid, we were unable in the first couple of years to move forward on holding presentations in schools and universities to promote diving. We subsequently decided that our booth at Science Alive would be sufficient to reach the school demographic; and we would rely on the university clubs (Adelaide and Flinders) to reach out to university students. We also took into consideration what other organisations were doing in this area, in particular EMS and the dive shops.

For future consideration

- We had hoped in 2020-25 to build a relationship with SA Tourism to promote SA diving but did not have the time or committee member resources to take this on.
- While Science Alive has been an excellent promotional opportunity for us, we were unable to participate in 2024 due to insufficient volunteers and the time required to develop a new and engaging booth experience for attendees.

Strategy 4. Hold or participate in special events, advocacy campaigns and projects.

Strategy 4 was intended to encompass specific initiatives to be launched by the SDFSAs. Most would require sub-committees, more detailed work plans and the support and involvement of members, dive shops/clubs and other stakeholders as needed. In general, these initiatives would:

- bring our community together to celebrate our sport and promote it to non-divers (events),
- ensure the conservation, enhancement and rehabilitation of the marine and freshwater

- environments (advocacy campaigns),
- ensure premier dive locations would be available and well-maintained, in terms of infrastructure and habitat conservation (special projects).

Our Achievements

On Events

We had originally envisioned our successful 2019 SA Scuba Week as an annual event. With Covid, we were unable to hold a large event in 2020. We determined in 2021-22 that an equally effective approach would be to align our events with other high profile activities such as championing Dive for Cancer and the 150th celebration of Edithburgh jetty and on occasion take our marquee out to popular dive spots to promote SDFS. In addition, we have successfully undertaken the following events to bring the community together:

- Jettyfest, 2021: the Port Noarlunga Jetty Centenary: registered 100 divers to join in a group dive and secured over \$4000 worth of prizes for the event.
- Two Lifetime Membership Awards banquets in 2022 and 2023.
- Splash Inn, launched in 2024. This has been designed to be a series of free events with guest speakers held during the cooler months to bring together the scuba, freediving and snorkelling community to socialise and learn more about our underwater world and how to enjoy and protect it. We secured the support of the Rob Roy Hotel for the event which has generously provided a room and nibbles. As of July 2025, we have held 5 Splash Inns, all very well attended.
- Sea Star Awards: In 2024 we launched a new recognition award to go to those who have made/are making a significant contribution to diving and our underwater world. Four individuals received the award in 2025 at the March Splash Inn.

On Advocacy Campaigns

Since the start of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, we have launched a number of advocacy campaigns, exceeding our original target of three such campaigns.

- **Current Campaigns:**
 - **On improving SA jetties:** In 2019-20 we submitted a major report to DPTI on the state of SA jetties. As a follow up to that report, in 2021 we were contacted by DPTI for guidance on specifications for jetty stairs and related infrastructure (benches, toilets, etc), which we provided. We were also asked for, and provided, input to the business case for supporting a select number of SA jetties. We continue on a regular basis to meet with DIT to advocate for jetties. Of particular concern is the recent complete closure to diving near and under the old Rapid Bay jetty. We are currently consulting with interested SDFS members on what to do about the closure of Rapid Bay.
 - **Effective shark deterrents:** In 2023-24, SDFS investigated numerous complaints about battery life, indicator lights and antenna reliability of the Ocean Guardian Shark Shield. With the company going into administration, we have subsequently been exploring and sharing information about the future of shark deterrents and options for repairs. At our most recent Splash Inn! we invited Professor Charlie Huvneers to discuss the latest in shark deterrent technology.

- **Working on major issues with other organisations:** we have also provided input and support for addressing:
 - Greater protections for sharks and rays in SA waters
 - Whyalla Cuttlefish zone infrastructure.
 - The location for the proposed desalination plant in the Upper Spencer Gulf and its potential impact on the Cuttlefish aggregation. We note that one of the possible sites, Point Lowly, is no longer being considered.

➤ **Concluded campaigns:**

- **On Cuttlefish protection:** We launched the Cuttlefish Alliance in 2021 to support petitions and campaigns to protect the Giant Cuttlefish aggregation. Our support for various petitions to reinstate fishing restrictions as well as behind the scenes conversations with PIRSA's Cuttlefish advisory group have contributed to the State establishing a permanent no-take zone during the aggregation in the waters north of a line between Arno Bay and Wallaroo. With this regulation now in place, we have concluded this advocacy campaign, although we will leave the Cuttlefish Alliance Facebook page in place should there be a need down the road to share information to protect the aggregation.
- **On photographing marine life:** guidelines for underwater photographers to encourage minimal impact on our marine life and environment [2021-22 campaign].
- **On Marine debris and cleanup** - Responsible disposal of single use face masks. [2021-22 campaign].

On Special Projects

We proposed in the 2020-25 Strategic Plan to undertake at least one major project in support of providing new dive experiences. In 2023-24, we surveyed the SA dive community — SDFSAs members, Facebook followers and members of the SA Dive Sites group to identify a major project that could be initiated by the SDFSAs and engage all shops and clubs. Such a project would focus on either a new diving experience or enhance an existing site. We had an excellent response to our survey, with ideas ranging from sculpture gardens to navigation trails to the broader need for an SDFSAs "green strategy" that might include regular site cleanups and an annual biodiversity count. Particular interest was expressed in the opening up of a fresh water quarry to be used for recreational and dive training purposes when ocean conditions were poor.

The committee reviewed all suggestions and followed up on 2 in 2024-25:

- **Rapid Bay navigation trail:** With the approval of DIT and the support of SAPOL dive team, we installed a navigation trail from the new jetty at Rapid Bay out to the T-junction of the old jetty. Storms in 2024 damaged approx. 50% of the trail, so in 2025 with the help of Sea Wolves dive club we rebuilt a section of the trail, installing longer star droppers, with the aim of rebuilding the damaged section after testing the longevity of these longer droppers. The recent closure of the T-section will of course impact the usefulness of the trail; however lessons learned from this work may open up possibilities for installing similar trails in other locations.
- **Opening up a fresh water quarry:** We made a number of inquiries for this project but it may not be feasible without significant state government investment to purchase and develop an old quarry for recreational purposes.

For future consideration

- We were also keen on the idea of a green strategy. This should be considered as part of developing the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. In particular, with the devastation caused by the recent toxic algae bloom, we may need to consider stronger advocacy and engagement on impacts of climate change. Much more work is needed to support monitoring efforts already underway at Flinders University and elsewhere.
- We had also proposed in the Strategic Plan to prepare a report on the contribution of diving to the SA economy. In 2022-23, we provided input to DIT to assist with their business case for investing in improvements to jetty infrastructure in several locations in South Australia. This input drew on research we located from academic sources about the economic contributions of recreation activities such as the use of Rapid Bay jetty and shark cage experiences in the Neptune Islands. However the data was still very limited, and more work needed to be done. In 2023-24, the Local Government Association came out with an excellent economic analysis of the value of jetties to the SA economy, which can be found at the following link:
[The Value of SA Australian Jetties Final Report](#)
This report provides useful input to DIT and local councils on the importance of maintaining jetty infrastructure. While it would still be useful to have our own economic analysis of the value of diving/free diving to the SA economy, we will need to engage either academic or commercial expertise to undertake our study, and significant financial resources will be needed to commission such an analysis.

Strategy 5. Strengthen the governance and management of the Federation.

Our intention in Strategy 5 was to ensure the SDFSFA Committee which is the governing body of the Federation adequately represents the diversity of the SA scuba, free diver and snorkelling communities and is accountable for its activities.

Our Achievements

- In addition to the four Executive positions (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer), the SDFSFA governing committee now has from 6 to 9 additional committee members, including a Membership Officer and a Communications Officer. This has proven to be a sustainable number of volunteers to guide our communications, marketing, advocacy and fundraising work.
- Established the role of SDFSFA Patron and secured the agreement of Dr. Richard Harris to serve as Patron.
- Prepared our first bylaws and amended our governance structure to provide a greater role for shops and clubs.
- Developed a Committee Handover document to support a better induction process for new Committee members, that covers the Constitution, bylaws and Strategic Plan.
- Instituted a recognition program for SDFSFA volunteers – the SDFSFA Lifetime Membership.

For future consideration

We continue to work on bringing new members onto the Committee who reflect a broader demographic and range of interests (snorkellers, free divers, etc.) but this is challenging. We

have also in the past been able to have a couple of Committee members from outside the Adelaide area, promoting regional interests, but this has been difficult to maintain.

Strategy 6. Build the financial resources for the Federation.

In the past, the SDFSFA relied on membership dues and a private donation to cover its very minimal operating costs. In order to expand the work and influence of the Federation, including purchasing public liability insurance, we needed to secure a sustainable financial base for the Federation.

Our Achievements

- At the end of this Strategic Plan, we can confirm that we can reliably raise every year the minimum necessary to cover our fixed annual operating costs. More specifically, we can sustain into the future a minimum operating budget of \$2200, covering our public liability insurance (necessary for all public events we might hold), website domain and hosting costs and funds for Lifetime Membership dinners or other special events.
- We have an excellent relationship with Bunnings to run at least one sausage sizzle a year, and two if we want to.
- We have held three wine sale fundraisers with the support of two South Australian wineries.
- We have received cash and prize donations from various dive clubs to support our work.
- Several dive shops have generously provided prizes for our various events over the years.
- We are reintroducing an optional membership fee for shops as a mechanism for them to voluntarily contribute financially to the work of the Federation.
- In 2021 we secured and used a grant from the SA Clubs Reboot program.

For future consideration

- More exploration of grants from government and charitable organisations is warranted but will be dependent on specific project activities that such grants would support.

Submitted by Heather Creech, Communications Officer

14th July 2025