

SDFSFA Strategic Plan 2020-25 Fourth annual report: FY 2023-24

Prepared for the SDFSFA AGM, July 2024

Our Key Performance Indicators: Progress towards our targets

The SDFSFA 2020-25 Strategic Plan is built around 6 strategies.

1. Build the membership

In 2023-24 we:

- Increased our membership from 492 to 597 (@17/07/24).
- We have also brought together a broader community of 3,093 divers, freedivers and snorkellers who have joined the SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions Facebook (FB) group (increased from 2,395 members in 2022-23). We also now have 884 followers of the SDFSFA Facebook page (up from 824 followers in 2022-23).
- 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.
- Continued to promote membership in SDFSFA through events like Science Alive.

In 2024-25, we intend to:

- Continue to work on building relationships with shops, clubs and organisations.
- Continue our membership drive with a view to reaching 650 members, or 65% of our target of 1,000.

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

In 2023-24, we have:

- Provided regular information on topics of interest to members through our monthly Newsletter and bi-monthly reports in DiveLog Australia.
- Updated the handout of our directory of shops, clubs, etc. for distribution at events.
- Kept our broader community engaged and solicited their input and feedback through our Facebook page and SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions.

In 2024-25 we intend to:

- Update and reissue our SDFSFA brochure.

3. Increase promotion and marketing of SDFSA and SA Diving.

We continue to strengthen our recognition from the State as the peak body representing the interests of divers, freedivers and snorkellers.

In 2023-24 we have:

- Maintained regular contact with Department of Infrastructure & Transport (DIT) and local councils over conditions at local jetties.
- In particular we have continued to be involved with planning for changes at Rapid Bay due to the deterioration of much of the old jetty. We have also interacted with the respective Councils over improvements for the Second Valley divers steps, the middle steps at Port Noarlunga, and the steps at Edithburgh.
- Promoted diving to high school students through our booth at Science Alive 2023.
- Promoted and attended the Edithburgh jetty 150 year celebration in 2023.
- Championed Dive for Cancer.
- Promoted the 2024 Cuttlefish aggregation "Cuttlefest" events through our Newsletter and FB pages.

In 2024-25, we intend to:

- Work with SA Tourism to promote SA diving.

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

A. Special events

In 2023-24 we launched Splash Inn: designed to be a series of events 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.

- Mark Tozer presented at the first event, on diving the wrecks in Darwin, with 80 people attending
- Dr. Richard Harris presented at the second event on his recent adventures cave diving in South Africa. This event was sold out, with the maximum capacity of 110 people attending.

In 2024-25, we intend to:

- Continue holding Splash Inn three times a year during the cooler months.
- If we nominate another round of Lifetime membership awards, we will hold an awards dinner.
- We are also close to launching another recognition award to go to those who have made/are making a significant contribution to diving and our underwater world.

B. 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

1. This year, the SDFSA undertook to investigate numerous complaints about battery life, indicator lights and antenna reliability of the Ocean Guardian Shark Shield. We communicated several times with the company, and also approached the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. We initiated a broader survey of our members to determine the extent of user concerns, only to learn that the company has recently gone into voluntary administration. We are now waiting to hear what the future might hold for the company before pursuing our investigations further.

2. On improving SA jetties: Over the past year, we have been able to respond quickly when damage has been reported by divers. For example:

- A former SDFSA Committee member was instrumental in the design of a repair to the divers' stairs at Edithburgh.
- Another active SDFSA member has helped to monitor and report on damage at Second Valley. We note that a useful extension to the divers' stairs there has been implemented to assist with getting out of the water at low tides.
- As noted under section 3 above, our President participates in a DIT working group on improvements at Rapid Bay. His advice is helping to influence how changes and upgrades will affect key marine life like leafy seadragons and support divers at one of the State's premier diving locations.

3. In 2023-24 we also provided input and support for addressing:

- 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.
- Greater protections for sharks and rays in SA waters.

Concluded campaigns

1. 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 will conclude 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.

2. On photographing marine life: guidelines for underwater photographers to encourage minimal impact on our marine life and environment [2021-22 campaign].

3. On Marine debris and cleanup - Responsible disposal of single use face masks. [2021-22 campaign].

In 2024-25, we intend to:

- Maintain and update our advocacy campaigns as necessary.

C. Special Projects

1. To establish a new dive site or enhance an existing site in SA waters: 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 have chosen three ideas to follow up on:

- Installing a navigation trail from the new jetty at Rapid Bay out to the T-junction of the old jetty, to assist divers as sections of the old jetty deteriorate. We have begun our work on determining what permits will be needed, commercial diver support and other tasks, as well as costs and a fund raising strategy if necessary.
- Opening up a fresh water quarry: We are making preliminary inquiries for this project.
- A green strategy.

In 2024-25, we intend to:

- Implement the navigation trail at Rapid Bay.
- Continue to work on the feasibility of opening up a fresh water quarry for diving.
- Develop a green strategy for the SDFSAs.

On hold:

2. 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 the 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 (<https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/about/what-we-do/advocacy/jetties#:~:text=use%20this%20site,-.Value%20of%20jetties,they%20go%20to%20a%20jetty.>). 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. As we now have three other special projects that we will need to raise funds for, the report on diving may be put on hold for now.

5. Strengthen the governance and management of the Federation.

In addition to the four Executive positions (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer), the SDFSA 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 for our communications, marketing, advocacy and fundraising work.

In 2024-25, we will need to find additional volunteers to assist with our new special projects — not necessarily to join the full Committee but to join working groups focused on those projects. We also continue to need to bring new members onto the Committee who reflect a broader demographic and range of interests (snorkellers, free divers) as well as representation from the regions.

6. Build the financial resources for the Federation.

Our Treasurer has prepared a separate report on our finances that presents our ability now to set an annual budget with estimated revenues and expenditures.

In reporting on the strategic plan, we are focused just on those financial commitments we cannot avoid, in particular our public liability insurance and web hosting costs. We can state now that we can reliably raise the minimum necessary to cover those costs every year. As we reported last fiscal year, 2022-23, we can sustain into the future a minimum operating budget of \$2200, covering fixed annual costs: our public liability insurance (necessary for all public events we might hold), website domain and hosting costs and \$500 for Lifetime Membership dinners or other special events.

In 2023-24, we:

- Maintained our good relationship with Bunnings, keeping in regular communication.
- Secured prizes for draws at Science Alive! 2023 from Adelaide Scuba.
- Organised a wine sale fundraiser with the support of two South Australian wineries (revenue will be received in 2024-25).

In 2024-25, we intend to:

- Continue our Bunnings fundraising BBQs.
- Explore new grant opportunities.

Submitted by Heather Creech, Communications Officer 17th July 2024