

SDFSFA Newsletter – July 2026

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SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA, Inc.

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SDFSFA Patron:
Dr Richard Harris



Temporary restrictions on diving and snorkelling during the Giant Cuttlefish aggregation
Photo from Environment SA

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2026 Giant Australian Cuttlefish Temporary Restrictions

As many of you are now aware, the 2026 Giant Cuttlefish aggregation is very late, with a concern that the numbers may be significantly reduced. This has led to the State imposing a temporary restriction on recreational activities at the Upper Spencer Gulf breeding site from the 1st of July to the end of September. Environment SA reports the following:

“The 90-day exclusion zone applies from July 1 to an area of the Upper Spencer Gulf Marine Park, including the sanctuary zone, between Black Point and Stony Point. The measure – which restricts in-water recreational activities, including swimming, snorkelling and diving, as well as vessel anchoring – aims to minimise any disturbance on breeding cuttlefish and help protect their eggs and hatchlings.

All marine park sanctuary zones are areas of high conservation value and no fishing has been allowed in them for more than a decade.

Latest surveys undertaken by the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) and Department for Environment and Water (DEW) show a significant reduction in cuttlefish numbers this breeding season.

The temporary restriction, which can be revoked at any time by the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water should cuttlefish numbers significantly increase.”

<https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/news-hub/news/articles/2026/06/more-protection-for-giant-australian-cuttlefish>.

Spencer Gulf Adventures (SGA) has been monitoring the situation and has noted that with the ocean temperature finally dropping below 15C, they are starting to see an increase in numbers of returning cuttlefish. SGA is continuing to run cuttlefish viewing boat tours, respecting the restrictions of the exclusion zone (no anchoring) and also touring areas outside of the exclusion zone. They are hopeful that this is simply an extremely late start to the aggregation, which may lead to a lifting of the temporary restrictions.

We should note that **Whyalla Dive Shop** and **Cutty's Tours** have made the extremely difficult decision to cancel their 2026 Giant Australian Cuttlefish seasons, posting the following on Facebook:

“We will not be operating guided dive or snorkel tours, glass-bottom boat tours, or equipment hire for the remainder of the season.

This decision has not been made lightly. We understand that many visitors have planned holidays months in advance, with the cuttlefish aggregation as the highlight of their trip. However, based on the conditions we are seeing every day, we cannot in good faith encourage people to travel to Whyalla expecting to experience the aggregation.

We also ask that visitors respect the few remaining animals on the reef. With such low numbers present, allowing them to remain undisturbed gives them the best possible opportunity to complete their breeding cycle without unnecessary human interference...

While the exact cause of this year's non-arrival is not yet known, there are several likely contributing factors. These include the Harmful Algal Bloom, changes in cuttlefish predator populations associated with fisheries management, and ongoing changes in ocean conditions with the rapid advancement of climate change. At this stage, no single cause has been identified, and further research is needed to better understand what has occurred.

The Whyalla Dive Shop will continue working alongside researchers and organisations including Eyre Lab, Flinders University, and Adelaide University to monitor the population and support ongoing research into the Giant Australian Cuttlefish aggregation. We will continue to share updates as more information becomes available.”



Should the aggregation strengthen in the coming weeks and the temporary restrictions are lifted, the SDFS will let everyone know through SA Dive Sites on Facebook.

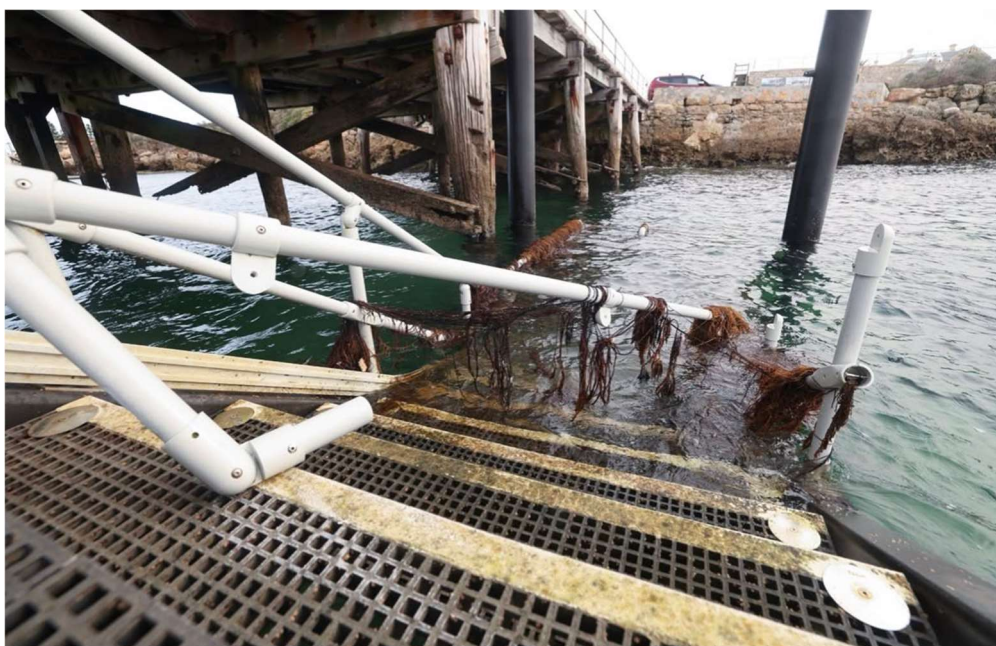
Edithburgh Jetty to close from 24 July until mid 2027

Steve Simmons has shared on Facebook an update on Yorke Peninsula Council's jetty works.

“McMahon Services will begin site mobilisation at Edithburgh during the week commencing 13 July, with the Edithburgh Jetty to close to the public from Friday 24 July until mid-2027 while repair works are undertaken. These important projects are being delivered through a joint funding agreement secured by Council and the South Australian Government. With Council responsible for managing more than one-third of South Australia's 31 local government-managed jetties, partnerships like this are essential to ensuring these valued community assets remain safe, accessible and able to be enjoyed by residents and visitors for years to come.

Thank you to the community for your patience and understanding while these essential works are completed.” <https://yorke.sa.gov.au/news/notices/ardrossan-and-edithburgh-jetty-works-update/>

One hopes that at some point during these repairs the jetty stair railing will be replaced with a more robust option!



Ardrossan jetty

The Yorke Peninsula Council is pleased to share that repair works on the Ardrossan Jetty are progressing well, with works expected to be completed by the end of July. The jetty is anticipated to reopen to the public in August.

Splash Inn 14 August: Josh Richards on the Laos Cave Rescue

Most adventures start with a plan. This one started with a Facebook message.

In May 2026, reports emerged from north-eastern Laos that a group of villagers were trapped in a remote mine by unexpected flooding. Within days cave divers and rescue specialists from all over the world had converged on the jungle near Long Tieng to search for the survivors. For Josh Richards, it all started with a message asking "How busy are you the next few days?" It turned into a story of uncertainty, desperation, despair, perseverance, and courage.

In this presentation, Josh gives audiences an inside look at how an international cave rescue unfolds. From last-minute packing and sleeping behind vending machines, to scraping through flooded tunnels, being asked to do terrifying things with a soup spoon, and sharing emotional moments never meant for the news, Josh will take the audience inside the real story behind the Laos cave rescue.

This is more than just a tale about cave diving in a remote country; this is about ordinary people coping with extraordinary challenges; and how experience, collaboration, and persistence became a lifeline for the rescuers and rescued alike.

Bio

Josh Richards is an explorer, author, and storyteller whose career has taken him from the military and fine arts, to cybersecurity and cave exploration around the world. A former Mars One astronaut candidate and author of "Becoming Martian" and "Cosmic Nomad", Josh is fascinated by the unknown, and is driven to explore it while sharing all he discovers along the way.

As leader of the Soggy Wombats cave exploration team, Josh has made numerous major cave discoveries in South Australia, the Nullarbor, Indonesia and Japan. In May 2026, Josh was asked to participate in the Long Tieng mine rescue, joining a team of cave divers and rescue specialists in Laos as they worked to reach and rescue 5 local villagers trapped inside a flooded mine. Josh's presentations combine adventure, exploration, humour, and hard-earned lessons from operating in some of the world's most challenging environments.

This event will be held, as usual at the Rob Roy Hotel, 106 Halifax Street, Adelaide, commencing 6.30pm. Registrations for this free event are now open through Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/splash-inn-009-inside-the-laos-cave-rescue-with-josh-richards-tickets-1993453268388?aff=oddtcreator>

Announcing the Winner of the 2026 Sea Star Award

Last month we invited members to nominate a worthy recipient for this year's Sea Star Award – we have been overwhelmed with the response received and the calibre of the many worthy nominations. **The winner will be announced at the August Splash Inn on 14 August.**

The Sea Star Award celebrates individuals making waves in diving, snorkelling, or freediving who are also championing the protection of our marine and freshwater environments and cultural heritage.



Splash Inn 16 October with Sea Dragon Films

Advance Notice!! We have locked in the 16th of October for an evening with Dean Spraakman of Sea Dragon Films. More information on the event will come in the next newsletter, but for now, save the date!

Northern Water Project is looking for feedback

According to <https://www.northernwater.sa.gov.au/> "Northern Water aims to provide a secure, climate resilient water source for industry located in South Australia's Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North. This will enable the growth of industries and key mining resources crucial for contributing to decarbonisation initiatives, sustainability and unlocking long term economic prosperity for South Australia.

The Northern Water Project proposes the construction and operation of a large-scale desalination plant at Mullaquana Station in the Upper Spencer Gulf, along with approximately 400km of transfer pipeline connecting to the Far North. Mullaquana Station is located approximately 20km south of Whyalla."

Northern Water is gathering feedback as part of the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which assesses environmental, social and economic impacts of the Project. The Survey is open now until 9 August. Go here to add your views: <https://engage.dit.sa.gov.au/nw-eis-survey>.

Economic Value of Scuba and Snorkelling to South Australia

A "Heads up" for all shops, clubs, independent instructors and guides, tour operators and related marine organisations: As we reported in last month's Newsletter, the SDFSA has secured funding and the services of a consultant to conduct research into the value of our sport to the economy of South Australia. An online survey will be run by the consultant to collect the data (and all data submitted will be kept in confidence by the consultant). **We will encourage all groups to participate in the survey:** In a small market like South Australia, it is essential to get as close to 100% participation as possible. **The survey is now under development;** we hope to launch it later in July.

SDFSA Committee Business

The SDFSA AGM is Wednesday 22 July, 7pm at the Arab Steed Hotel, level 1 meeting room. In order to have a vote on the future work of the Federation, you must sign up as a voting member here: <https://sdfsa.net/join-the-scuba-divers-federation-of-sa/>. By becoming a voting member of the SDFSA, you can raise issues of concern, support and have input into all SDFSA matters, including [our key issues](#). Most importantly, you will have a say in the governance and operations of the Federation, and can help to set the priorities for the Federation. **Membership is free!**

Congratulations and Thanks to...

- Janine Baker on receiving the 2026 SA Environment Award for Conservation Science
- Jochen Kaempf on being appointed Adjunct Professor in Oceanography at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies at the University of Tasmania.
- Paddy O'Toole for her review of the Star of Greece anchor at Semaphore jetty. She has re-classified the anchor as being a Porter's style anchor.

- 20th Anniversary for IMOS: Tasmania's Integrated Marine Observing System is celebrating 20 years of sustained marine observing this year. "For two decades, IMOS has delivered national-scale observations of Australia's coastal and open oceans through a coordinated network of Facilities. Together, these Facilities have built an enduring capability, providing open, high-quality marine and climate data that support First Nations communities, research, government and industry." See <https://imos.org.au/> and their April newsletter for more details.

News from Shops and Clubs

Sea Wolves is planning its 2026 Swap meet.

Peter Fulton reports that the Sea Wolves 2025 Swap Meet was a huge success. With a large attendance; members, friends and people we had never met before. Great buys, great networking, great fun, a free sausage sizzle and a few drinks. A great night judging by the noise level of the conversations.

The 2026 Sea Wolves Swap Meet has now been scheduled and everyone is welcome. Lots of gear, both new and pre-loved. There are things to buy to replace worn or damaged kit, as well as some of the hard to find gear whether for sale at the meet or found through chatting. You could build a completely new dive kit from the gear on offer.



All divers are welcome to attend. Come along, make and meet new dive buddies, catch up with old friends, buy some gear, sell some gear, enjoy a free sausage or buy a drink at the bar. Entry is free.

You are also welcome to stay for the meeting where we discuss up and coming dives and events.

When: Tuesday September 29th 2026

Time: Starts 6:30pm. Finishes by 8:00pm before our Club meeting.

Where: 10 Bayford Rise, Morphett Vale SA 5162

Who: Peter Fulton via email: secretary@seawolves.org.au

Marine Life Society of South Australia's 50th Anniversary celebration was held at the Rodney Fox and Mark Tozer's Museum and Research Centre in June. SDFS Life Member Con Penglis gave a presentation about his early abalone diving days. The Society's Port Adelaide Anchor Trail is undergoing some changes. A new trail guide will soon be printed. It will include a change of anchor style for the Star of Greece anchor at Semaphore jetty and a newly discovered anchor.

Steve's Science Reading

By Steve Reynolds, SDFS member 0001 and Inaugural Life Member

Marine Life Society of South Australia blogs by Steve Reynolds and other MLSSA members:

[Storms That Damaged Some of South Australia's Jetties & Ships](#)

[A Second Valley Dive With BSAC Members](#)

[Renewed Sightings of Western Cleaner Clingfish, *Cochleocephalus bicolor*](#)

[Red *Ammannia*, *Ammannia gracilis* Recorded in Ewens Ponds](#)

[More on Skate Egg Casings](#)

[AI's Response to Cuttlebone Query](#)

Woods Hole Ocean Learning Hub: The Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) website's Ocean Learning Hub <https://www.whoi.edu/ocean-learning-hub/> provides access to educational content: The newly launched Hub is an interactive online resource for informal education. It is designed to immerse audiences of all ages in understanding the ocean. You can search the Hub by subject.

For Your Calendar: Forthcoming Events

South Australia

Wednesday 22 July, 7pm: **SDFS AGM** at Arab Steed Hotel, level 1 meeting room

7th-9th August: **Science Alive!** at the Adelaide Showgrounds. Friday is STEM careers day; Saturday-Sunday is open to the public.

Friday 14 August, 6:30 pm: **Splash Inn with Josh Richards on the Laos Cave rescue**. Free: Registration on Eventbrite coming soon.

24th September 10am - 2pm: **U3A South Coast** event on Marine life of the Great Southern Reef at the Church of Christ Hall in Seaview Rd at Victor Harbor. There will be a focus on seadragons and sustainable fishery management, with a case study on either the snapper or the tuna fishery in SA. Rubab Nazar is presenting re. seadragons on behalf of MLSSA.

September 25th - October 11th: **The Nature Festival** <https://www.naturefestival.org.au/> This year's theme is Seed. The Nature Festival is a collaborative movement of more than 200 community groups and organisations. We exist to celebrate our unique love for nature in South Australia.

Friday 16 October. **Splash Inn with Sea Dragon films**. Rob Roy Hotel. Free: Registration on Eventbrite coming in September.

19 – 22 October 2026: **The Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia's SERA 2026 Conference**: Hilton Hotel, Adelaide

Interstate/International

30th July – 2nd Aug: The **Sydney Boat Show** is being held at the Sydney Showground.

15th–23rd August: **National Science Week** (Australia's annual celebration of science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM).)

30 Aug to 3 Sept. **Australian Marine Sciences Association.** Canberra, ACT. [More info](#)

5-6th September: <http://www.godivingshow.com/anz>

19th-23rd October: The **Australasian Coastal Restoration Network's** ACRN 2026 Symposium:
Thursday 22 October - Friday 23 October | Venue TBC.

About the SDFSFA ...

The Scuba Divers Federation of South Australia is a non-profit, incorporated membership association dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of our unique underwater world. You can join us for free: <https://sdfsfa.net/membership-categories/>.

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