

Taking Care of Eyre Peninsula's Coastal Assets

An historic meeting in May 2004 witnessed the coastal councils of EPLGA brokering a deal with Planning SA designed to tackle planning and development of Eyre Peninsula's coastal precinct on a regional basis. Planning SA committed \$40,000 towards funding this innovative and ambitious project.

Eyre Peninsula's spectacular coastline extends for 1650km from the Nullarbor Cliffs to the top of Spencer Gulf, mostly unspoilt. To put that into perspective, that equates to the road distance between Adelaide and Sydney via Melbourne.

In many respects Eyre Peninsula has been fortunate, with the contraction in the agriculture sector taken up by sustainable growth in the coastal precinct, with a focus on aquaculture and tourism. Mining is the hidden giant, with a \$ 4 billion industry predicted by Mining & Energy SA by 2020.

The forecast for Eyre Peninsula's aquaculture industry is that it is likely to double its capacity by the year 2015. Main industry sectors include tuna, oysters, abalone, mussels and finfish.

Eyre Peninsula's tourist industry recorded strong growth since the early eighties, more than doubling its levels of visitation in less than two decades: (1984/85: 206,000/2000/01: 455,000). Impact on resident population is often not fully appreciated, with the visitor accounting for 5,700 extra people or 17.4% of Eyre Peninsula's population at any one time. Strong tourism growth is predicted over the next decade, with a focus on coastal activity.

Recent growth and demand can be illustrated by escalating level of investment into new residential dwellings and new commercial properties across Eyre Peninsula:

In recent times a number of land divisions have been proposed for Eyre Peninsula, with a strong focus on coastal real estate. Such plans include Ceduna Keys Marina, Boston Point, Coffin Bay, Smoky Bay, Venus Bay, Elliston, Lincoln Cove Stage 3, Tumbly Bay and Perlubie Beach. Those sub-divisions represent well over 1000 new blocks.

Strong economic growth focusing on Eyre Peninsula's coastal strip will be exacerbated by an inexorable and growing wave called Sea Change. The "Sea Change" phenomenon includes any coastal activity or impact generated by retirement, lifestyle, holiday or recreational purposes.

National and international trends suggest that the coastal regions of South Australia are likely to come under increasing pressures from the eastern seaboard and Adelaide, notwithstanding the number of our own local residents gravitating towards the coast for retirement purposes and recreational pursuits. and the "Sea Change" phenomenon is not restricted to the mature-aged sector.

Spectacular coastline, relaxed and stress-free lifestyle, access to marine-based recreational pursuits and a mild temperate climate will make Eyre Peninsula a prime target for the Sea Change experience.

From a local government perspective, this phenomenon presented three options:

Do nothing and let our coastline develop in an "ad hoc" fashion, leave individual councils to grapple with coastal issues on a case by case basis or take a regional approach to the future planning and development of coastline of Eyre Peninsula.

After debate amongst its members, it chose to travel down the latter path, utilising its regional local government association as the vehicle. A special EPLGA Coastal Development Working Party was set up to take care of the project.

Key elements of the project:

- Regional collaboration
- Community consultation
- Planning and reporting on key trends, issues and priorities
- Mapping
- Policy development
- Final strategy and planning requirements to best manage Eyre Peninsula's coast

The project was not seen to be a one-dimensional, but needing to address a complex and multi-faceted range of issues. Those issues include economic growth, community development, good environmental management, retention/growth of region's population, the region's capacity to pay and most importantly, community perceptions on shape and style of our coastal assets in years to come.

For this reason, the regional consultation process is seen to be one of the most important elements of this regional coastal strategy.

Planning SA and EPLGA will do their very best to consult the people of Eyre Peninsula on this coastal initiative, with a series of forums scheduled across the region from 28 June to 14 July. Information sessions have been programmed for Ceduna, Streaky Bay, Elliston, Cummins, Tumby Bay, Arno Bay, Whyalla and Port Lincoln. In addition, an 8-page full colour information brochure will be included as an insert to the region's five newspapers.

Eyre Peninsula's sixteen hundred kilometres of coastline is a major regional asset. From a layperson's perspective, the task would seem to be maximising its intrinsic value, at the same time minimising negative impacts on this valuable natural resource.

"Eyre Peninsula is an opportunity-rich region of great natural beauty and the pressures on its coastline will surely come," commented EPLGA Executive Officer, Vance Thomas.

"The challenge before us is to find a balanced approach that protects our coastal assets and at the same time enables this vast peninsula region to grow and prosper. That balance can only be achieved through regional collaboration and community consultation," he commented.

"In the final wash-up, judgement on our success or otherwise will ultimately be made by our grandchildren," he added.

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Eyre Peninsula Coast to Coast

- Eyre Peninsula was sighted in 1627 near Streaky Bay, by Dutch explorer Pieter Nuyts
- Matthew Flinders charted the Eyre Peninsula coastline in 1802 aboard the Investigator
- If Nicholas Baudin had arrived a year earlier, Spencer and St Vincent Gulfs would have been called “Golfe Napoleon” & “Golfe Josephine” and Port Lincoln known as “Port Champagne”
- The first white settlers arrived in Port Lincoln aboard the Abeona, Porter and Dorset in 1839, just three years after South Australia’s proclamation
- HMAS Whyalla was the first ship built by Whyalla Shipyards (1940). 47 years later, the corvette was hauled up the same slip to become a feature in the Whyalla Maritime Museum
- Schooner “Postboy”, trading regularly between Port Adelaide and the Spencer Gulf ports, was wrecked at Arno Bay. Sail training vessel “One and All” is based on Post Boy’s design
- 600 tonne barque “Lady Kinnaird” foundered off Cape Bur in 1880. Her anchor is a monument to that tragedy on the Port Neill foreshore
- Flinders named the islands of Thorny Passage after the eight crewmen tragically lost by drowning in 1802. (Thistle, Taylor, Smith, Lewis, Grindall, Hopkins and Williams)
- Much of the underwater real life footage for the film “Jaws” was shot at Dangerous Reef.
- The last of the “mosquito fleet” of coastal ketches that used to ply the Eyre Peninsula coast is the “Hecla”, focal point for the Axel Stenross Maritime Museum at Port Lincoln
- Ancient rocks at Cape Carnot on Whaler’s Way have been dated at 2700 million years. An outcrop at Commonwealth Bay in Antarctica lending weight to the theory that the two continents may have been once joined
- The oyster industry in Coffin Bay dates back to the early 1850s. Native or mud oysters from Coffin Bay graced the tables of top Adelaide restaurants and dining rooms at the sum of 2 shillings a doz.
- The film “Gallipoli” was made at a location on the beach and cliffs just north of Farm Beach near Coffin Bay. The beach retains the name to this day
- A family of osprey enjoy spectacular ocean views from their loft vantage point atop of a pinnacle or sea-stack located at Cummings Monument Lookout near Sheringa
- At Sheringa, is a signpost to “Nowhere Else”, the locality name given to an early shepherd’s camp
- At Blackfellows, a popular surfing spot near Elliston, it is not uncommon to see a pod of dolphins sharing a wave with a safari of surfers
- At Baird Bay you can get up close and personal with the local marine wildlife by snorkelling with sea lions and diving with dolphins, all in the same day
- The film “Bluefin” by Colin Thiele’s book of the same name, was shot at Streaky Bay
- The number of horse races on the card at Perlubie Beach New Year’s Picnic Race Meeting is ultimately determined by the tide
- The map references in Jonathan Swift’s book “Gulliver’s Travels” places the Islands of Lilliput in the Nuyt’s Archiplego off the coastline of Ceduna
- The world famous surfing breaks at Cactus Beach are called Castles, Cactus and Caves
- The spectacular cliffs of the Great Australian Bight measure up to 90 metres high and stretch close to 200 km in one gigantic unbroken wall from Head of Bight to the W.A. border