

Estuary Care Foundation – Strategic Plan – 2018

Estuary Care Foundation

Rationale

The Port River and Barker Inlet is a historically degraded environment, which is now showing signs of recovery and needs help to fast track improvements. The development of the Port transformed a pristine natural estuary, rich with wildlife and flora, into a bustling centre of trade and industry, with consequent loss of habitat and drastic reductions in water quality due to dredging, infill and development. Originally it was a highly interconnected ecosystem, based on seagrasses and shellfish reefs, mud flats and mud oysters, and fringing mangroves and samphires. The Estuary supported local Kurna communities, who referred to the area as Yerta Bulti.

Despite that development, elements of the estuary's natural assets survive and, in some cases, thrive. Conservation and marine reserves such as Torrens Island Conservation Park, Barker Inlet Aquatic Reserve, and the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary are testament to the enduring ecological importance of the area. The Estuary is the largest area of mangrove forest, seagrass meadow and mudflats remaining in the Gulf St Vincent.

Changes in industry and improvements in environmental management, such as storm-water management and waste-water treatment, have resulted in ongoing improvements in water quality – which is enabling improvements in the aquatic environment. There are signs of regeneration in some seagrass beds and some shellfish (Pacific oysters and blue mussels), are now abundant.

With continued effort to improve environmental conditions, opportunities are emerging for the active restoration of former habitat, and the revitalisation of local ecosystems – including the return of mud oysters which once flourished in the Estuary. While the threat of rising sea levels and land subsidence brings new risks to habitat, local commerce and communities, one of the mitigation options – living shorelines – offers hope of providing cost-effective safeguards and of further contributing to the ecological restoration of the Port River and Barker Inlet Estuary.

Restoring the environments of Yerta Bulti will increase the resilience of the whole ecosystem, and its value for conservation and as a nursery for marine life. A healthy estuary will have greater value for recreation (such as fishing, kayaking, or water sports), for eco-tourism and related business ventures, and for education and research. 'Living shorelines' will aid environmental restoration and help safeguard community and industrial infrastructure from storms and rising sea-levels. A robust natural ecosystem will sustain the Port River and Barker Inlet, enabling it to remain a place with 'near-pristine' elements – providing a rare chance to 'connect with nature' and enjoy its' beauty while living on the edge of a modern city.

Need

Many people and groups appreciate the importance and natural beauty of the Port River and Barker Inlet Estuary, and are active in significant projects such as weed control, pest control and revegetation. However, in light of international and interstate experience, broader benefits seem possible with a more holistic approach to estuary restoration.

The Foundation meets that need, providing a unified voice to raise awareness of, and speak for, the Estuary - painting a vision of how it can be – and providing a means for individual groups to come together for a common cause, to collaborate more easily, and add value to each other's efforts. The Foundation is also active in its own right, engaging individuals and groups that have not previously been involved in local environmental activities.

Estuary Care Foundation – Strategic Plan – 2018

Strategic Plan

Mission

Estuary Care Foundation is devoted to the protection and rehabilitation of the ecology of South Australia’s Port River and Barker Inlet, for the intrinsic benefit of the environment and so communities and businesses may find pride and pleasure in that environment.

Estuary Care Foundation has two roles:

- Helping the Estuary; driving restoration programs and being a voice for the Estuary on behalf of the community.
- Helping people to help the Estuary; engaging groups and individuals, and being a vehicle for their collaboration in estuarine restoration activities.

Vision

The Foundation’s vision is for a strong Port River and Barker Inlet ecosystem, contributing to vibrant local communities, businesses and industry. The main element of the vision is a healthy, natural system that is resilient to managed use, and changes in climate and sea level. It includes aspects of:

- Protecting and enhancing natural assets such as aquatic habitats and shorelines, to benefit marine animals, bird life, and the Estuary’s shorelines.
- Employing natural systems to serve communities through measures like ‘living shorelines’ for bank stability, and storm-water management for improved water quality.
- Encouraging commercial activities that care for or enhance the environment, such as eco-tourism, and eco-conscious marine construction and transport facilities.
- Supporting communities enjoying the natural environment, through activities like water-based recreation, outdoor education, art and photography, and involvement in conservation works.

Aims & Objectives

The Aims and Objectives of Estuary Care Foundation are:

Aims	Objectives
Habitat Restoration	Shellfish Reefs: Restoring shellfish reefs.
	Seagrass Meadows: Restoring seagrass meadows.
	Living Shorelines: Developing living shorelines.
Community Engagement	Communities: Sharing knowledge and experiences.
	Practitioners: Exciting and enabling contributors.
	Research: Facilitating world class research.



Photo: K Murphy

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Strategies

Habitat Restoration

Shellfish Reefs

Restoring shellfish reefs.

- Promote and coordinate trials to advance shellfish reef restoration.
- Explore opportunities for further shellfish reef developments.

Seagrass Meadows

Restoring seagrass meadows.

- Promote and coordinate the trial of seagrass restoration.
- Explore opportunities for further seagrass monitoring, research and restoration.

Living Shorelines

Developing living shorelines.

- Encourage decision-makers to promote trials of 'living shorelines' concepts.
- Seek funding for 'proof-of-concept' trials of living shorelines.

Community Engagement

Communities

Sharing Knowledge and experiences.

- Facilitate community understanding and support for estuary protection and rehabilitation.
- Work closely with environmental and other community groups in designing, funding and implementing projects that provide care for the Estuary.
- Ensure the Kaurua community have opportunities to influence and contribute to rehabilitation projects.
- Stimulate a range of community interests to support the vision of a healthy and vibrant Estuary; including business, arts, education, recreation and community service groups.

Practitioners

Exciting and enabling contributors.

- Provide opportunities for industry and businesses to contribute to Foundation projects.
- Foster a network of Estuary Care volunteers, through links with organisations and by providing an 'umbrella' to cover the involvement of groups and individuals.
- Maintain links with Local and State governments, and encourage their support through policies and projects that care for the Estuary.

Research

Facilitating world class research.

- Encourage universities and schools to use the Estuary for course-work field trips and a site for research projects, by assisting with research questions, site access, and support for citizen science.
- Engage with researchers to define research needs, share knowledge and information, and facilitate access to field support and citizen scientists.
- Work with interested organisations (e.g. recreation, fishing and conservation) to build networks interested and able to assist in citizen science projects.

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Culture

Estuary Care Foundation is a ‘doer’ and a ‘facilitator’, committed to estuarine habitat restoration through community involvement. The Foundation collaborates with others to achieve shared environmental goals. That collaborative style is integral to how the Foundation operates. Groups working with the Foundation are embraced, and encouraged to retain their own identity.

As a ‘doer’ the Foundation provides opportunities for volunteers with a wide range of skills to contribute to improving the local environment. In all its actions the Foundation strives to be operating on, and helping to build, a world class knowledge base, to be independent, and to always be open to innovative solutions to the challenges faced in restoring estuarine ecosystems.

Strategy Summary

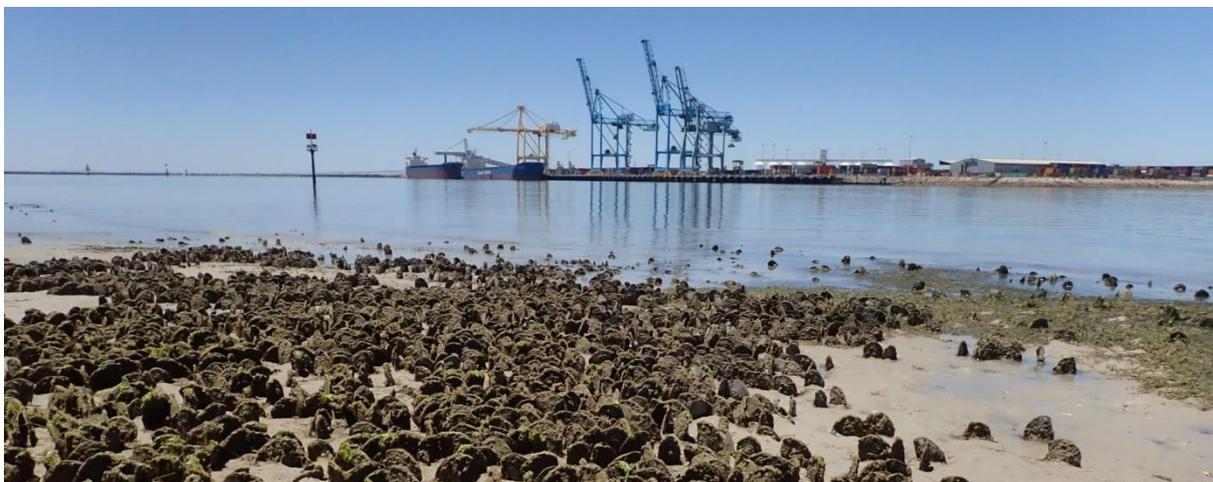
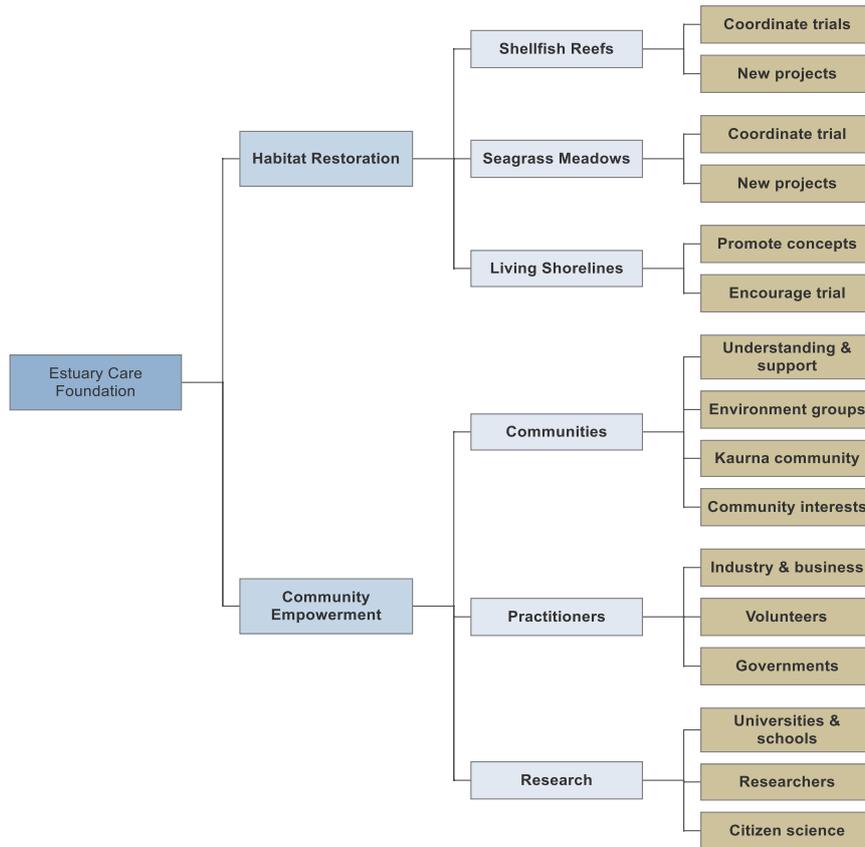


Photo: P Hunt