

SOUTH AUSTRALIA JETTY MANAGEMENT – STATEWIDE SUMMARY

March 2019

History of Jetties in SA

Jetties were originally constructed across South Australia to provide safer and more efficient handling of livestock, agricultural produce, passengers, mail and general goods transported by sea. They also provided for the storage and launching of lifeboats, sites for navigation lights, berths for pilot vessels and convenient places for undertaking customs and immigration procedures. In the 1870-1880s jetty numbers increased as new areas in the state opened. While the Government built many jetties, others were the result of local funding (Brighton) or private enterprise (Largs, Port Vincent).

The management and cost of jetty maintenance has been a contentious issue in South Australia for well over a century.

From the late 1880's, the Marine Board controlled most marine jetties and some on the River Murray and its lakes. From 1888 unprofitability and high maintenance costs prompted the State Government to transfer many jetties to Local Government control, but when Councils encountered difficulties, the Marine Board resumed control of some.

Two Royal Commissions into the control and management of jetties and wharves in 1897 and again 1911 resulted in a new State Harbors Board being established as the authority controlling jetties.

From 1914 the Harbors Board policy favoured deep-water ports with facilities to service large districts. Bulk handling of grain further reduced the number of export jetties, road transport competed with intrastate shipping and coastal trade waned. By 1957 the Harbors Board maintained more jetties for recreation and fishing purposes than for shipping.

During the 1970s the Department of Marine and Harbors began to demolish all or parts of unprofitable jetties to reduce maintenance costs. Restructuring from 1989 led to the new South Australian Ports Corporation (now 'Flinders Ports') controlling commercial shipping jetties such as those at Port Adelaide, Port Lincoln, Port Pirie, Port Giles, Klein Point, Thevenard and Wallaroo. (excluding privately owned jetties, such as BHP's at Whyalla and Mobil Oil's at Port Stanvac).

Around this time, the State again sought to transfer or lease many remaining jetties and wharves to Local Government. Whilst some Councils rebuffed the approach from the Government, under threat that the structures would be demolished if the Council did not take on management and maintenance responsibility, many felt the risk of losing a key community recreation and tourism asset was too great and entered a lease arrangement.

In 1993 the then Department of Marine and Harbors compiled a *Facilities Hazard and Condition report* into the state's recreational jetties, which estimated the cost to minimise hazards would be in the order of \$1.1 million, plus \$4.2 million for a five-year maintenance program. In 1996, the State Government allocated \$12.8 million for the repair and upgrade of recreational jetties to bring them to an acceptable standard as part of the transfer to Councils for day-to-day management and maintenance.

There is now a substantial disparity of ownership and management responsibility of recreational jetties and wharves across the state that has created a complex and inequitable system for local ratepayers and communities. There are also several critical, emerging issues in relation to pending expiry of leases, asset deterioration, inconsistency in co-contributions from the Government and the financial impost facing Councils to undertake the necessary repair, upgrade and in some cases, replacement works needed to maintain these structures in safe working order into the future.

Several Councils have cited that DPTI historically provided financial assistance to purchase materials for repair and upgrade work, however, following an internal review of the program by DPTI, this support ceased several years ago. It is understood that, whilst the financial support was welcome, there were serious flaws in its implementation, with grants allocated at an equal, flat rate per Council, not per asset. This meant Councils with only one jetty under their care and control received the same level of funding as Councils with multiple DPTI assets to manage.

Current Status

Today, there are around 100 public recreational jetties and wharfs across metropolitan and country South Australia, with an additional number of commercial and private facilities. Ownership, responsibility for maintenance, funding support, lease terms and conditions vary across the state.

Thirty-six recreational jetties and wharves are owned by DPTI and leased to Councils. This occurs in –

- Port Augusta (Eastside and Westside)
- Ceduna (Ceduna, Denial Bay, Smoky Bay)
- Cleve (Arno Bay)
- Copper Coast (Port Hughes)
- Holdfast Bay (Glenelg)
- Tumby Bay (Tumby Bay, Port Neill)
- Yankalilla (Normanville, Second Valley)
- Lower Eyre Peninsula (North Shields, Coffin Bay, Mount Dutton Bay, Louth Bay)
- Onkaparinga (Port Noarlunga)
- Yorke Peninsula (Wool Bay, Stansbury, Port Victoria, Point Turton, Marion Bay, Edithburgh, Sultana Point, Ardrossan, Port Rickaby, Port Julia, Port Vincent)
- Kangaroo Island (Emu Bay)
- Streaky Bay (Haslam)
- Alexandrina (Port Elliot)
- Mount Remarkable (Port Germein)
- Port Lincoln (town jetty)
- Robe
- Kingston and
- Elliston.

Thirty-nine recreational jetties and wharves across the state are all owned and fully maintained by the State Government (DPTI) including:

- Kingscote, Penneshaw, American River and Vivonne Bay (Kangaroo Island);
- Adelaide Shores (West Torrens)
- Beachport and Southend (Wattle Range)
- Brighton (Holdfast Bay)
- Cape Jaffa (Kingston)
- Coffin Bay (Lower Eyre Peninsula)
- Cowell (Franklin Harbour)
- Henley and Grange jetties (Charles Sturt)

- Rosetta Head and Granite Island (Victor Harbor)
- Port Broughton (Barunga West)
- Port Kenny and Venus Bay (Elliston)
- Port Lincoln No. 1 berth (Port Lincoln)
- Port MacDonnell (Grant)
- Port Wakefield (Wakefield)
- Cape Jervis and Rapid Bay (Yankalilla)
- Largs Bay, Semaphore, North Arm, Outer Harbor (Port Adelaide Enfield)
- Streaky Bay (Streaky Bay)
- Moonta Bay and the Wallaroo Spur jetty (Copper Coast)
- Port Augusta Eastside wharf and Great Western timber bridge are owned and maintained by Council, following their 'gifting' from the State Government in 1971
- The Solomontown and Port Davis jetties in Port Pirie, the Whyalla jetty, boat ramp, marina loading wharf/moorings, Point Lowly Wharf and marina moorings, the Narrung and Meningie jetties in the Coorong, are all owned and maintained by Council.
- Alexandrina Council manages 11 public jetties, the Beacon 19 barrage and Goolwa wharf on behalf of the Department of Environment and Water. The Council also administers the annual licence for a further 219 privately owned jetties, under a 1964 arrangement with the Department for Environment and Water.
- The Innes National Park jetty on Yorke Peninsula is fully owned and maintained by DEW.
- Boat ramps/jetties/pontoon infrastructure at Solomontown (Port Pirie Council) and Cape Jervis (Yankalilla) are owned and maintained by Council, on land leased from DPTI. The Yankalilla lease can be terminated by giving one month's notice.

Recent Issues and Trends

Lease Arrangements and Expiry

Several leases are close to expiry, with the assets close to the end of their life. There is a strong desire by many Councils to either revoke the lease altogether, or to ensure a consistent and united approach to renegotiation is taken by Local Government across the state. Lease terms vary across the state anywhere between 1 and 99 years. Alexandrina Council's Horseshoe Bay jetty at Port Elliot is subject to an annual lease with DPTI.

The first of the long-term leases due to expire is Tumby Bay in December 2024, followed by Port Neil, Haslam, North Shields, Coffin Bay, Mount Dutton Bay, Arno Bay, Ceduna, Denial Bay, Smoky Bay, Emu Bay and Port Noarlunga all between 2025 and 2028.

Port Vincent, Point Turton, Marion Bay, Edithburgh, Ardrossan, Port Rickaby, Port Julia, Normanville, Second Valley, Stansbury, Port Victoria, Penneshaw, Wool Bay, Glenelg and Kingston don't expire until approximately 2048-2051, with Port Hughes, Port Pirie's Berth 1 and 3 and Port Augusta not until 2099-2100.

Funding, Lease and Management Inconsistencies

Whilst not responsible for any maintenance of the Port Broughton jetty, the Barunga West Council does assist DPTI with minor emergency maintenance for safety/risk purposes, from time to time. DPTI are also asking Council to maintain the channel markers. The Port Wakefield Boat ramp and wharf are both DPTI owned and maintained, yet Council is responsible for maintaining the channel. Conversely, In Onkaparinga, (O'Sullivan's beach boat ramp), DPTI own and manage the boat ramp and facilities but want Council to build a new pontoon and carpark.

Whilst some lease arrangements between DPTI and Council provide that the Council will pay the cost of the first \$10,000 (CPI adjusted since 2001) towards repair for significant damage by vandalism, fire,

earthquake, storm or other act of third party, with the State Government to fund the balance, others appear to only be able to claim this Government support for storm damage.

Several leases contain a special condition that after 15 or 25 years, the Council can terminate the lease if, based on engineering advice, the structural integrity of the jetty has deteriorated at a greater rate than that expected by the Council. Many Councils are seeking to test this clause.

Some lease agreements require that Councils must maintain the jetty to an agreed standard, generally to above 30% of the life of the asset.

Asset Deterioration

The Port Augusta Council has very recently demolished the DPTI leased Eastside Mill Jetty, which had been closed since 2014 after engineering reports found a range of structural issues that rendered the structure unsafe. Whilst the situation in Port Augusta has reached a particularly critical point, there are several Councils across the state facing similar issues.

The Kingston jetty is currently closed due to lower landing damage, the Port Noarlunga jetty stair access is closed following storm damage, the Port Lincoln town jetty has no lateral strength, Port Pirie F jetty mooring has structural issues and cannot be used.

Tumby Bay jetty is in poor condition with major renewal works estimated at \$2.5 million required. Glenelg also requires significant maintenance works at Council expense. The Cleve District Council budgeted \$60,000 in 2017/18 to replace 6 piles and repair a set of stairs for the Arno Bay jetty. The Robe jetty is in poor condition and of limited community value, with Council open to demolishing.

Next Steps

Across the state, Councils are considering several options to try and find a financially sustainable solutions for recreational jetty and wharf infrastructure. These include:

- Seeking support of the LGA to commence a collective negotiation for development of a new jetty lease arrangement (note Tumby Bay has submitted this to the April OGM of the LGASA)
- Coordinating a statewide audit of jetties/wharfs to determine the costs to fully upgrade/repair this infrastructure, rather than continue to maintain at a minimum standard, with a view to preparing a collective funding bid to Commonwealth.
- Council to hand back lease to the State Government, and
- Asset demolition.

Councils and their communities will have different needs and views on the future of their local jetties and wharves. As such, there will not be a universal solution across the state, but instead, a range of measures.

Fundamentally however, it will be important that the full range of measures are explored and developed collectively and that cost-sharing arrangements are redefined in a more transparent and equitable way and do not create a financial burden on local ratepayers alone, especially in rural and regional areas.

Given the pending expiry of the first tranche of long-term DPTI leased jetties within the next five years and the perilous state of many assets, it will be important that local government starts to explore the full range of options to safeguard for the future management, maintenance and repair of recreational jetties/wharves sooner, rather than later.

References:

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Feedback from South Australian Coastal Councils Dec 2018 – February 2019



Tumby Bay Jetty – photo credit Adam Gray