

Judge Report

CLEAN BEACHES 2014

Whyalla, South Australia



Keep Australia Beautiful National Association

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Introduction

Community

Whyalla, South Australia

Population

23,000

Date judged

20 May 2014

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Overview

The beauty and amenity of Whyalla's foreshore is newly emerging as a result of substantial investments in new parks, gardens and infrastructure. The Council's ongoing efforts have delivered the community a new capacity to enjoy and appreciate the city's coastal and wetland environments, and have greatly enhanced the City's ability to make the most of their uniquely beautiful beach, dune, wetland and marine environments.

Leadership by the local council, and partnerships with industry, government, clubs and community groups, has provided not only a more stable beach environment, but is also delivering programs to educate locals and tourists alike.

Greater focus on building partnerships with local community groups, and in ensuring that local voices are heard in decisions around the management of all Whyalla's foreshore areas will give the City and its residents a stronger sense of connection with their beaches, and build broader and more cohesive networks of decision-makers from a wider range of stakeholder groups.

Community Action & Partnerships

Recognises achievement in community and civic beautification, presentation, health, wellbeing and pride. Also recognises partnerships between government, business, industry and local community networks.

The coastline around Whyalla, including the beaches adjacent to the City and the area's coast in general, has been benefiting from an ongoing program to enhance its amenity and accessibility. The works undertaken, which have been developed and led by the Council, have attracted support from the area's industrial residents such as OneSteel, as well as funding from state and Commonwealth Governments. The Council provides scope for the community to contribute to its vision for the area through calls for public comment and consultative forums such as the Foreshore Users Group.

Whyalla's coastline naturally falls into two areas. Firstly, the foreshore adjacent to the City, and secondly the recreation areas around Point Lowly.

Whyalla Foreshore

Beach stabilization, reconstruction and revegetation that has occurred along the Whyalla foreshore, demonstrates a significant commitment by Whyalla City Council to increase the beauty, accessibility and sustainability of the foreshore environment. With the guidance and support of local volunteers such as Heidi French, the Council works to keep the area free of weeds and clear of litter. Plans to increase improving the condition and area of the beach's dunes will be essential to ensuring the area's hard infrastructure remains sustainable.

As part of a joint venture with Rotary, the foreshore's Rotary Park has recently undergone an upgrade, with new paving, painting and the installation of four new monuments, celebrating the multicultural mix of people that have come to work in Whyalla.

The Whyalla Surf Lifesaving Association is based at the Foreshore, having regular meetings and training at the site. Members report that the investment in improving the foreshore environment has had a dramatic effect on the number of local people and tourists using the beach, and has increased the amount of time that people spend at the beach.

The area also provides fish cleaning and boat washing facilities, and it is one of Australia's premier kiteboarding sites. Whyalla City Council continues to consult with both these user

groups to ensure their needs are met regarding safe access to and from the beach, as well as providing an area to assemble and wash their equipment down after use.

It is also worth noting that Council has worked with industry partner OPAL to install adult playground facilities at the foreshore as part of the Council's Healthy Communities Initiative. These new facilities are well used, and are coupled with introductory fitness classes utilising this new fitness equipment.

Other local community groups that use this site include:

- Whyalla boat owners;
- Whyalla sports fishing club;
- Whyalla Yacht Club;
- Whyalla Air Sea Rescue.

Point Lowly coastline

Whyalla's northern coastline provides breathtaking scenic views, and is home to both the unique Stranded Shingle Dunes and the world famous Giant Cuttlefish. Much of the vision for this area has been developed by community members from the Cultana Jenkins Shackowners Association (CJSA). In the past, vehicles accessing the coastal areas and shingle dunes did significant damage to the areas environmental and heritage values, however Council, working in partnership with the Shackowners Association and the South Australian Government's Department of Water and Natural Resources, now effectively prevent further damage. Continuing efforts by the CJSA to close off inappropriate off-road tracks, to manage weeds, and to highlight the area's problems to Council demonstrate their commitment to effective stewardship of the area.

Point Lowly is also home to two of Whyalla's most popular sandy beaches. These two beaches are affected by invasive weeds, most of which appear to be garden escapees including succulent plants such as Aloes and Agaves. Council staff, Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA), Cultana Jenkins Shackowners Association (CJSA) and DEWNR staff continue to work together to limit the spread of weeds, as well as to educate the community on opportunities to plant endemic species that can also survive the harsh conditions and do not need to be irrigated.

Dame Phyllis Frost Litter Prevention

Recognises achievement in community litter management and reduction initiatives including the undertaking of litter audits, and litter education programs.

Council collects litter at the City foreshore on a daily basis, and weekly and bi-weekly in other less used zones further from the City. On the City foreshore, bins are provided in high traffic areas including butt-out bins. Public space recycling bins are limited at present, however the Council supports zero waste education initiatives and shows a commitment to improving the community's capacity and understanding for litter reduction and recycling.

Other aspects of management on the foreshore include:

- dog control areas;
- annual Clean Up Australia Day;
- a Council-sponsored graffiti busters program.

Resource Recovery & Waste Management

Recognises achievement in resource recovery and waste management including initiatives which conserve resources, recover and reuse materials and the appropriate disposal of non-recyclable materials.

Whyalla benefits from South Australia's container deposit programs, and recycling of containers associated with it is now deeply embedded in the daily lives of Whyalla's residents. As well, Whyalla has its own Waste and Resource Recovery Centre. This centre provides some services for local recycling, including:

- Creating mulch from local area green waste. This mulch is used by Council's Parks and Gardens team, as well as given away to the community for free, to encourage them to use the product, and improve the water efficiency of their private gardens;
- Recycling crushed concrete into road base, which is also a saleable product;
- Scrap metal is supplied to OneSteel which is used in their steel making processes;
- In the Council's foreshore rehabilitation work, palm trees used to provide the advanced landscape works were sourced from local yards. These trees have the added benefit of being acclimatised to the Whyalla conditions, giving them a head start in their establishment.

Hummock Hill is one of Whyalla's most visited tourist sites, as it provides a great vantage point to view the coast, the city, and OneSteel operations. Much work is currently underway at Hummock Hill, which showcases opportunities to use recycling materials, such as:

- Recycled furniture, bollards, rumble bars and wheel stops;
- The old railway sleepers that were used to create the original retaining walls at the site, were recycled to create habitat for the resident Gidgee Skinks (*Egernia stokesii*);
- a new walking track that is separated from the vehicular traffic by 480 recycled plastic rumble bars.

Environmental Protection & Innovation

Recognises innovative principles and actions associated with developing sustainable communities. Also recognises protection of the natural environment focusing on the conservation of native flora and fauna.

As well as the work underway controlling weeds and off-road vehicles in the Point Lowly area, Whyalla cares for and showcases its local environmental assets through work to improve and conserve its foreshore dunes and coastal wetlands.

Council has been working to recreate self-sustaining frontal dunes at the Whyalla Foreshore. On the advice of coastal engineers, Council has carted sand from just offshore and placed against it against the new sea wall to protect the City's main beach from the actions of the sea. Council continues to direct seed the dunes, and to establish vegetation which will give the new dunes robustness required to deal with storms and high tides. The re-created dune system is also designed to provide valuable habitat for the native fauna.

The creation of the Whyalla Wetlands has been an ongoing process, since the first sod was turned in 1994. The Rotary Club of Whyalla has made significant contributions, including the construction of a shelter/BBQ area. The wetland vegetation and habitat is steadily improving through initiatives such as National Tree Day planting programs, and Council reports that now birds not normally seen in Whyalla are frequenting the site. The Whyalla wetlands are fed with storm water and groundwater, which is filtered by the system, before ultimately flowing out to sea adjacent to the main City foreshore area.

There are also significant environmental benefits arising from the Hummock Hill Heritage project, including:

- Maintenance of habitat for the resident Gidgee Skinks;
- Use of local endemic native vegetation which, once established, needs very little irrigation;
- Designed to be low maintenance and self-sustaining.

Also, Council is investing time in the Newton Street landfill beautification. This program aims to enhance the vegetation growing on the cap of the City's old landfill site, using mulch from the Whyalla Waste and Resource Recovery Centre. This process is utilising a useful resource that would otherwise need to be buried in landfill, as well as enhancing the old landfill site, making it more beautiful, and more habitable for the native plants and animals that exist at the site.

Water Conservation

Recognises sustainable water management within communities which has combined innovative water conservation and water re-use initiatives at the private, industrial and municipal levels, benefiting society and nature.

It is worth noting that GSBC have for many years had a policy whereby all new dwellings and extensions are required to install a 10,000 litre water tank for the collection and use of roof water. The effect of this on the community's understanding of the value of water is difficult to quantify, however it suggests there is an understanding of water as a limited and precious resource.

As well as this, there are a number of water-saving elements in use at Raspins Beach including:

- Timed water saving taps;
- Dual flush toilets;
- Waterless urinal in the male toilets;
- Use of native plants in re-vegetation which, once established, require no watering.

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council have been involved in the production and distribution of native garden brochures in an effort to encourage residents to plant natives and be water-wise.

Energy Innovation

Recognises sustainable energy management which focuses on innovative energy efficiency measures and climate change issues

Council is currently developing their Strategy for an Environmentally Sustainable Whyalla. Current initiatives that are relevant to this category include:

- Use of solar hot water in the foreshore's marina toilets and shower block, as well as in Whyalla's newly re-developed Leisure Centre.
- Solar panel installation on the Library Mount Laura Homestead, Civic Building and the Council Depot Visitor Information Centre.
- Successful Local Government Energy Efficiency Program (LGEEP) application.

Heritage & Culture

Recognises how communities proudly preserve and value cultural history.

Hummock Hill is one of the most visited sites in Whyalla, particularly because of the outstanding views it provides over the City's beach, foreshore and industrial developments. Beautifying the Hummock Hill site has provided an opportunity not only to create environmental assets such as the newly secured Gidgee Skink population, but also to highlight the area's military heritage. Hummock Hill is State Heritage Listed, as it is the location of WWII Gun Emplacements which were built to protect Whyalla's Steel Works and Ship Building facilities. As part of the successful refurbishment of the site, Council ensured that local Aboriginal representatives were consulted.

Whyalla's beach and foreshore plays host to:

- Annual Snapper fishing Championship held at the Foreshore and Marina;
- Annual Fishy Fringe festival, sponsored by OneSteel, Council and various community groups;
- Australia Day celebrations;
- Whyalla Kite Boarders.

Young Legends

Recognises environmental achievement through youth initiative and/or by a community, which encourages and promotes youth initiative and environmental education programs and/or achievement.

There are many facilities for Whyalla's young people associated with the foreshore, including the Surf Club and Kite Boarding Club and Whyalla is home to junior kiteboarding champions.

Council reports that Stuart High School students helped with the planting of the native vegetation at Hummock Hill, in National Tree Planting Day at the Whyalla Wetlands, in Clean Up Australia Day activities, and are involved in sport or scientific studies through school activities on the foreshore.