

SA Heritage Register

Nomination form

South Australian HERITAGE COUNCIL

To help your nomination be successful, please fill out this form with as much information as possible.

Feel free to expand the answer fields as much as you require or append information to the form.

Please note that places which have been nominated during past three years will not be reconsidered by the South Australian Heritage Council unless you can provide significant new information not provided through the previous nomination and assessment.

For assistance with this form you may contact:

Your local historical society or heritage adviser may be of assistance OR you may telephone an assessment officer in Heritage South Australia on (08) 8124 4960.

A. Nominated Place

1. Name					
Name of Place / Object:	Great Western Bridge				
Any other or former name(s):	Old Great Western Bridge				
Is the place already on another heritage list?	Not known, but should have been listed previously under both State and Local Heritage registers. It has not been, for unknown reasons.				
2. Location					
Street Address:	Adjacent to Joy Baluch Bridge Victoria Parade Port Augusta				
	Suburb / Town: Port Augusta Post Code: 5700				
Local Council Name:	Port Augusta City Council				
Land Description: (if known)	Title:	Volume:	Folio:	Parcel Type:	Parcel No:
	Plan Type:	Plan No:	Section:	Hundred:	
GPS Location/s: (If known)	Longitude / Easting / X 32°29'06.9"S		Latitude / Northing / Y (Datum =) 137°45'47.0"E		

3. Ownership	
Name of Owner(s):	
Contact person: (if different from owner explain relationship)	
Postal Address:	
Phone Number:	
Ownership History:	

4. Nominator (your details)	
Your Name/s:	
Organisation/Position:	
Daytime Phone:	
Postal Address:	
Email Address:	

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B. Description

5. Description of nominated place or object	
Description of the nominated place or object and its current condition:	Timber Vehicle Bridge Spanning Spencer Gulf at Port Augusta. Bridge is in some disrepair and has some current structural issues. However it could be stabilised and managed.
Are you aware of any modifications or additions to the place or object? Can you provide dates for these changes?	in 1944 the Bridge was widened to enable the Morgan Whyalla pipeline to cross the gulf utilising the bridge structure to support the pipeline .
Do you believe there may be historical items under the ground? Should an archaeological investigation be considered?	Uncertain. It is possible that there may be historical items submerged under or near the bridge and may be worthy of further investigation.
Date you inspected the place or object:	Numerous dates regularly over the last several years with the last inspection 3/6/23
Have you had any contact with the Owner?	Yes, [REDACTED] Members of the public have spoken to numerous Members of parliament, / Local Council / sub-contractors / members of the public
Current use of the place or object:	Currently barricaded, needing some repairs. Suitable for pedestrian traffic, or marine activities
Original or former use(s):	Initially Vehicle and working animal traffic connecting Eastern and Western South Australia, Morgan-Whyalla pipeline route, later in time foot traffic, pedestrian and cycle path, General Recreation, recreational fishing, community events (e.g. annual Kids Crabbing Day), snorkelling and scuba diving.
Are there any current or long-term threats to the nominated place or object?	Urgent threat: Demolition, including removal and sale of timbers.
Name of Builder:	Atkins and Finlayson
Any other information:	<p>No alternatives to demolition are currently being considered, nor has an Environmental Impact Assessment been undertaken of the marine environmental significance or the Heritage significance of the structure.</p> <p>The only assessment that has been undertake is a cost estimate to repair the bridge for heavy (15 tonne) vehicular traffic. Alternatives need to be considered (IE for foot traffic / cycling or removing access) to enable the remnants to remain in situ.</p> <p>The bridge has Heritage significance at both Local and State level, and should have been listed under the Heritage Places Act well prior to this critical time. Not keeping this bridge would be a significant loss to South Australian bridge heritage overall, and to the transport history of western SA. A number of other bridges of heritage significance in Port Augusta have already been demolished in recent years, and the Great Western Bridge is the last remaining bridge representing an important part of western South Australia's transport history, and of South Australia's marine bridge transport history. Specifically, the Great Western Bridge was the first bridge over Spencer Gulf, and thus the first means by which eastern and western sides of SA were connected over Spencer Gulf.</p>

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	<p>The Great Western Bridge was key to Port Augusta being known as "Crossroads of Australia" (being the major east-west highway connecting Perth and Sydney), and also the north-south highway connecting Adelaide and Darwin. The bridge is thus a significant example of Port Augusta's and Eyre Peninsula's transport history and economic significance, when transport across Spencer Gulf by bridge that connected roads was the only route. Further, it is reported to be the longest wooden bridge structure remaining in SA; thus, it is a significant physical structure at State level. The bridge also carried the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline from the 1940s onwards throughout the 20th century. This water was key to Whyalla's Steelworks and enable BHP to erect a blast furnace. The heritage stonework at each end of the Great Western Bridge came from a 19th century hotel in Pichi Richi pass. The bridge has Heritage values similar to the nearby Wharf, which is protected under the State Heritage Act. Conversations with people within government have confirmed that the Great Western Bridge is of State Heritage significance and a nomination should be made urgently. There are several points under the Heritage Places Act that the Great Western bridge undoubtedly satisfies, for immediate State listing.</p>

C. History

6. Origins and history	
Years of Construction:	Start: 1926 Finish: 1927
Name of Designer / Architect:	Local Government
History of the nominated place or object:	<p>Before the construction of this bridge, the only way to cross Spencer Gulf was by ferryboats and barges. The much longer overland route involved a journey of approximately 24 km north via Yorkey Crossing.</p> <p>A bridge was proposed in 1926, the Bridge was opened by the Minister for Local Government on 6 July 1927 and was named The Great Western Bridge. The bridge was the first structure to span a major water body that connected eastern and western South Australia.</p> <p>The stone used at each end of the bridge was obtained from the ruins of the historical hotel in the township of Saltia, Pichi Richi Pass. It was widened and strengthened in 1944 to carry the Morgan to Whyalla pipeline, which supplied Port Augusta with its only assured water supply and extended to Eyre Peninsula.</p>

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Historical sources used to support your nomination:

Please attach copies of pages from publications or newspaper articles as appropriate.

State Library of South Australia:

<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+23811>

Tour SA (undated): <https://www.toursa.com.au/listing/see-and-do-flinders-ranges-outback/great-western-bridge-2/>

State Library of SA (2010)

<https://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1057>

State Library of SA (2023)

- New Bridge across Spencer's Gulf:
<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+4156>
- Sheep at Port Augusta (crossing the Great Western Bridge):
<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+61935>
- The hulk of 'Old Jenny' at Port Augusta [B 60892]:
<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+60892>

Office of Rowan Ramsay MP (undated)

<https://www.rowanramsey.com.au/great-western-bridge-90sec/>

Wikipedia (2022) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joy_Baluch_AM_Bridge

Anderson, R. J. (1988) "Solid Town - The history of Port Augusta". Pages 150-157

District Council of Whyalla (undated) <https://www.whyalla.com/story-of-whyalla>

Donovan, P.F. (1991) *Highways: a history of the South Australian Highway Department*. Dept. of Road Transport, South Australia

Port Augusta Dispatch (1880), Newspaper article. 13th August 1880

Department of Environment and Water (2019) Six historic shipwrecks you can see in and around Port Augusta.

<https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/goodliving/posts/2019/11/port-augusta-shipwrecks>

DIT: Fact Sheet · February 2021 "Granite Island Causeway Project"

https://dit.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/781672/DOCS_AND_FILES-16635509-v1-GIC_History_Fact_Sheet_Jan2021_RP_V3.pdf

D. Heritage Significance

7. Statement of State Significance - Why is the place or object important to South Australia?

It is of State heritage significance because

The (Old) Great Western Bridge (GWB) is the longest remaining Timber Bridge over the sea in South Australia and a significant engineering structure, being of all timber construction. It was the first bridge across Spencer Gulf, and thus connected eastern and western South Australia (Eyre Peninsula and beyond) via sea crossing. The bridge enabled crossing of the gulf waters, and changed the relationship of the communities on the eastern and western side.

The GWB is significant to South Australia as it had a major impact upon transport across South Australia, through the "Crossroads" of Port Augusta. It allowed Port Augusta to develop and grow by being a key trade centre, and the bridge helped to open up transport and trade to Eyre Peninsula and also the northern parts of Australia. By carrying the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline, the Great Western Bridge provided Whyalla with the opportunity to build a smelter, which enabled BHP to be a major producer of steel and shipbuilding in South Australia, and nationally. This economic development, facilitated by connectivity across the Great Western bridge gave South Australia the opportunity to "boom" and become a major producer and industrial player. And thus, the GWB helps to reinforce the industrial and economic importance of western South Australia. As "Crossroads of Australia", the GWB has served both industry and travellers (national, State and local) alike.

The bridge is a notable landmark in the area, and is the only remaining historical bridge in Port Augusta. Inconsiderate of Heritage values, the other wooden bridges in Port Augusta were demolished in recent years without proper assessment of their State or Local heritage values, and the Great Western Bridge – the last remaining bridge of its kind in SA – is the most important of Port Augusta's bridges past and present, in State Heritage terms. Locals have significant connections and association with the bridge, as it links historical, economical, and social themes that are of importance to the local area. One example is the introduction of motor car transportation into western South Australia, and another is the early maritime history (e.g. old Jenny Wreck Barge No. 4 alongside the bridge, part of Port Augusta Ships' Graveyard that is promoted by DEW Maritime Heritage). The Wreck, which is local landmark, came from Mannum in the 1880s, was used on the River Murray until 1910, and then taken to Spencer Gulf to carry ore from Whyalla to the Port Pirie Smelters. Barge No. 4 (Old Jenny) was brought to Port Augusta in 1944 to carry materials used for the extension to the old Great Western Bridge. Thus, both the Bridge that crosses Spencer Gulf and the adjacent shipwreck together reflect part of the maritime history of Port Augusta, and of South Australia more widely.

The GWB has also provided a significant cultural and social place for many, with a history of recreational fishing and crabbing activities, including Kid's Crabbing Day, which has had to be moved in recent years since the bridge was closed to public access. GWB also provides unique habitat for a rarely seen, shallow water population of a threatened, legislatively protected marine species (*Hippocampus abdominalis* – the Potbelly Seahorse). GWB is also habitat for native shellfish, of cultural significance to First Nations people. GWB provides nursery habitat for young juveniles of commercially and recreationally important marine species in South Australia, such as Pink Snapper and Blue Swimmer Crab.

Whilst the GWB is in current disrepair due to a lack of maintenance, the structure is intact, and the ability to structurally stabilise and ensure its longevity is possible, and highly recommended.

8. Significance Criteria

The South Australian *Heritage Places Act 1993* lists seven criteria by which places are assessed as 'State significant.' Please tick the criteria you feel the place demonstrates and explain your reasons.

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☒ It demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history.

- Before the construction of this bridge, the only way to cross Spencer Gulf (and thus to link eastern South Australia and western South Australia and beyond) was by ferryboats and barges. The much longer overland route involved a journey of approximately 24 km via Yorkey Crossing.
- The GWB was the first structure across the entire span of Spencer Gulf, and thus bridged a previous sea barrier to connecting eastern and western South Australia, and connecting southern Australia via a sea-land connector.
- The bridge resulted in Port Augusta being known as "Crossroads of Australia" and the "Gateway to the Outback", being the major east-west highway connecting Perth and Sydney, and also the north-south highway.
- GWB linked the two parts of Port Augusta - East and West. Until 1927 Port Augusta West remained largely a separate community, and its amalgamation with the town council for Port Augusta coincided with the building of the Great Western Bridge across the Gulf (State Library of South Australia 2010).
- Within a week of the GWB opening, a bus service was commenced, that serviced east and west; water and electricity were able to be provided to the west Port Augusta, and sheep and cattle were regularly driven across the gulf, via the bridge. *Such was the use of the bridge that within a month of opening, signs were erected requesting motorists to slow down while restrictions were placed on stock traffic.*
- *The building of the bridge ... realised an old dream of annexing vast hinterlands for the Port, Already Business has been attracted ... 75% of the Eyre peninsular trade could be attracted from Port Lincoln through Kimba to Port Augusta" (Anderson P154-155).*
- GWB provided water to Whyalla (via the Morgan-Whyalla Pipeline that crossed the bridge) and enabled the BHP steelworks to develop, and to operate a Blast furnace. This resulted in major industry for the State of South Australia, including steel production and ship-building.
- The stonework used at each end of the GWB was obtained from the ruins of the hotel at Saltia in the Pichi Richi Pass, an historically significant location in SA's transport history. The late 19th century railway from Port Augusta through Pichi Richi Pass to Quorn was part of the first stage of the Great Northern Railway, intended to link Port Augusta with Darwin.

☒ It has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance.

- Historic (19th and early 20th century) timber bridges are now rare in South Australia and nationally, and there are inadequate efforts to maintain them. For example, the State Heritage-listed 1877 Angle Vale wooden bridge collapsed in May 2023, 2 weeks before planned stabilisation and restoration works. The same fate should not befall the Great Western Bridge, the only wooden bridge that crosses Spencer Gulf, and one of the few remaining wooden bridges anywhere in South Australia. Another of South Australia's only remaining timber bridges over ocean in the 21st century – the original 120-year-old Granite Island Causeway – has been demolished, despite a previous Heritage assessment attesting to the value of retaining that historic structure.

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The Granite Island Causeway was one part of a State Heritage listed item described as, Granite Island Causeway, Screw-pile Jetty, Breakwater & Cutting. The listing recognised the historical significance of the elements as port facilities that were built to serve as the ocean port for the River Murray trade. The Causeway was a State Heritage Place in the SA Heritage Register, yet it was demolished against public recommendation. Ten thousand people signed a petition to retain the original Causeway bridge, next to the new concrete causeway at Victor Harbor. Similar to the ill-fated Granite Island Causeway, GWB can thus be considered to be of significant State heritage value as a rare example of its type.

- B2 Rare / Uncommon or Endangered Natural Features: the Great Western Bridge has remained in place for almost a century (i.e. 97 years as at 2023) and over that time the piles of the structure have become an ecologically important habitat as a built reef / artificial reef. The GWB reef supports many species - including attached fauna (such as "old growth" sponges that filter seawater and improve water quality); large "lace coral" bryozoan colonies that take many years to grow; threatened species (such as a rare, shallow water / nearshore population of Potbelly Seahorse – see information below); other species of social and research interest (e.g. healthy populations of large, spectacularly coloured and patterned sea slugs / nudibranchs), and is a nursery habitat for commercially and recreationally important fished species in Spencer Gulf, such as Pink Snapper *Pagrus auratus*, Blue Swimmer Crab *Portunus armatus* and other fisheries species of value to fishers in South Australia. There is photographic evidence of these species using reef that has developed from the wooden bridge piles, for resting, shelter and feeding. The reef habitat that has developed from the submerged bridge structures also provide habitat for native shell fish (mussels / oysters) that are of cultural significance to the Bungala and Nukunu First Nations groups.
- B2 Rare / Uncommon or Endangered Natural Features (continued): The wooden piles that hold up GWB support a significant population of *Hippocampus abdominalis* (Potbelly Seahorse). This species is legislatively-protected under *Fisheries Management Act* in SA, and also the Commonwealth *EPBC Act*, and is rare in shallow waters in South Australia. Most examples in SA are specimens hauled up from trawl grounds (and thus completely unprotected), and the Great Western Bridge population this is the only resident one in SA, known to occur in shallow water, near a town / city. The south-eastern Australian species Potbelly Seahorse *Hippocampus abdominalis* at the western edge of the geographic range here in SA, and also at the northern end of its SA distribution in Port Augusta. It is also the only known population in SA that is accessible for research, diving and photography. These animals are strongly site associated and non-migratory and significantly threatened by demolition of the Great Western Bridge's structural habitat and the associated marine life that support the seahorse population.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bridge is within is a Habitat Protection Zone of the Upper Spencer Gulf Marine Park, and the bridge piles form environmentally significant, century-old built habitat for many marine species, some of which are documented in this nomination. The physical presence of the bridge has enabled additional habitat to form, due to sediment entrapment. The habitat structure that is created oceanographically over time thus enables marine species larvae to settle and grow, and persist over time. • Ecologically significant "de facto" artificial reefs of timber construction in SA, that have developed naturally over decades / a century as the subsurface structure of historic jetties and bridges, are increasingly rare in South Australia, and of social and cultural significance, as well as their ecological and other environmental values. A prime example is the old Rapid Bay jetty timber structure from the 1940s: the marine fauna associated with those wooden jetty piles attract thousands of SCUBA divers per year, from SA, and around Australia and internationally. • The jetty piles in place for 97 years form an important artificial reef habitat for many other species, including species of interest for research, and for diving and photography.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the State's history, including its natural history.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bridge was the first to connect eastern and western South Australia, and from 1927 onwards, had a significant role in the development of transport across South Australia and the provision of goods and services to and from Eyre Peninsula. • The bridge was used regularly for transport throughout the 20th century (and later for recreation), and is thus connected with South Australia's economic, social and cultural history. Some items under the bridge may be of archaeological significance and worthy of investigation. • The 19th century stonework at each end is connected with Australian's regional transport history (Pichi Richi Pass) and historic buildings (Saltia Hotel).
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place Type: Bridge. Class: Timber Bridge: Understood to be the longest Timber Bridge remaining in SA. Historic timber bridges from the 19th century and early 20th century are increasingly rare in South Australia, due to degradation and lack of maintenance over time. Very few remain, particularly maritime bridges, and this is the only example across a stretch of ocean / sea remaining in South Australia. (<i>For details, see Criterion B: Rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance</i>). • D2 Integrity: The GWB remains intact and is a visible, largely undamaged example of early 20th century timber, maritime bridge construction in South Australia. • Before recent closure, the bridge was previously promoted in South Australia as a heritage tourism destination (e.g. https://www.toursa.com.au/listing/see-and-do-flinders-ranges-outback/great-western-bridge-2/)

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stone used at each end of the bridge was obtained from the ruins of the hotel at Saltia in the Pichi Richi Pass, an a historically significant location • The (Old) Great Western Bridge (GWB) is one of the longest remaining Timber Bridges in South Australia and a significant engineering structure being of all timber construction. • Criterion E1 – Solution to a Technical Issue in the 20th Century: The GWB was the first bridge across Spencer Gulf, and greatly helped the crossing of the Gulf for transportation of people, working animals, goods and services. Constructing the bridge thus aided regional development across western South Australia and beyond. • The bridge is a significant visual landmark in the Port Augusta area and the only remaining example of historic wooden bridge construction in that area.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It has strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community or a group within it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building of the GWB changed the relationship of the communities on the eastern and western side of Spencer Gulf and enabled connection of peoples who were previously isolated by a water barrier. • GWB has been a key component of recreation for many Port Augusta locals over decades, and in particular, a focal area for marine recreation (fishing / crabbing) • Many Port Augusta Locals have significant memories and associate the GWB with economically significant events, recreational activities and historical events. • The GWB reef structure also provides habitat for Native shellfish (mussels / oysters), species which are of cultural significance to the Bungala and Nukunu First Nations groups. Some interest has been expressed by Nukunu reps in repopulating the area with native shellfish.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1944 the GWB was widened to enable the Morgan Whyalla pipeline to cross Spencer Gulf. During the ensuing decades whilst the bridge supported the pipeline, that physical connection enabled significant industrial, economic and social development of western South Australia to occur.

E. Additional Information

9. Images/Maps/Diagrams/Site Plans

A full range of images including maps, site plans, and photographs will help your nomination.

Please provide:

- a clear outline of the place or object being nominated within any maps or plans provided
- high quality images of the place or object (please list the total number of images being provided)
- the subject of each image
- the date each image was created
- the author of each image, and
- the copyright holder of each image (if known)

Paste images here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/124637023@N03/albums/72157720016825701>



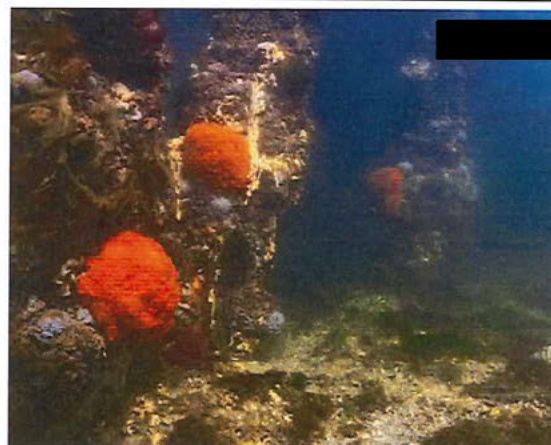
Google maps 7/6/23 Three bridges PTA



Google maps street view 7/6/23



3/6/23 Old Great Western Bridge (GWB) Western side looking east / south



3/6/23 Extensive old marine growth GWB Pylons

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3/6/23 GWB



3/6/23 Extensive old
marine growth GWB Pylons



5/1/23 View of GWB from Joy Baluch concrete bridge



<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+23811>



GWB, with Barge No. 4 ("Old Jenny")
in upper left side of image



Juvenile Snapper 24/5/2021



Blue Swimmer Crab 02/10/2017

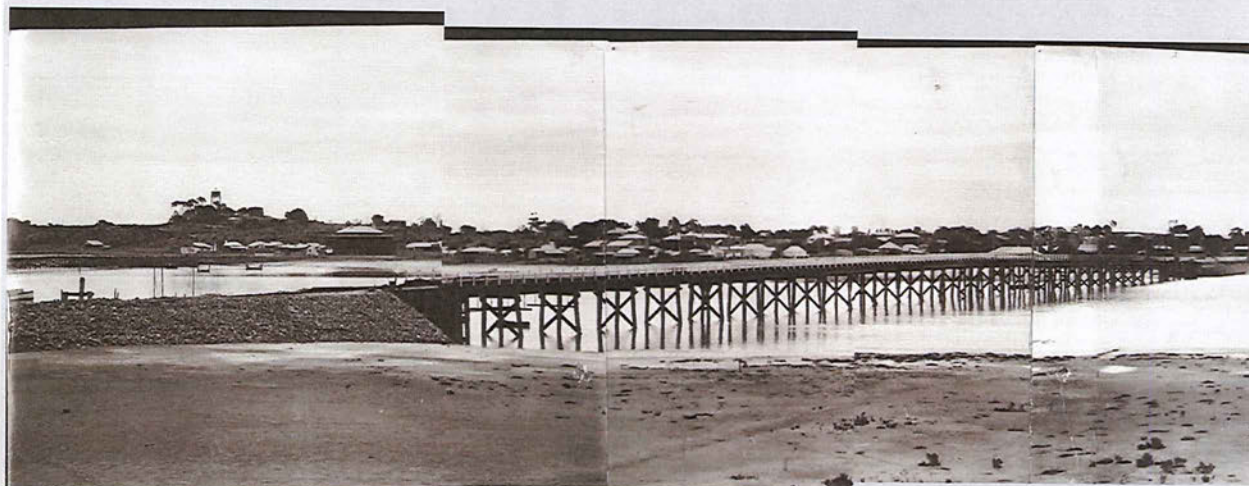


Photo of Great Western Bridge when built, in 1927: <https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+4156>



Sheep crossing Great Western Bridge: <https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+61935>



19 / 8/2017 Environmentally significant, shallow-water population of Potbelly Seahorse *Hippocampus abdominalis*, at the edge of its SE Australian biogeographical range in northern Spencer Gulf, and at the northern edge of its distribution in SA. This species is very rarely recorded in shallow waters in SA. (Recent images are also available).



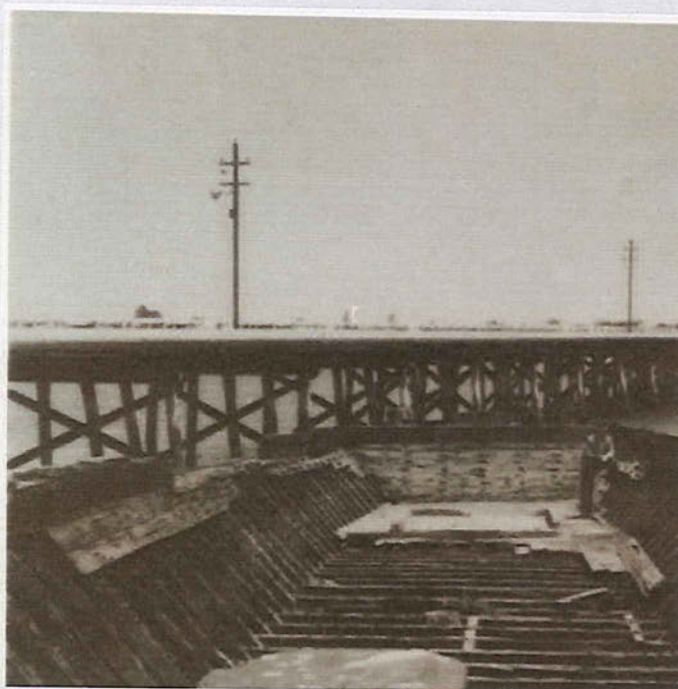
27/5/2018 Extensive old marine growth GWB Pylons



Various dates, small selection of large nudibranch species that inhabit GWB



Dendrodoris nigra



Hulk of Barge no. 4 (Old Jenny) which rests beside the Great Western Bridge, on the eastern bank:
<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+60891>

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The South Australian Heritage Council is committed to transparency in relation to the listing process and wishes to enhance public confidence in the nomination, listing and decision-making process. The Council's policy is to make nominations for State heritage listing and submissions on provisional entries publicly available via webpage or to interested parties. The Council will adhere to the Privacy Principles and your name and personal details will not be released.

We, [REDACTED] and others listed below, nominate Port Augusta's Great Western Bridge to be heritage listed under the Heritage Places Act.

The information I/we have provided is correct to my/our knowledge.

Your Signature/s:

Date: 19/6/23

Your Signature/s:

Date: 12/06/2023

Your Signature/s:

Date: 18/06/2023

Your Signature/s:

Date: 19/06/2023

Your Signature/s:

Date:

Your Signature/s:

Date:

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Nomination Form Checklist

Please check that your nomination includes:

- ☒ A clear indication of the location of the place or object (including map/s). Where a number of features are nominated, show the location of each and/or a boundary surrounding the significant elements of the site.
- ☒ A history of the place or object explaining important aspects relevant to the nomination.
This should generally help support arguments of cultural significance.
- ☒ A clear description of the nominated place or object/s.
- ☒ A statement of significance and indication on how the place or object satisfies one or more of the significance criteria.
- ☒ Have you taken the opportunity to discuss the nomination with a heritage assessment officer? It is strongly advised you to do so prior to submitting this nomination.

Email: DEWHeritage@sa.gov.au

Post: Executive Officer, South Australian Heritage Council

Department for Environment and Water

GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001