



**Reimagine KI - Seal Bay**

# **Seal Bay Framework: community vision, guiding principles, opportunities and ideas**

**Prepared by: ProManage on behalf of the Seal Bay Community  
Reference Group for the Department for Environment and Water**

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# Contents

<b>Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgement</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Seal Bay Community Reference Group membership</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Reimagine engagement program</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Objectives and purpose of the Seal Bay Community Reference Group</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Phase 1 reimagine engagement summary</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Seal Bay vision</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Seal Bay guiding principles</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Seal Bay opportunities and ideas</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Future engagement and communications</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>32</b>

## Acknowledgement of Country

The Department for Environment and Water acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country.

The Department works in partnership with the First Peoples of South Australia and supports their Nations to take a leading role in caring for their Country.

# Abbreviations

Acronym	Term / definition
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CRG	Community Reference Group
CTOs	Commercial Tourism Operators
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DEW	Department for Environment and Water
FCNP	Flinders Chase National Park
KI / Island	Kangaroo Island
KIWT	Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail
NPWSSA	National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia
Parks	Collective term for the network of Conservation Parks and National Parks on Kangaroo Island
SATC	South Australian Tourism Commission
WPA	Wilderness Protection Area

*In what continues to be difficult circumstances, the Kangaroo Island community has been incredibly generous in sharing their time and contributing to the reimagine engagement program.*

*On behalf of ProManage and the Department for Environment and Water, we extend our thanks to everyone who has taken part - and in particular we thank the members of the Seal Bay Community Reference Group for their time, commitment, enthusiasm, ideas and contributions.*

## Seal Bay Community Reference Group members

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BUSINESS	Jayne Bates
DEW	Alana Binns
DEW	Mike Greig
ENVIRONMENT	Deb Laver
EDUCATION	Matt Linn
SCIENCE	Andy Young
TOURISM	Wes Newman
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TOURISM / BUSINESS	Leeza Irwin

This document has been endorsed by the Group and is acknowledged to be an accurate reflection of the discussions held and perspectives discussed and agreed.

The Group also acknowledges the contributions of Kangaroo Island Council, Kangaroo Island Food, Wine and Beverage Association and the Kangaroo Island Landscape Board as well as all other stakeholders, interest groups, businesses and members of the community who have provided their feedback throughout the Reimagine engagement program.



**Objectives and  
purpose of the Seal  
Bay Community  
Reference Group**

# Background

The combination of bushfires followed almost immediately by local, national and international travel restrictions due to COVID-19 have significantly impacted communities, businesses and individuals across Kangaroo Island.

This continues to be the case.

The South Australian Government has committed up to \$52 million of works to rebuild and rejuvenate Kangaroo Island's nature-based tourism economy, with a focus on the western Kangaroo Island parks and Seal Bay.

It is anticipated that these works will provide a boost to the local economy and help Kangaroo Island's nature-based tourism industry bounce back.

The Government furthermore committed to involving community and stakeholders on the island in a collaborative process to provide input towards what this investment to rebuild and rejuvenate Kangaroo Island's nature-based tourism economy could look like.

Seal Bay, while not fire-impacted, has been included given its importance to the visitor economy and the opportunity that the reimagine engagement process offers to assess how the current offering can be enhanced.

# Reimagine engagement program

A tailored engagement program was developed to support community, stakeholder and business input within the constraints and context of bushfire recovery and COVID-19.

## Phase 1:

- Publicly available survey, open for a period of 2.5 months
- Series of workshops, one on one meetings, presentations and small group meetings held on the Island and in Adelaide over a period of 1.5 months
- Three all-day drop-in sessions at Penneshaw, Parndana and Kingscote
- Email contributions via online Engagement Hub

584 people participated in the engagement program, contributing an estimated 591 hours of their time.

## Phase 2:

The Seal Bay Community Reference Group (the Group) was formed on completion of the Phase 1 engagement.

There are 10 members in the Group, comprising a cross-section of interests and businesses on the Island.

The key themes, ideas, concerns, opportunities and challenges identified in Phase 1 were used to structure the topics and issues to be explored in greater depth by the Group as part of Phase 2.

In addition the Group referred to and utilised the following to refine their thinking:

- Visitor personas based on tourism research and Department for Environment and Water (DEW) data.
- The Kangaroo Island brand values.
- A summary of desktop research conducted for DEW by an independent consultancy regarding best practice nature-based tourism and trends and potential opportunities for Kangaroo Island.

A summary of this information can be found in Appendix 1.

## Final deliverable of the engagement program

This framework document is the final outcome of the Reimagine engagement program as it relates to Seal Bay.

The Group acknowledges there is a second Community Reference Group relating to the Reimagine engagement program for Western Kangaroo Island Parks and believes both framework documents should be considered together when considering the whole network of experiences in Parks across the Island.

# Objectives and purpose

## The Seal Bay Community Reference Group was asked to:

- Review the feedback received from industry sectors and the community as it relates to enhancing the visitor experience at Seal Bay.
- Take account of tourism trends research and how it might relate to the visitor experience at Seal Bay.
- Reflect on the types of visitors travelling to the Island, what they are looking for in terms of experiences and how better to accommodate their interests.
- Explore the key themes that emerged from the Phase 1 engagement program to provide ideas and options for visitor experiences.
- Identify infrastructure options and ideas that might be needed to support visitor experiences.
- Explore visitor centre models consistent with broad industry sector and community feedback to identify options and ideas.
- Explore how Seal Bay fits within a broader network of experiences to encourage longer visitor stays and grow the visitor economy.
- Develop guiding principles to support activities, experiences and infrastructure development.

## Purpose of this document

This document will be one of the inputs used to inform a master plan to support the visitor experience at Seal Bay.

The Seal Bay Framework (this document) reflects the perspectives, ideas and opportunities put forward by the Kangaroo Island community, refined by the members of the Group.

The Group considers that if any of these ideas and opportunities are pursued, then the sentiments presented in this document be taken into account.

It is acknowledged that the Group is not a decision-making body and that DEW is the ultimate decision maker with respect to master planning for the visitor experience at Seal Bay.

The master planning process is likely to be informed by other inputs, facilitated by DEW, such as ecological considerations, feasibility studies, business case assessments, Government priorities and existing regulatory structures and legislation.

# Phase 1 reimagine engagement summary



# Engagement summary

**The following is a high level summary of what we heard from stakeholders and community in the Phase 1 engagement, which informed Seal Bay Community Reference Group discussions.**

## **About the Seal Bay visitor experience today**

- The visitor centre is viewed as somewhat tired and dated.
- The visitor centre is too small for visitor volume in busy periods.
- The visitor experience is impacted at peak periods due to high visitor volume, which appears misaligned with the Kangaroo Island brand promise.
- The importance of the sea lions as a critical part of the Seal Bay experience is recognised. In reimagining the experience at Seal Bay, the ongoing well being of the sea lion colony needs to be a priority.
- The visitor centre has poor visitor flow and queues cause bottle-necks.
- The car park suffers from poor traffic flow and capacity problems at peak times.
- There is a lack of seating inside and a lack of seating and shelters outside.
- A food and beverage offer is lacking.
- Existing toilets are sub-standard.
- Education, storytelling and interpretive opportunities are underdeveloped and lack space.
- The local community on the Island tends not to visit or take visitors to Seal Bay due to cost and visitor volume impacting the experience.
- Branding is inconsistent with other parks on the Island.

- In reimagining the Seal Bay visitor experience, it was felt development needs to be consistent with the Kangaroo Island brand values and support the breadth of visitors coming to Seal Bay, including taking the opportunity to reconnect with the local community to foster passion, advocacy and visitation.

## **Conservation first approach**

- The principle that DEW takes a conservation first approach on Kangaroo Island is widely supported across the community. This is not to the exclusion of visitors.
- What is sought is the careful management of visitor volume and the sensitive development of visitor experiences and infrastructure in ways that protect conservation values and areas that have seen little to no human impact.
- In National Parks and Conservation Parks, it is preferred that only existing impacted and disturbed areas are used for visitor infrastructure.
- Any form of light touch development that may be considered outside of these areas (such as new trails, shelters, seating etc) must be subject to a due diligence process to ensure a conservation first approach is maintained.
- With respect to Seal Bay every effort must be made to minimise impact on the sea lion colony, continuing to avoid key breeding sites and carefully managing visitor access and interaction.

## **Management of visitor experience (numbers)**

- Visitors come to Kangaroo Island to enjoy the wilderness, the views and landscapes, unique flora and fauna, peace and tranquility - experiences that are relatively "untouched" by humans.

- However, it is felt the ability to quietly enjoy the sights and sounds is lost at peak times at Seal Bay due to visitor volume and a lack of visitor dispersion. There is concern this will, over time, damage the reputation of the Island due to a disconnect between the brand promise and reality.
- Introducing the opportunity for other experiences, ensuring the one-way flow of pedestrian movement, creating spaces / nodes / viewing areas to slow movement and developing a visitor centre which is a destination in itself to hold people longer will help to manage this issue.

### **Future-proofing**

- Ensure visitor infrastructure is highly adaptable and flexible so it can adjust to current as well as future unknowns and circumstances, particularly in relation to visitor origin, expectations, type and volume.
- Design and build with a long-term view of 20 plus years as opposed to what we think might be needed now.
- Implement bushfire appropriate design and construction.

### **Take the time to do it right**

- Take the time to plan and build back better.

### **Technology and social media**

- Wi-fi should be available to visitors at key hubs in Parks. This supports the immediacy of involvement in citizen science initiatives, social media posts from Parks and itinerary research amongst other things.

### **Interpretation and storytelling / science and education**

- It is generally felt information, education and storytelling in the Parks is either inadequate and / or poorly done (too traditional in approach).
- Storytelling topics have the opportunity to go beyond a focus on iconic species and incorporate: First Nations, flora and fauna, geology and science, whalers and sealers, shipwrecks, primary production, fire and fire recovery, marine parks and more.

### **Bike riding and additional walking trails**

- Opening up more walking trails and bike trails of various difficulties and durations across the network of Parks on the Island is seen as a significant opportunity and something visitors are looking for, subject to appropriate guidelines and locations.

### **Night experiences**

- Night walks and other night-time experiences and events are an untapped opportunity.

### **Extend the visitor season**

- Businesses on the island state they are working to broaden the visitor season and in particular, encourage visitation in winter. This could be supported by Parks through experiences and promotional activity with supporting infrastructure.

### **Set the example**

- It is felt Parks should play a key role on the Island in setting the example for the sustainable development and operation of visitor infrastructure and facilities from the perspective of building materials, water and power, waste management, eco-friendly operations and so on.

### **Buy local**

- There is strong sentiment against the high proportion of imported, plastic souvenir items for sale and the lack of local product and produce in Parks. This is viewed as being out of sync with the expectations of the typical Kangaroo Island visitor looking for a nature-based, unique and authentic experience.

# Seal Bay Vision



# Seal Bay vision

The Group was asked to express in words how they would like a visitor to Seal Bay to describe their experience. These words and phrases were used to construct a vision for reimagining the visitor experience to Seal Bay.



## **The Group has agreed the following vision for Seal Bay.**

*At Seal Bay, the sea lions really do come first.*

*Visitors observe them in their natural environment, learning about them and all the other amazing flora, fauna, history and heritage found in this unique place.*

*The visitor centre is eco-friendly, fascinating and staffed by passionate local guides*

*The variety of things to see, do and learn combine to deliver a once in a lifetime experience that fosters repeat visitation and a commitment to supporting sea lion research and conservation.*



# Seal Bay guiding principles

# Guiding principles

The following principles have been established by the Group to guide the development of visitor experiences at Seal Bay. The Group considers key decisions in relation to future developments at Seal Bay should be able to demonstrate the application of these principles, where applicable, noting that other inputs will also impact decision making.

## Environment

- Conservation first: That an expanded tourism focus at Seal Bay may not necessarily be a negative impact to the landscape, as long as there is a genuine, conservation-first, knowledge-based ethos involved in developing further products and expanding the current focus.
  - While this Framework document focusses on visitor experience, conservation and the funding of conservation as core functions of park management must be retained.
  - Any change to visitor centre size and location needs to predominantly use existing impacted land / existing footprints.
  - Consideration can be given, if necessary, to expanding beyond the existing hardstand footprint on the basis that any such expansion is minimised, degraded areas or 'shoulder' areas to roads and existing car parking are first utilised and vegetation assessments are undertaken.
  - Vegetation areas within the existing car-park footprint can be removed and/or redesigned to accommodate better pedestrian / vehicle movement.
  - In the sea lion zone, boardwalks should remain elevated so as not to impede the movement of the animals.
- New and / or expanded boardwalk / path infrastructure will require appropriate due diligence in the design process including environmental impact, engineering and consideration of ongoing maintenance requirements.
  - Protect areas of high conservation value when considering the development of new infrastructure, experiences and facilities.
  - Development must be undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation, existing regulatory structures and other documentation such as current and future park management plans.
  - If there is a potential need for any expansion beyond the current development footprint, it is recognised that any such expansion will have some level of environmental impact. The primary aim should be to minimise any expansion beyond the current development footprint and to minimise any negative environmental outcomes if such an expansion becomes necessary. If there becomes a need to consider expansion beyond the current development footprint, a site specific assessment should be undertaken taking into account the following:
    - Establish feasibility within the framework of relevant legislation, existing regulatory structures and other documents such as park management plans and guidelines.
    - Assess the area as an ecological zone (ecological value).
    - Assess the aesthetic value of the landscape.
    - Engage appropriate specialists with Island specific knowledge to support / contribute towards these assessments.
    - Assess the proposed land use against the Guiding Principles within this Framework document.

## Visitor centre

- The Group strongly supports a new visitor centre that is a feature and destination in and of itself, with an inspiring and interesting design.
- Incorporate materials sympathetic to the environment which complement the landscape.
- In designing the building and the operating model, locally sourced and environmentally responsible suppliers, producers, materials and products are to be prioritised and incorporated where practicable.
- Set the example for the sustainable development and operation of visitor infrastructure and facilities from the perspective of building materials, water and power, waste management and eco-friendly operations.
- Ensure visitor infrastructure is highly adaptable and flexible so it can adjust to current as well as future unknowns and circumstances, particularly in relation to visitor origin, expectations, type and volume (with an assumption visitor numbers will continue to grow).
- Design and build with a long-term view of 20 plus years.
- Access for all – including those who are mobility impaired or have physical or mental disability.
- Design and build being mindful of efficient resourcing and maintenance requirements for infrastructure and facilities to ensure a consistent, quality experiences can continue to be offered, even if funding and resourcing arrangements change.
- Deliver functionality in design e.g. sliding all-weather doors, multi-use spaces that offer flexibility, durable building materials.
- Toilets must be environmentally appropriate, sufficient in number and in an appropriate location with external all weather access.
- Utilise the visitor centre to educate visitors in relation to waste, biosecurity and appropriate behaviour around the sea lions.
- Create a focus on story telling with supportive infrastructure (outdoor auditorium / amphitheatre), signage and quality interpretive materials.

- Broaden information provision and interpretation topics beyond a focus on sea lions and marine fauna to incorporate: First Nations, flora and fauna, geology and science, whalers and sealers, shipwrecks, fire and fire recovery and marine parks.
- Incorporate, to the greatest extent practicable, the sale of locally designed and produced (Kangaroo Island / South Australian) souvenirs and gifts in the retail outlet at Seal Bay.
- Avoid, to the greatest extent practicable, the sale of plastic, imported souvenirs and gifts in any retail outlet at Seal Bay, noting commercial realities and market trends.
- A food and beverage offer at Seal Bay should, to the greatest extent practicable, incorporate the sourcing and use of local produce (Kangaroo Island / South Australian).
- Separate pedestrians and vehicles where possible to improve safety and improve the flow of larger vehicles (coaches).

## Experiences

- Develop diverse experiences to disperse the visitor load and encourage them to linger, learn and discover.
- Create visitor experiences suitable for a wide cross-section of visitor types, interests and origins.
- Avoid the unmanaged flow of visitors by creating one way trail/boardwalk loops thereby enhancing the wilderness experience by reducing the numbers of visitors at any one location at any point in time.
- Visitor numbers on the actual beach at any one time should be limited to what research determines are numbers that do not impact on the health or behaviour of the sea lion colony and, in the absence of such research, should remain capped at 100.
- Ongoing monitoring of sea lion behaviour should occur to ensure that continued visitor presence on the beach does not negatively impact the sea lion colony.

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## **Fire**

- Implement bushfire appropriate design and construction in support of visitor safety.
- Consider how vegetation (fire resistant or low fuel load) can be used as part of the fire protection zone.

## **Other**

- Explore and implement mechanisms to facilitate visitor donations directly funding research and conservation projects and resources at Seal Bay, including the possibility of a partnership administered by DEW and a Kangaroo Island operated, community-based not for profit (e.g. a research position, adopt a sea lion, revegetate an area).
- Clearly demonstrate to the visitor the proportion of visitor spend (excluding donations) that is invested back into research and conservation at Seal Bay.

# Seal Bay opportunities and ideas



# Seal Bay opportunities and ideas

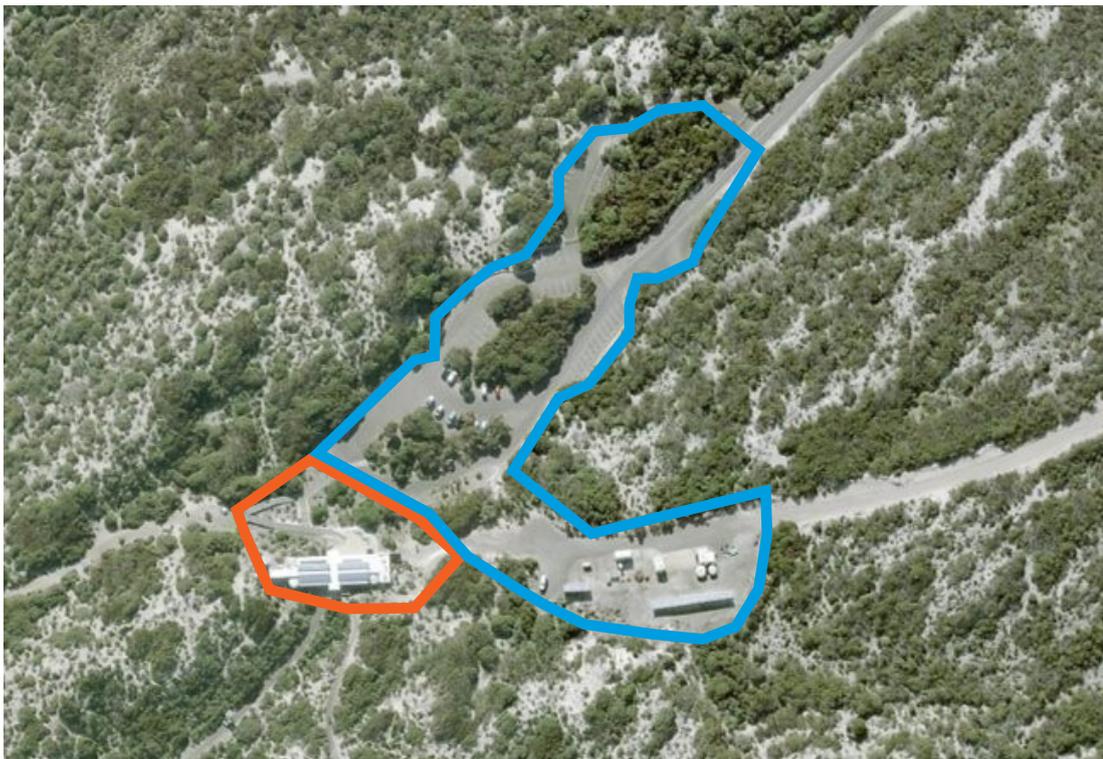
These ideas and opportunities are presented for further consideration and analysis by DEW.

## Visitor Centre and immediate surrounds

- **If a new visitor centre is to be contemplated for Seal Bay, it is recommended to be removed from the sea lion zone and be positioned somewhere within the existing hardstand footprint (inclusive of existing car park and maintenance area) maximising views of the landscape and coast (see Figure 1 on page 22).**
- The design, layout, capacity and functionality of the existing visitor centre is not commensurate with the Seal Bay vision and therefore a new visitor centre should be considered if possible.
- While upgrading the existing facility in the current location may be contemplated from a business case perspective, the Group does not consider this to be a sustainable long term option that adequately delivers on the vision.
- If a new visitor centre is to be contemplated, a different location within the existing hardstand footprint is preferred. This will enable:
  - The existing building to be removed completely from the sea lion zone.
  - Enable the area of the existing visitor centre to be rehabilitated and revegetated in areas not required for pedestrian access, thereby supporting the restoration of the sea lion habitat.
  - Enable new trails with mustering points and nodes in the area of the current visitor centre to be established to connect the new visitor centre with the existing trails, thereby further dispersing pedestrian traffic across a greater distance.
- It is acknowledged that to deliver a state of the art destination visitor centre development with views of the landscape, consideration may need to be given to annexing space adjacent to the existing hardstand area for the the building, part of the building or the car park. Should this be required, the guiding principles need to be applied, with the community engaged in the decision-making process and brought on the journey.
- Any new facility should incorporate innovative and striking design that blends with the landscape. Designs could contemplate two storeys and/or partially buried / underground spaces to maximise footprint and/or be above the ground - with the latter allowing for car parking and a CTO drop-off point to be retained underneath.
- Clever design and flexible use of space to allow for the following should be contemplated:
  - interpretive and education spaces
  - a retail offer
  - a food and beverage offer including a restaurant through to a cafe style facility offering lunch and coffee (all showcasing local produce)
  - a multi-use space for research, education, school groups, storytelling and events
  - toilet facilities
  - indoor and outdoor seating
  - space for research purposes
  - the opportunity to enjoy coastal views
  - an outdoor space for children suitable for a broad age range
  - an outdoor amphitheatre for education and storytelling

- While commercial realities are acknowledged, every effort should be made to design a building that maximises coastal views while being sympathetic to the surrounding landscape in scale and design.
- The visitor centre could potentially, dependent on design, offer an outdoor deck space for seating as well, linked to the food and beverage offer.
- Toilets should be sufficient in quantity to efficiently manage an influx of 50 visitors at the same time, environmentally and aesthetically appropriate for a state of the art facility and accessible from both within and outside the visitor centre.
- It is felt an outdoor amphitheatre should be discreetly designed and relatively compact, seating a maximum of 50 people (one busload) and easily accessible from the visitor centre. It is felt it should not require much in the way of “built” form and be immersed in the landscape using natural materials where possible and the natural shape and surfaces of the landscape. Seating is preferred to be removable for minimum impact and some form of shade / weather protection is viewed as necessary. It is anticipated the talks and presentations held here are primarily chargeable in some form, whether they be included in the ticket price as a package or available to purchase on arrival. The amphitheatre would also act as a multi-use space for school groups to utilise.

**Figure 1: Indicative revised visitor centre location and car park adjustments**



**Orange outline:** Rehabilitate and revegetate much of the existing visitor centre zone and return it to sea lion habitat, noting the area would accommodate new trails with mustering points and nodes to connect the new visitor centre with the existing trails.

**Blue outline:** Construct new visitor centre within footprint of existing car park.

Identify areas which can be used for additional car parking - to make up for what is lost as a result of moving the visitor centre - at the edge of the existing car parking zones and within pockets of vegetation within the existing car parking zone.

Better utilise this existing impacted land.

- Outdoor seating, some with tables to eat a picnic lunch, should be dotted around the visitor centre in appropriate locations. Access to these should be free.
- The existing impacted area which is used for solar panels and the research hut could be better utilised - this may or may not involve relocating the infrastructure in that area as part of the redesign of the entire Seal Bay facility.
- Consider private / public commercial partnerships to manage the centre and the facilities and to free up guides for interaction with visitors.
- For busy periods and peak days identify public / private land from which to run shuttle buses with visitors to the new facility.
- Make wi-fi reliably available within the visitor centre.
- Look at ways which help deter/prevent unauthorised access (i.e. those trying to bypass the visitor centre and payment to access the sea lions and the beach).
- A research facility can also offer a display element to create visual excitement.
- Consider the development of participative programs to support research and conservation activities: e.g. adopt a sea lion, which could include individual profiling, photographs and a certificate. A concept such as real time tracking data tags for sea lions could 'self sell' the sponsorship of individual sea lions as well as contribute towards research.
- Biodiversity hub: The potential for commercial products, featuring a citizen science focus, to create a momentum and 'buzz' around the site, promoting the breadth of the Park's biodiversity. This in turn has the potential to attract interest and further visitors.

Visitor centre examples selected by the Group for ideas and consideration are shown on page 32.

## Research facility

- The opportunity should be explored to partner with either a single or several universities to incorporate a research facility at Seal Bay.
- Research opportunities are broad and include marine mammals, healthland ecosystems, fire environment, botany, invertebrates, goannas, echidnas and more.
- The research facility could comprise a multi-purpose room for research which could also be used for school groups, education, events and presentations.
- Possible operating models and funding options require further consideration.
- An opportunity exists to take a bold approach and make the research facility a drawcard, thereby attracting funding, visitation, interest and media coverage. In-house researchers, biologists and other expertise could be supported as an integral part of the visitor centre and visitor experience.
- The research centre could feed information into interpretive experiences and add to revenue generation through workshops, storytelling, presentations and researcher hosted tours.

## Food and beverage offer

- A food and beverage offer is supported.
- This needs to be pitched at the right level to ensure year-round sustainability and an appeal to both the local and visitor market.
- There is openness to exploring the opportunity to have both a casual cafe and a restaurant within the constraints of power, water and sustainability.
- The site should be developed as a Zero Waste site using recyclable materials for all services.
- The food and beverage offer at Seal Bay should, to the greatest extent practicable, incorporate the sourcing and use of local produce (Kangaroo Island / South Australian).

## Retail offer

- It is accepted that a souvenir / gift shop may form part of the visitor centre.
- As stated in the guiding principles, a focus on locally designed and made (Kangaroo Island / South Australian) product is sought.
- It is proposed a section of the retail area be operated as a cooperative by the community to enable local product and produce to be promoted and sold. There are various models that could be explored to ensure local producers are supported.

## Car park and vehicle volume

- Car park flow and pedestrian movement requires careful planning as this has not worked effectively to date at the current Seal Bay site. Currently, vehicles and pedestrians move in an uncoordinated manner, with safety concerns being an issue in busy times.
- A larger than currently available, and clearly identified, dropping off point with shelter is needed for school groups and CTO's bringing large visitor groups to Seal Bay. This needs to be located close to the visitor centre entrance to support mobility impaired visitors.
- It is felt that while the concept of a large car park external to the park, with electric cars and shuttles moving visitors back and forth to the visitor centre has merit, the investment in such infrastructure and the receptiveness of visitors to such arrangements are both long-term propositions. A staged approach to these concepts could be introduced.

## Experiences

- It is agreed there is significant opportunity to diversify the visitor experiences available at Seal Bay to enhance the experience, provide choice, increase potential visitor spend and disperse visitor numbers. It is felt experiences should be tiered by price (from free of charge to premium) and capped by number of participants (where necessary and appropriate). An example of potential tiered pricing linked to experience is provided below, noting DEW will determine the commercial arrangements for Seal Bay based on business case assessments:
  1. Access to children's play area, viewing area in the visitor centre, picnic tables and basic interpretive information (free).
  2. Enhanced interpretive experience, virtual reality room and viewing area (low fee).
  3. Visitor centre plus access to lookout and clifftop boardwalk (low to mid fee).
  4. Full visitor centre experience plus self guided lookout, boardwalk loop (one way) and cliff boardwalk (no beach access, guide available on boardwalk for questions) (medium fee).

5. Full suite of experiences plus guided beach walk as the premium experience (numbers for beach walk capped, cannot be self-guided) (high fee).
6. Special interest tours e.g. Out of hours sunset / sunrise small group experience, research tour, flora and fauna heathland tour, wildflowers tour in spring, day in the life of a guide/ranger tour (medium to high fee).
7. Fees could increase further should families / small groups wish for private tour.
8. Add-on experiences could be presentations in the amphitheatre or the virtual reality room or the like.

- Not all experiences need to be available all the time. Some would be seasonally driven. This could be used as a drawcard for specific, interest-focused visits at strategic times. This may potentially encourage off-peak visitation, multiple visits to access products and experiences across seasons or longer stays from a given individual or group.
- In school holidays, additional free experiences could be added such as a "wildlife detective checklist" or a talk specifically pitched for children.
- Encourage and promote winter visitation by offering wet weather attire and seasonal experiences.
- Consider broadening the hours of access to incorporate sunrise and sunset, particularly for guided walks and to enable access to the food and beverage offer for evening meals.
- Consider opportunities for off-peak (less busy times of day) / low season pricing.

## Boardwalks and walks (refer Fig 2, page 26)

- Loop walk through heathland (free).
- Connect lookout path to the beach viewing platform boardwalk.
- Change existing beach viewing platform boardwalk to a looped walk, avoiding impacts to the sand boat / swale (boardwalks to be elevated).
- Include sheltered "nodes" along all boardwalks where visitors can pause, sit down, seek protection from the weather (rain / sun), take in a view, look at interpretive information or interact with a guide. Consideration

could also be given to the inclusion of discreet bird hide type structures.

- Each node could potentially be themed by topic / interest area.
- In redesigning the boardwalk, consideration could be given to developing a further connecting boardwalk from the top of the beach viewing platform boardwalk along the top of the cliff line and then along the sand ridge back to the visitor centre. The section of boardwalk along the sand ridge would replace the existing path used for the beach experience.

## Interpretive experiences

- Interpretive experiences, education and storytelling (inclusive of virtual reality) are seen as a critically important part of the new visitor centre, positioned prominently so as to encourage visitation and access.
- The visitor centre experience could focus on a call to action to support sea lion research and to teach the importance of conservation.
- It is noted interpretive experiences should be designed so they can be refreshed and revitalised, approximately every three years, without significant investment.
- While it is acknowledged that technology is critical to delivering modern interpretive experiences, planning and design must consider longevity and maintenance requirements in order to ensure a quality experience can be sustained long term.
- A portion of the interpretive experience should be free.
- The interpretive experience within the visitor centre should take visitors "on a journey of discovery" that informs their experience and guides their behaviour once they reach the boardwalks (if this is where they choose to go).
- It is felt interpretive and educational experiences would benefit from including live streaming of sea lions and a virtual reality experience.
- Technology should be used in different ways, such as providing the ability to download or listen to information in different languages or participate in an interactive experience in different languages.

- Digital experiences should combine with touch tables, visuals, signage and other forms of displays to provide variety.

## Bales Bay

- Upgrade and expand picnic facilities and enhance the lookout, including shelter and interpretive information at the existing location.
- There is potential for a guided marine ecologist night walk on the beach, including the western end rockpool, that could be run seasonally and be advertised for small group bookings.
- It is noted that caution should be applied to infrastructure development that increases visitation at the bay given its proximity to the Wilderness Protection Area and use of the bay by sea lions. However, it provides an opportunity for a destination node if well managed.

## Other ideas

- Rebuild the local community's emotional connection with, and support for, Seal Bay through the development of a new facility, providing opportunity to reset and refresh opinions and perceptions.
- Build community momentum, excitement and interest for Seal Bay through communication, transparency and engagement about plans for the site.
- Identify initiatives to free up guides' time to enable more visitor interactions, including introducing improved technologies to support administration practices.
- Volunteer resources to be further considered to assist with visitor interactions and monitoring on the boardwalks.
- Consideration should be given to "Instagram" opportunities, such as a seal sculpture or other points of visual interest (perhaps developed by local artists) to act as stopping points or play spaces for children.
- Consider the creation of inland low impact trails that could deliver a niche experience (guided or self guided) and include geology/landscape, birds, sea fauna, wildflowers, other fauna (insects). Such walks could be seasonal and link to education inclusive of endangered species maps for example.

**Figure 2: Conceptual boardwalk additions shown as straight lines. These lines are not indicative of endorsed alignments. They are for illustration purposes only and actual alignments will be subject to ecological and engineering assessment. Note the design of any new boardwalk system needs to be one-way where possible, with nodes and viewing areas, avoiding straight lines so as to mitigate the sense of crowding. Boardwalks should also be elevated to enable sea lion movement.**



— New connection between the existing lookout to the top of the beach viewing platform boardwalk.

— New clifftop boardwalk (different pricepoint to beach viewing platform boardwalk).

— New section of boardwalk to turn the existing beach viewing platform boardwalk into a one-way loop.

NOTE: to maintain one-way flow, visitors undertaking the beach walk premium experience would access it via the “new” beach viewing platform boardwalk loop or clifftop boardwalk.

— The only two-way visitor movement along a section of boardwalk would be on the existing beach walk access section - which carries a smaller number of people.

— Turn existing path into an elevated boardwalk **OR** consider new alignment slightly behind the ridge line so as to “conceal” this return pathway and lessen the sense of overcrowding and visual impact of boardwalks (this option would involve removal and rehabilitation of the existing return pathway footprint).

# Future engagement and communications

- In general terms, the Group states that communication and transparency with the whole community on the Island across all stages and phases of planning, design and construction are critical to ensure community buy-in and support for future development at Seal Bay (this was expressed as “you cannot overcommunicate with us”).
- The Group feels it does have, and would like to have, an ongoing role in working with DEW through the upcoming planning, design and construction phases.
- The current members of the Group all expressed an interest to continue their involvement and felt the sector representation model is effective and appropriate. It was felt new group members could be introduced to ensure this representation is broad and balanced.
- The Group would like to be a sounding board at key project milestones and have the opportunity to provide feedback and comment.
- The Group is invested in this Framework document and excited by the future plans for Seal Bay and therefore looks forward to retaining a connection with the project and being able to share their ideas, contributions and knowledge at appropriate project stages.
- The Group expressed their contributions to date have felt valued and respected and they would like to see this continue.

# Appendix 1

# Visitor personas

**The following visitor personas were identified by tourism research, DEW data and the DEW team on Kangaroo Island and were used by the Seal Bay Community Reference Group to inform their ideas and thinking:**

- Domestic day visitors (inter and intrastate)
- Domestic multi-day visitors (inter and intrastate)
- Adventure tourists (empty-nesters) (inter and intrastate)
- Highlights tourist (inter and intrastate)
- Backpacker / young traveller
- European honeymooners
- International independent travellers
- International large group tour
- School groups
- Local community / residents of Kangaroo Island
- Volunteers
- Special interest groups
- Research / conference groups

# Our brand values

## Connected to unspoilt nature

Nature is fundamental to our concepts of humanity and wellbeing; it is why communities like Kangaroo Island's rise up to protect and preserve it. Our secluded beaches, pristine ocean, well managed national parks and prolific wildlife all reflect Kangaroo Island's soul. And a connection to nature is at the heart of much of what happens on Kangaroo Island – our products, experiences and lifestyle are all inspired by our unique environment and natural features.

## Authenticity

A truly authentic experience has become a rare commodity in a world of convenience. A sense of authenticity permeates our regional culture, our local characters, and the holiday experiences and products we offer. And Kangaroo Islanders understand that authentic doesn't mean perfect.

## Personal relationships

Increasingly, people want to become re-engaged with their daily lives and to know the people in it – family, friends, community, neighbours and people they do business with. Kangaroo Island is a place that provides the space and time to rebuild and reconnect with these people.

On Kangaroo Island strangers wave to each other. Locals share their passion for what they do and why they do it – whether it's family farming handed down through generations, making handmade artisan food and wine, volunteer work for the environment and wildlife, or art inspired by the surroundings.



## Seclusion (Island)

Kangaroo Island is first and foremost an island, a place apart. It is one of the few remaining destinations where people can genuinely get away from it all. And our products and experiences are isolated from everyday routines, the commonplace and many mainland diseases.

## Peaceful/Restored

People are seeking to scale back and restore balance in their lives. They want to get back in touch with nature, relax and eat healthy foods. Kangaroo Island is an antidote for stress and busyness. It offers an escape and a restorative peace, through a holiday experience. Plus it offers healthy, natural and genuine products created on the Island that nourish the mind and body.



## Tourism trends and insights

Below is a summary of the desktop research conducted by independent consultancy regarding best practice nature-based tourism and trends and potential opportunities for Kangaroo Island.

### Challenges

- Seasonality
- Length of stay / spend
- Transport / distances / road issues
- Limited range of experiences / activities
- On-park visitor experience influences who visits, for how long, the design of each visitor itinerary and investment on and off park

### Tourism mega-trends

- More for less: Parks have become increasingly visited and expectations around quality and management has risen while funding reduces - revenue has to be generated in other ways.
- Nature-based tourism continues to be a critical motivator for domestic and international travel.
- China and India likely to be growing markets for KI.
- Ageing population that still travels means increased demand for accessibility provisions.
- There is a growing dependence on online services. Communications, user generated content and imagery play a larger role in travel planning and decision making.
- Experiences rather than things/ products are the key to travel. Stories help create the experience and customise it, to make a place relevant to each individual.
- Technology and innovation is changing travel: e-bikes, driverless cars and shuttles, phone apps etc.
- A major trend in Australia has been the rise of 'social reconnection' with people wishing to reconnect with families / friends and connect with the place and people they are visiting.
- 50 year tourism strategies are becoming more common. Developing tools to manage tourism, not just drive growth, are emerging.
- There is growing interest in understanding and respecting Aboriginal connections / understanding Country.

### Possible opportunities

#### DEVELOPING VISITOR HUBS

- Visitors want to be able to see the range of experiences available and readily be able to match their preferences to them. Also need a service centre assisting CTO and group servicing and the provision of core services and facilities (toilets, wayfinding, Parks operational work, fee collection etc).
- Clustering experiences around nodes can help disperse visitor numbers beyond current "icons" by providing a suite of good options, where no single option may be a 'drawcard', but collectively they act to become one.
- Many parks globally are working to remove self-drive vehicles from internal parks road networks to shift from constructing larger car parking towards creating more experiential visits. This approach needs a departure point for shuttle buses / sustainable transport options.
- The location and scope of a replacement to Flinders Chase Visitor Centre requires significant consideration – there are a number of models that can be considered. Many examples exist that blend servicing needs and experiential interpretation objectives. The physical interpretive needs of a Centre should be considered flexibly and allow for innovation in space / design.

#### QUALITY AND DIVERSITY OF VISITOR EXPERIENCES

- Major visitor trends, both globally and domestically, are now appearing around sustainability and making value-based choices. The opportunity exists to build a variety of mechanisms so all visitors contribute back to meaningful and essential work around the Island's long-term conservation.
- Many locations are working on altering visitor behaviour away from parking the car, taking a short walk to the icon, taking a few photos and heading back to car. Tools include diversifying the walk itself by creating stopping points / features or adding opportunities such as picnic hire, bike hire and Segway tours.
- Parks need to encourage diversification to provide appeal to different types of visitors, ensure icons are not "loved to death", encourage longer stays / repeat visitation, and achieve regional development goals. Globally many Parks use different forms of public-private partnerships to achieve this.
- Interpretation is important and has been thought of as face to face or via apps, websites, visitor centres where people can 'learn' about what they are going to see or have just seen. The current trend is 'storytelling', working across all five senses. Emotional connection is the key to the delivery of good quality experiences and connecting in a meaningful and lasting way with visitors.
- People management needs to be well planned. Attractions with large volumes of people have considered how to manage visitor flows and minimise peaks and congestion and deliver quality of experience. Multiple price points and products and capped numbers are some ways to do this.

#### DIGITAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS

- Technology is a key requirement for contemporary visitor management. Visitor nodes should have coverage. User generated content and imagery drives much of the Island's global marketing.
- Sensitive sites, hard to access locations and shy or reclusive animals all can be revealed to visitors much better through improved technology that is engaging and interactive.

# Appendix 2

## Visitor centre examples of what is viewed to be innovative and interesting architecture in tune with surroundings.



Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre



Ecosanctuary Visitor Centre, Dunedin



Penguin Parade Visitor Centre, Philip Island



Great Fen Visitor Centre, UK



Warrumbungle National Park Visitor Centre



Thy National Park centre under dunes, Denmark

