

Alexandrina Council
From Strategy to Reality
The Bristow Smith Reserve Nature Playspace Story

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES



Alexandrina

Connecting Communities

Strategic Management Plans

2014-23 Community Strategic Plan

2017-26 Long Term Financial Plan

2016-25 Infrastructure & Asset Management Plan

Acknowledgements

Council and its communities acknowledge the Ngarrindjeri people as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of our Council district.

Council would like to acknowledge the author Cheryl Jordan, Writing and Communication, in the development of the case study.

Location

Bristow Smith Reserve Nature Playspace is located on Barrage Road, Goolwa, South Australia.

Alexandrina Connecting Communities



Contents

5	Message from the Mayor
6	Introduction
8	From Strategy to Reality
12	Cross Functional Approach
16	Community Engagement
17	Strategic Directions
17	Playspace Design
17	Construction
18	Community Arts Projects
20	Development, Design and Construction
26	Effectiveness
28	Community Response
28	Benefits
28	Economy
29	Transferability
29	Knowledge
30	Funding Partners
31	References





Message from The Mayor



Alexandrina Council has made a commitment to provide natural play experiences for our community, to encourage our children and families to play outside for longer periods of time. Nature is filled with beautiful sights, sounds and textures. It provides all the sensory experiences children need, so it makes sense to mimic nature when we create spaces for our children to enjoy.

We are delighted with the community response to this fantastic new Nature Playspace at Bristow Smith Reserve, Goolwa. This Playspace provides a unique, regionally-significant open space to inspire connection with the local environment and engage children in creative and imaginative play. It provides children with physical, sensory and mentally stimulating play opportunities and allows all children to challenge themselves, irrespective of age and ability.

The \$700,000 project was jointly funded by the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure and Alexandrina Council. A number of the sensory elements of the play space have been funded through the generous \$50,000 donation by the Fleurieu Philanthropy Foundation. This includes musical elements and interpretive artwork.

Community groups, including the Goolwa Sea Scouts, the SA Wooden Boat Association and the Aboriginal Youth Advisory Committee, worked alongside local artists to incorporate Indigenous-inspired art features into the playspace that celebrate our community's history and Ngarrindjeri culture in a unique and engaging way.

There have been many partners and contributors to the success of this wonderful project: State Government, the Council, community groups, organisations and individuals. I want to thank them all. I particularly want to thank the Council staff who had the original vision and worked so hard to make their dream a reality. This outstanding playspace is a credit to their passion and their strong commitment to our current and future communities.

Keith Parkes
Mayor





Introduction

From Strategy to Reality



The Bristow Smith Reserve Nature Playspace (BSRNP),

completed in December 2015, is a unique, all ages, all abilities, nature-based playspace on the Goolwa foreshore. It is the third and most ambitious of Alexandrina Council's playground projects based on the 'nature play' concepts of Canadian Adam Bienenstock, an international leader in natural playground design and construction. Natural playspaces are designed to connect children to nature, engaging them in open-ended, imaginative and challenging play and promoting the concepts of risk benefit and natural play. The Bristow Smith Nature Playspace is an outstanding example of these principles in action.

The Alexandrina Council has partnered with the State Government, local designers, landscapers, artists, Indigenous communities, schools, kindergartens, community groups, grandparents, parents and children to create a beautiful natural playspace in a stunning waterfront location along the Encounter Bikeway.

The Playspace features many natural, recycled and culturally respectful elements including a ten metre carefully restored 1911 wooden fishing boat, a natural timber and sand parkour course, water play with a creek bed, sensory wall, climbing nets, basket swings and stepping logs. Interpretive artwork is a key element throughout the site, reflecting local Indigenous and European cultural heritage, the natural environment and community ownership. An upgraded beach area and new barbecues and shelters encourage families to stay and play all day.



'It was a Council reserve by the lake that was a big area of open space in a good location that we maintained for very little use. The staff had a vision, supported by the elected members, to fill that empty space and to bring people to it.'

David Mullins,
BSRNP Project Team



**From
Strategy**



to Reality

From Strategy to Reality



The Bristow Smith Reserve Nature Playspace

epitomises the close and respectful relationship between Alexandrina Council and its communities. It is the result of planning and working together to achieve outstanding outcomes for current and future communities. It's what happens when communities are engaged in clearly identifying their aspirations, interest and priorities for the places where they live, work and visit —when the council is genuinely committed to achieving those objectives — and when the council and its communities work together to make them a reality.

The development of the 2014–23 Community Plan commenced in late 2011 and proceeded through a series of Council workshops, community forums and consultation drafts. Through this process emerged a shared vision, Alexandrina Connecting Communities; four key aspirational themes, Innovate, Participate, Activate and Thrive; and a number of proposed major projects that would bring that vision to life.

This vision and these key themes are reflected in all of Council's strategic, annual, business and project plans including the 2015 Regional Health Plan, Alexandrina's response to Public Health. In this way, everything that Council plans and does is aligned with its communities' vision for the future.

The Bristow Smith Reserve Nature Playspace was a project that ticked all the theme boxes in the Community Plan: innovation in its planning and in its concepts, community and cultural participation, activation of public spaces and ensuring a clean green future for people and the environment to thrive.

It also aligned with the South Australian Government's objectives for development through the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure's (DPTI's) Open Space and Local Government Stimulus programs, for public health through the OPAL (Obesity Prevention and Lifestyle) program and for community and cultural arts through Country ArtsSA.

The Nature Playspace project is the first stage of the Bristow Smith Reserve Master Plan, which itself is one of a number of concept plans aimed at activating the entire Goolwa Lake foreshore area: creating landscapes that challenge the imagination and provide unique and memorable experiences, extending from Goolwa wharf along the Encounter Bikeway trail — expanding, diversifying and linking the recreational experience for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

'It's an area where there were a lot of things for adults, mostly boating related, but no space or activities for kids. It's a demographic that's often forgotten.'

Peter Dinning,
Chief Executive

From Strategy to Reality



Long Term Directions and Objectives

ALEXANDRINA COUNCIL

MISSION AND VALUES KUNGUN NGARRINDJERI YUNNAN AGREEMENT (2002)

Including a Sincere Expression of Sorrow and Apology to the Ngarrindjeri People and a series of commitments to work together.

2014–23 COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision: Connecting Communities

- four Community Aspirations: Innovate throughout our Region, Participate in Wellbeing, Activate our Spaces and Thrive in Clean Green Futures
- Strategic Priorities aligned with SA State Government's Seven Strategic Priorities
- Commitment to sustainability (environmental, social, economic, cultural).

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014-23

LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2014-2023

GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

STATE PUBLIC HEALTH PLAN

Vision: South Australia a Better Place to Live: Promoting and protecting our community's health and wellbeing 2013.

Key priorities for action including:

- stronger and healthier communities and neighbourhoods for all generations
- increasing opportunities for healthy living, healthy eating and being active.



Medium Term Priorities and Objectives	Shorter Term Localised Objectives
<p>ALEXANDRINA COUNCIL</p> <p>2014-15 AND 2015-16 ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN & BUDGET DOCUMENTS</p> <p>'We have heard from you about the community's vision to improve our environment in order for it to thrive, to stimulate and innovate our regional economy, to improve the quality of life and wellbeing for all and to increase cultural vitality and activate vibrant communities. The Council shares your vision and by implementing its Strategic Plan through the Annual Business Plan and Budget we will embrace the challenges of securing a far more sustainable future for all generations.' Chief Executive, Peter Dinning.</p> <p>ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN 2014-2018</p> <p>DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN 2015-2018</p> <p>WELLBEING IN OUR COMMUNITY: REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH PLAN FOR THE SOUTHERN AND HILLS LGA 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> including the Alexandrina Council Public Health Action Plan 2015 a range of strategies grouped under three themes: Healthy Environments, Healthy Lifestyles, Planning and Partnerships. <p>HealthSA: OPAL PROGRAM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision: Healthy Communities. 'Alexandrina's OPAL team works in many different settings in our community to encourage families and children to pursue active and healthy lifestyles.' (Alexandrina Council website). 	<p>ALEXANDRINA COUNCIL</p> <p>AREA PLANS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council planning and community engagement process involved in the development concept plans including the Bristow Smith Reserve Foreshore Master Plan. <p>BRISTOW SMITH RESERVE NATURE PLAYSPACE (BSRNP) DESIGN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive community engagement process in the development of detailed design plans for the Bristow Smith Reserve Nature Playspace. <p>BSRNP PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLANS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including complex planning, coordination, consultation and cooperation required for the number of community and Indigenous art projects that are a significant feature of the playspace. <p>BSRNP FUNDING AGREEMENTS and PARTNERSHIPS</p> <p>STATE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPTI (Department of Planning, Transport & Infrastructure), SA Country Arts, HealthSA OPAL program. <p>FLEURIEU PHILANTHROPY FOUNDATION</p>

Cross Functional Approach





Councils are increasingly recognising the value of a cross functional approach to managing complex projects – bringing key stakeholders together to manage projects end to end. This approach is particularly effective for projects aimed at activating public spaces which need to integrate strategic planning, urban design, public health and community wellbeing objectives.

A cross functional approach was ideally suited to the Bristow Smith Reserve Nature Playspace project, which clearly aligned with strategic

Council objectives as well as those of the State Government's OPAL (Obesity Prevention and Lifestyle) program. The six-member team brought together all aspects of the project: planning, design, construction, contract management, communication and community engagement in a genuinely integrated approach involving local and state government collaboration. The strong support of the elected members and the wider community provided added motivation to achieve the best possible outcome on their behalf.

'I think bringing people from across the organisation together in the project team enabled a variety of ideas to be generated – this is reflected in the diversity of elements in the Playspace.'

Peter Dinning,
Chief Executive

Cross Functional Approach

BRISTOW SMITH RESERVE NATURE PLAYSPACE PROJECT TEAM

Alan Harvey

Manager Engineering Services

Stewart Ratcliff

Infrastructure Manager

Linda Scholz

OPAL Manager

David Mullins

Recreational Services
Co-ordinator

Conway Childs

Building Services

Travis Hester

Project Officer – Recreational
Services

The size of the project required a group that could make decisions and take responsibility for project progress and outcomes – to generally keep the work moving along and avoid unnecessary delays. It was an effective approach according to team member Alan Harvey, 'The team members all brought different areas of focus, knowledge and expertise so, as a group, we could deal with most issues that arose'. Similarly, the rich diversity of knowledge and experience often enabled potential issues to be identified well in advance and creative and innovative solutions devised to address them. An added benefit was that the range of skills and experience available in the team assisted in managing the different requirements and expectations of all the project funding partners.

Each team member had a clear role and subgroups were established

to manage different aspects of the project such as tendering, contract management and administration, arts and philanthropy, communication and community engagement.

Other key Council staff were involved at different stages of the project. These included Mellissa Bradley (Infrastructure Engineer) who guided the design in the project's early stages and Diana Gordon (Project Officer – Just Add Water) who coordinated a number of the community arts projects.

It was a non-traditional approach in many ways. For example, it is unusual to have the design element included in the team — such projects are generally designed first and then handed on to engineering staff for construction. And perhaps unexpectedly, OPAL's Linda Scholz was a key member – the team all agree that her dynamic approach to the communication role was

critical in engaging the community and generating broad interest and enthusiasm for the project.

The cross functional theme extended across the Council through the use of in-house skills, expertise and creativity wherever possible. This included the meticulous and painstaking restoration of the MV Premier fishing boat and the intricately carved animals on the giant tree stump that welcome visitors to the park. Alexandrina staff volunteered their free time to work on the site and kept their eyes open for materials that could be reused or restored to add to the natural play environment they were creating for their community. Another staff member took photos to document the progress of construction. These were posted to the Council's project page to keep the community informed and formed part of a professionally produced film that tells the project's story.



The project demonstrates how the work of local government covers many different functions but its overall community objectives are aligned. A small example is that Council staff members now better recognise how their work in parks and gardens and recreational services supports the public health objectives of both their own organisation and the South Australian Government through the OPAL program – and the valuable contribution they are making to the health of their community.

'I'm proud to be part of this team who have come from all parts of the organisation, who are doing good work and drawing in more support and resources from other parts of the organisation and the community as well.'

Alan Harvey,
BSRNP Project Team



Community Engagement

Strategic Directions



The community has guided the development of the Nature

Playspace from long before it was detailed drawings on a page. The story begins with the development of the 2014–23 Community Plan. A comprehensive community engagement process including workshops and forums identified the outcomes the community sought and the community’s vision: Alexandrina Connecting Communities and its four aspirational themes Innovate, Participate, Activate and Thrive.

Playspace Design

Throughout 2012 and 2013, there was also a considerable amount of community consultation in the preparation of the Bristow Smith Reserve Masterplan. This was followed by a process to engage all of the relevant stakeholders, elected members, community groups, the Indigenous community, families and individuals in designing the details of the Nature Playspace.

The Council and the designers wanted to hear directly from children and the community about the experience they wanted the playspace to provide. Project team members visited local schools,

kindergartens and child care centres to facilitate their input into the design and the concept designers WAX Design led a formal community engagement process:

Phase 1: Identifying the community’s priorities for the playspace and foreshore and any site constraints. This phase included an open community consultation session where enthusiastic children, parents and grandparents added sticky dots on posters to indicate their preferred elements. The strongest support was for a feature boat and constructed climbing, natural play equipment and cultural representation were also top contenders for inclusion in the design. In addition, the session included aerial imagery of the site to map issues and opportunities (What Works? and What Doesn’t Work?) and one-on-one conversations and discussions with Ngarrindjeri communities regarding their connection with the site and potential cultural interpretation opportunities.

Phase 2: Consultation on concept design ‘to test the design and ensure things were heading in the right direction’. (Bristow Smith Reserve Playspace Consultation Summary, WAX Design). This phase included



presentations to the Ngarrindjeri community and an open Park Day for community feedback.

Both phases of the consultation included targeted meetings with representatives of the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority and the Indigenous community. It also included community groups such as the Fleurieu Philanthropy Foundation which was interested in providing funding for inclusive play elements to enable children with autism and those less able bodied to access the nature play experience.

Construction

The community continued to be engaged throughout the development of the Playspace. The project team had a strong focus on keeping everyone informed on progress through their publications, social media, promotional materials and the special Bristow Smith Reserve project page on the Council’s website, which included photos and video updates. Hundreds of local residents and visitors observed progress on the site with intense interest, even requesting that staff add many more carved animals to the original four planned for the sculpture tree.

Community Engagement



Community Arts Project

Arts and cultural installations that draw on the cultural and environmental significance of the site are a strong and highly visible feature of the Nature Playspace. The community were involved in many aspects of the development of these works, sharing stories that informed the works or creating the works themselves. The traditional European fishing boat artworks and Indigenous art pieces within the playspace each represent the varied local cultural values of the area and demonstrate that these values can co-exist in one place that welcomes all.

Council Arts Project Officer, Diana Gordon consulted with local Ngarrindjeri elders whose culture and stories have informed a number of the projects. These include a five metre long mosaic sensory wall



and an inlaid art trail path which encircles the Playspace — both of these were created by artist Tony Rosella to provide a range of sensory experiences for children of all ages and ability, including those with autism.

At a more hands-on level, local community members were actively involved in learning new and old skills to create Playspace art features.

Maritime knotting: An experienced artist and local community member, 85 year-old Derek Scott, worked with a group of young Goolwa Sea Scouts to pass on his skills in the dying art form of maritime knotting to create artworks for the restored 1911 fishing boat. They created:

- a feature fender (a rope art piece that traditionally protected the bow of the boat from damage)
- maritime 'necklaces', a series of knot art pieces in a circular motif around the boat's mast.

Scrimshaw: Artist Mike Tye worked with the Wooden Boat Association of SA (WBASA) to create art works drawing on their fishing and boating experiences and using the traditional maritime art form of scrimshaw. These works feature in different locations on and around the boat.

Pyrography: Indigenous artist Damien Shen collaborated with the local Ngarrindjeri community to create a series of designs that reflect the cultural significance of the area to the Indigenous people of the region. Young Indigenous people then worked with artist Nick Brauer to translate these designs onto a series of four metre eucalypt tree trunks using pyrography – the art of decorating wood or leather by burning a design on the surface with a heated metallic point. The posts now form a eucalypt grove in the Nature Playspace.

The clear and sustained focus on engaging the community throughout the project has created a profound sense of community ownership of the Nature Playspace, because its evolution has been genuinely guided by their voice and their endeavour. It is a true reflection of the values, diversity and creativity of the local communities and their shared vision for the future.

Mayor Keith Parkes sees it as a symbol of healing for the community: 'It's such a good thing for the community to see something so positive in that space that was really a disaster area during the drought.'



Development, Design and Construction

Development, Design and Construction



In recent years, Alexandrina Council has developed in its appreciation of, and expertise in, a nature play approach. The Bristow Smith Reserve project was the third in the Council's nature-based playground projects and the support and enthusiasm of both staff and elected members for the concept increased with each step along the way.

From the beginning, the drive came from within the Council. Alexandrina staff were inspired by a presentation from Adam Bienenstock, an international leader in natural playground design and construction. Adam's visit to South Australia had been organised and funded through the State Government's OPAL program.

In 2013, the Council's recreational services team applied natural playground principles to the upgrade of Goolwa's Amelia Park site. The playground was designed and constructed by staff out of recycled timber and surplus materials stored at the Council's works depots. Features of the playground included an elevated tree house, restored wooden boat, hand crafted seating, rocks, logs and natural material edging.

The next natural playground project, the Forrest Reserve Nature Playspace at Strathalbyn, was a much larger undertaking. The recreational services team and OPAL staff consulted with local communities including kindergarten and childcare centres to design the playspace.

Jointly funded by the state's Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) and the Council, the \$100,000 project had a focus on natural materials and included slippery dips on a large mound, a restored wooden boat, a 30m flying fox, a sandpit with embedded skeleton, a mini bike track, logs and rocks for balancing, climbing and imaginative play as well as carved wooden animals lurking in the bush. Many of the features were sourced from previously discarded and surplus materials. All the logs and boulders were sourced locally at no cost, including an upside down tree salvaged by Council staff from a routine maintenance task.

By the time the Bristow Smith Reserve project planning was commencing, Council and OPAL staff had acquired considerable expertise in relation to designing and building nature playgrounds.

Consultants WAX Design and Ric McConaghy Playspaces were engaged to prepare the concept design. Their approach ensured that the voices of the Council, the State Government, the community and all other stakeholders were reflected in the final design.

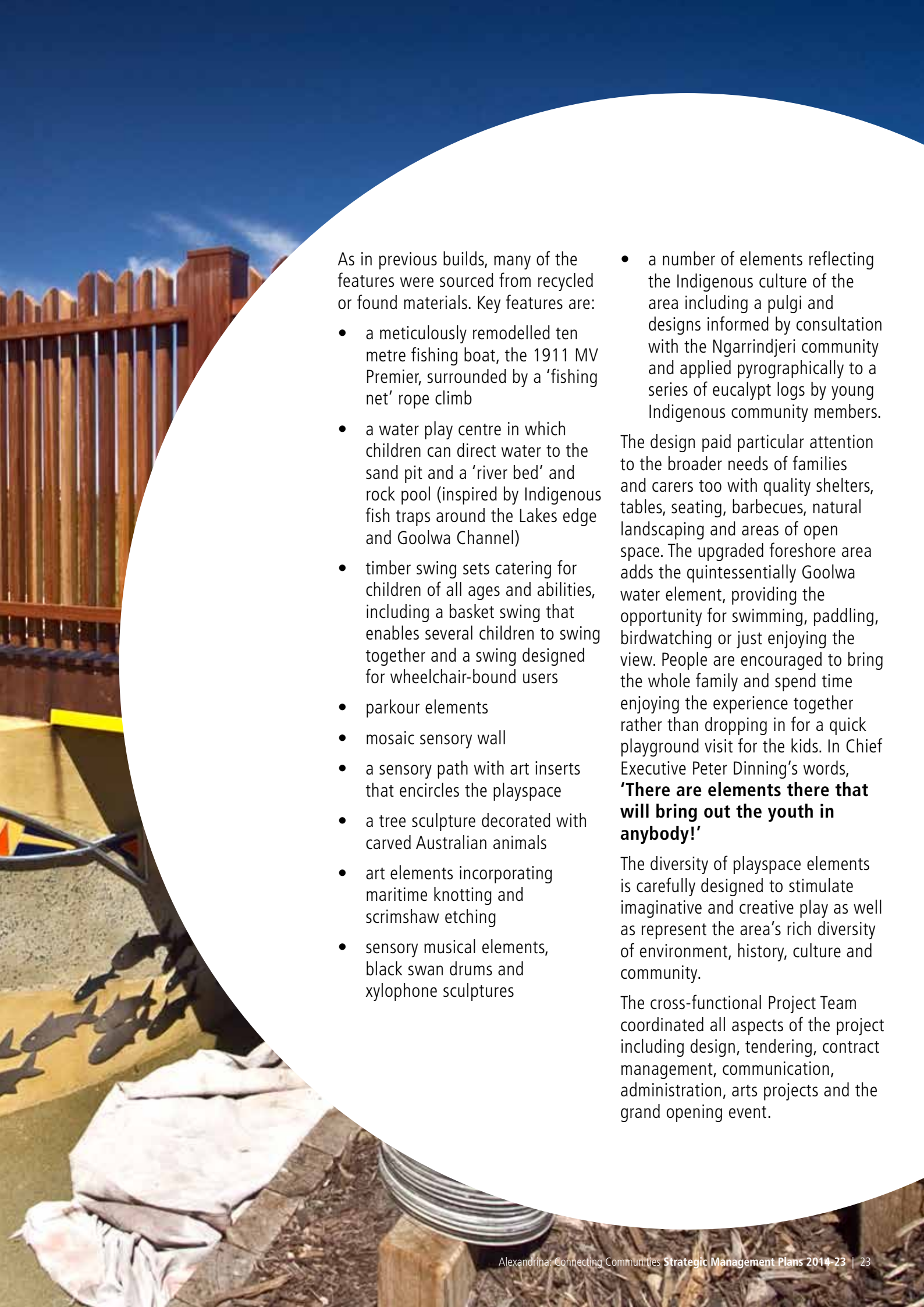
The majority of the funding was provided by DPTI and the Council with additional support from Country ArtsSA, OPAL and the Fleurieu Philanthropy Foundation (funding details on page 30).

LCS Landscapes were selected by competitive tendering to undertake the majority of the Playspace construction. This South Australian company's focus is on preserving and, where possible, restoring vulnerable eco-systems, an approach that aligns with the spirit of the project's intent.

'There's been an evolution of council in this area of activating playground spaces.'

Anne Liddell, Manager - Governance and Strategy





As in previous builds, many of the features were sourced from recycled or found materials. Key features are:

- a meticulously remodelled ten metre fishing boat, the 1911 MV Premier, surrounded by a 'fishing net' rope climb
- a water play centre in which children can direct water to the sand pit and a 'river bed' and rock pool (inspired by Indigenous fish traps around the Lakes edge and Goolwa Channel)
- timber swing sets catering for children of all ages and abilities, including a basket swing that enables several children to swing together and a swing designed for wheelchair-bound users
- parkour elements
- mosaic sensory wall
- a sensory path with art inserts that encircles the playspace
- a tree sculpture decorated with carved Australian animals
- art elements incorporating maritime knotting and scrimshaw etching
- sensory musical elements, black swan drums and xylophone sculptures

- a number of elements reflecting the Indigenous culture of the area including a pulgi and designs informed by consultation with the Ngarrindjeri community and applied pyrographically to a series of eucalypt logs by young Indigenous community members.

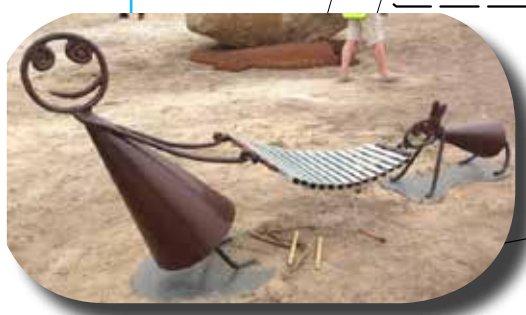
The design paid particular attention to the broader needs of families and carers too with quality shelters, tables, seating, barbecues, natural landscaping and areas of open space. The upgraded foreshore area adds the quintessentially Goolwa water element, providing the opportunity for swimming, paddling, birdwatching or just enjoying the view. People are encouraged to bring the whole family and spend time enjoying the experience together rather than dropping in for a quick playground visit for the kids. In Chief Executive Peter Dinning's words, **'There are elements there that will bring out the youth in anybody!'**

The diversity of playspace elements is carefully designed to stimulate imaginative and creative play as well as represent the area's rich diversity of environment, history, culture and community.

The cross-functional Project Team coordinated all aspects of the project including design, tendering, contract management, communication, administration, arts projects and the grand opening event.

LOCATION OF
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



























23



20

- 1 1911 MV Premier, ten metre fishing boat, featuring maritime knotting and scrimshaw etching art elements. Surrounded by a 'fishing net' rope climb.
- 2 Hill slide.
- 3 Giant basket swing.
- 4 Timber swing sets catering for children of all ages and abilities, including a swing designed for wheelchair-bound users.
- 5 Shelters, tables, seating, barbecues and rainwater tank.
- 6 Metal climbing structure symbolic of a pulgi (traditional Aboriginal shelter).
- 7 Wooden see-saw.
- 8 Mosaic sensory wall.
- 9 Parkour elements.
- 10 A water play centre in which children can direct water to the sand pit and a 'river bed' and rock pool (inspired by Indigenous fish traps around the Lakes edge and Goolwa Channel).
- 11 Spiral rope climbing feature.
- 12 Wooden stepping logs and climbing timbers.
- 13 Feature wooden bridge.
- 14 Wooden gangway to fishing boat.
- 15 Sensory musical element, black swan drums set in creek bed.
- 16 Rock mound garden bed and boat anchor.
- 17 A sensory path with art inserts that encircles the playspace.
- 18 Giant boulder with rubber reptile.
- 19 Sensory musical element, xylophone sculpture.
- 20 Sculpture tree incorporating carved native animal.
- 21 Gigantic sandpit surrounding boat.
- 22 Logs with Indigenous woodburning.
- 23 Murray River beach entry for family swimming.
- 24 Sand tray.

Map Legend

	STEPPING LOGS (19 D01)		OVAL TIMBER BENCH (07 D05)
	TIMBER PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE (04 D05)		DRINKING FOUNTAIN (AS SPECIFIED)
	TIMBER SLEEPER PATH (06 D05)		RUBBISH BINS (AS SPECIFIED)
	2 TIER TIMBER SLEEPER RETAINING WALL (04 D03)		BIKE RACKS (AS SPECIFIED)
	3 TIER TIMBER SLEEPER RETAINING WALL (02 D04)		BARBECUE (AS SPECIFIED)
	MASONRY RETAINING WALL WITH TIMBER BALUSTRADE (RENDER & MOSAIC BY OTHERS) (05 D04)		TIMBER SHELTER (AS SPECIFIED)
	TIMBER LOG SEAT (10 D01)		MUSIC DRUMS (AS SPECIFIED)
	TIMBER BIKE RACK (11 D01)		TURTLE SEAT (AS SPECIFIED)
	TIMBER GANGWAY (01 D03)		REED SCULPTURE (AS SPECIFIED)
	BENCH (AS SPECIFIED)		COASTAL FENCING (03 D05)
	RUBBER SOFTFALL (AS SPECIFIED) (05 D01)		CLIMBING ROCKS (AS SPECIFIED) APPROX. 100-160mm HEIGHT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ROCKS
	RUBBER SOFT FALL STEPS (15 D01)		ROCK EDGING (AS SPECIFIED) (12 D01)
	TIMBER LOG EDGING (13 D01)		ROCK MOUND (04 D06)
	LOG SEATING CIRCLE (20 D01)		WATER PLAY ROCKS (AS SPECIFIED)
	SANDPIT AREA SURROUNDING BOAT		LOG CLIMBING STEPS (AS SPECIFIED) (16 D01)



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17

Development, Design and Construction

'If you care about your children's safety, mental health, physical development, community engagement, and the future sustainability of our planet - natural playgrounds are the most important and intelligent choice you can make.'

Adam Bienenstock,
International Nature Play
advocate

Nature Play: Connecting children to nature when and where they play.

The natural playground movement, or nature play, is gaining worldwide popularity with the growing awareness of issues arising from an increasingly sedentary and risk-averse generation of children who are disconnected from nature.

Pioneered by Canadian Adam Bienenstock, an international leader in natural playground design and construction, nature play represents a distinct move away from the 'safe' and restrictive play options provided by the steel and plastic modular playground equipment in use almost universally in recent decades.

Natural playspaces are designed to connect children to nature: engaging them in open-ended, imaginative and challenging play and promoting the principles of risk benefit and natural play.

Nature play principles have guided the Alexandrina Council's playspace designs:

- starting from nature – using natural materials in their natural state wherever possible
- engaging the users in the design
- creating imaginative and creative play with diverse elements to explore, to challenge and to develop skills, whatever

the age or ability of the child

- providing interesting options for individual or group play (inclusive of all, not just the fit, confident or physically adept)
- ensuring adherence to national safety standards (Australian Standards for Playgrounds)
- including music and artworks – 'Art and music are inclusive. They help to break down barriers presented by age, language and physical ability while they encourage collaboration and less aggressive behaviour.' Adam Bienenstock.

Key statistics:

- the average unsupervised daily roam rates for children have shrunk from a 10km radius in 1920 to 300m in 2015
- a recent Australian study showed that 45% of 8 year olds rising to 80% of 16 year olds exceed the recommended maximum 2 hours per day for screen based media use
- 1 in 4 children in Australia are overweight (18%) or obese (7%).



'Increasing urbanisation and smaller backyards have significantly reduced children's daily contact with the natural environment and their connection with it.'

Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR) Natural Resources Management (NRM)



Effectiveness

Effectiveness



It's generally agreed that it's a good thing to create beautiful

natural playgrounds but how can their success be measured? In the view of the project team, the Mayor and Council staff, the major determinant of the Nature Playspace's success is usage: visitor numbers, length of stay, diversity of ages and abilities and return visits. Although there is no quantitative evidence yet available, the experience of all three Alexandrina Council playspaces, Amelia Park, Forrest Reserve and Bristow Smith Reserve, has been that 'if we build it, they will come'.

Staff and community members observe that the playspaces are always in use. Neighbours comment that they are especially delighted to see these once underused places being activated – coming alive with grandparents, parents, children, groups and individuals using and exploring them in many different ways, all day long.

Community feedback and observation also indicates that the initial aim for the spaces to have intergenerational appeal has been achieved. Interest for all age groups has been generated through many of the elements, particularly in Bristow Smith Reserve with its strong focus on incorporating art, Indigenous culture and history as well as the use of restored and recycled materials such as salvaged timber. 'A lot of the old wood is of huge interest to older people,' says David Mullins, BSRNP Project Team.



'We have found that these playspaces have enough different things to continue to interest the kids. Their imagination gets fired up and they keep coming back to try things again, try them differently or try other things.'

Alan Harvey,
BSRNP Project Team

Community Response



The Playspace has only been open for a short time but the

early response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. Here are a few examples of user feedback:

- Amazing imaginative playspace for all ages and great to see facilities for all kids!
- Brilliant – well done Council!
- Fantastic! Amazing place to play
- Ab Fab. Great concept and love the recycled boat!
- OMG fantastic.
- Brilliant. We will be back.
- Great place for family to hang out.
- Terrific. Awesome fun.
- Great work to all involved.
- The council have done an amazing job with the new play space! It is so well thought out and my kids and I will have so much fun there! What a great space for our awesome town!
- We are so proud and so grateful for the new nature playground. What a great space, so well thought out and executed. We will be using it as much as we can.
- I think the new nature playspace is amazing , what a beautiful thing to add to our beautiful town, so many families will spend so much time there! Wonderful idea and the tree sculptures look great!
- Absolutely love the new nature playspace! What a fantastic thing for our beautiful town. Well done Alexandrina Council. We will be there all the time.

Benefits

There are multiple benefits for the Goolwa community as well as more broadly for Alexandrina and for South Australia. These include enhanced outcomes in relation to health and wellbeing, community development, public amenity and the environment.

Economy

Bristow Smith Reserve Nature Playspace is expected to provide significant economic benefits to the Goolwa area. It provides a unique tourist offering within an easy drive from the city of Adelaide: a beautifully sited large and attractive nature-based playspace for all ages, abilities and interests. It offers a diversity of possibility for imaginative and challenging play as well as water-based activities along the foreshore. It has all the amenities required for families or groups to make a day of it with

'The community reaction to it has been fantastic.'

Mayor Keith Parkes

'Community feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, which doesn't always happen in councils!

Linda Scholz, BSRNP Project Team



shelters, barbecues, tables and seating and elements to interest all generations. It provides a significant new point of interest as part of the Council's long term plan to expand and diversify the range of available tourist activities available along the Goolwa foreshore.

Transferability

The nature play approach to play area design is one that is eminently transferable to other places and spaces. The principles can be applied on any scale, large or small, and within most budgets, particularly if existing natural features or salvageable materials are available. It is particularly appropriate for use by other councils because it relates to their areas of responsibility and capitalises on the wide range of staff knowledge, expertise and ingenuity already available in councils. It has a strong community engagement element, which is a natural fit for councils and the

social, economic and environmental outcomes align strongly with local government objectives.

OPAL's Linda Scholz also feels there is a role for councils in educating the community about natural play for children.' I think there is an educational role in moving beyond an open grassed area to drawing families in and demonstrating the value of free play in a natural environment. A lot of these ideas can be used in your own backyard.'

Knowledge

The nature play approach is supported by a considerable body of international research and evidence of its benefits for the mental and physical health of children. It is part of a world-wide trend towards reconnecting children with nature.

Through their 'Playspace evolution' over recent years, Alexandrina Council and their partners have developed a strong base of knowledge and understanding

about the design and construction of natural playgrounds and their value to the community. The experience will inform their approach to public spaces and future planning for the Council area.

Alexandrina staff have received many enquiries from other councils who are interested in the playspace projects. They are happy to share their learnings in the same way they have learned from others in developing their own approach to natural playspaces.



Funding Partners

Alexandrina Council (including OPAL Program): \$344,250

SA Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI): \$344,250

SA Country Arts: community art projects \$13,070

Fleurieu Philanthropy Foundation: musical and sensory art projects \$50,000



**Government
of South Australia**

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OPAL is a joint program of State and Local Governments.



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