

Blueprint for future Great Southern

Public comment invited

Seven major initiatives that will build the Great Southern over the next 25 years are revealed in the recently-released draft version of the Great Southern Regional Blueprint.

The Regional Blueprint was produced by the GSDC, with a mandate from the WA State Government, as a long-term plan for the Great Southern's future out to 2040. Public comment on the draft is open until 5pm on Friday 31 October.

GSDC Chairman Peter Rundle said the Blueprint was based on a great deal of research and consultation.

"Stakeholders from businesses, community groups, not-for-profit organisations and all tiers of government were involved throughout the process," Mr Rundle said.

"The result is an aspirational plan that sets short, medium and long-term ambitions for the region, to fulfil a vision of making the Great Southern an internationally recognised region of choice for opportunity and lifestyle."

Mr Rundle said the Blueprint presented an

extensive analysis of the current state of the region and also surveyed the major global trends that are expected to affect the region over the next few decades.

"Putting the main characteristics of the region against these big trends, we see seven key project areas that offer real prospects of building up the Great Southern," Mr Rundle said.

"These initiatives have the potential to transform the region. They cover the essential areas of energy, water, transport and community building, and also identify significant opportunities in digital technologies, tourism and food production.

"I encourage people to take a look at the Blueprint through the GSDC website, at a local library or at a Community Resource Centre in the region, and use the comment procedures to tell us what you think," Mr Rundle said.

Mr Rundle emphasised that the Blueprint was a strategic guide for investment from all sectors of the economy.

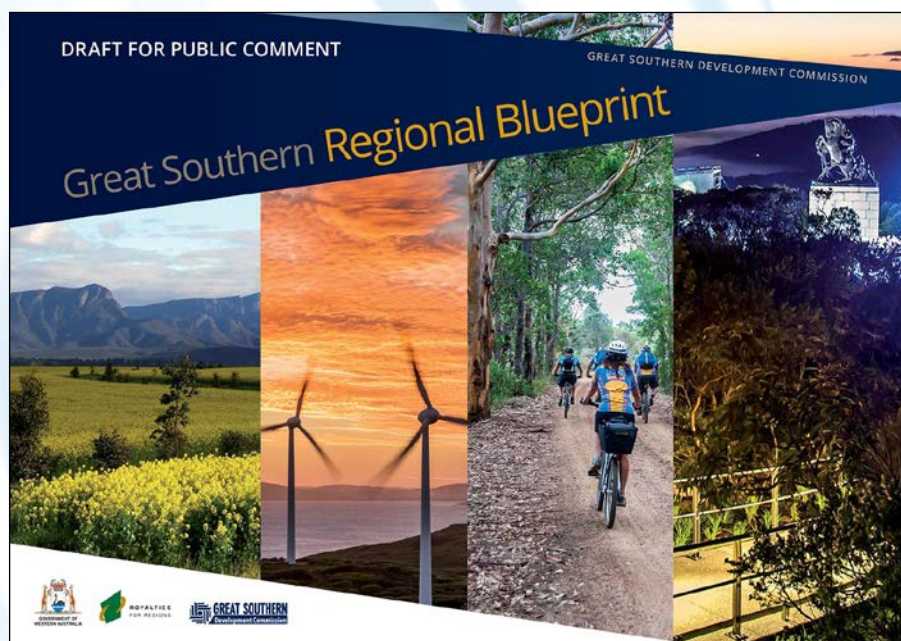
It would inform investment decisions by the public sector, private sector, community groups and not-for-profit organisations.

More information is available in documents on the GSDC website: the brief Blueprint Snapshot, a more detailed Blueprint Overview and the full version of the Great Southern Regional Blueprint.

Inspection copies of the Blueprint are available at public libraries and Community Resource Centres in the Great Southern.

People wishing to comment are encouraged to read the full version. Comments can be made online, by email or by post.

Contact: Bruce Manning, ph. 9842 4888



The Great Southern Regional Blueprint is available for public comment until 31 October.



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Award crowns AEC success

Centre named best venue caterer

The Albany Entertainment Centre (AEC) crowned a successful 12 months by winning the coveted Venue Caterer Award in the Western Australia Savour Australia Restaurant and Catering HOSTPLUS Awards for Excellence 2014.

In the year to 30 June 2014, the AEC hosted 149 performances and events attracting more than 36,000 patrons. Proving itself to be far more than just a centre for the performing arts, the AEC continues to grow its corporate and function business.

Its achievements were capped by the category win in the Awards for Excellence, in which more than 130 caterers and restaurant and café operators were judged across 31 categories.

The series, in its 16th year, is decided by trained judges who anonymously visit the venues to determine the winners. Scores are based on the entire dining experience of that one judge on a specific evening.

The event entered by the AEC was the 2014 GSDC Medal gala dinner evening on 20 June 2014.

The 110 guests at the dinner were served a three-course meal including twice-cooked Plantagenet Pork belly on a sweet potato skordalia, Mount Barker chicken breast with pumpkin risotto and provolone picante and dark chocolate mousse cake with orange blossom chantilly.

Restaurant and Catering CEO John

Hart said the Awards for Excellence set the national benchmark for objectively recognising and promoting best practice.

"The winners should be proud that they have been judged and rigorously reviewed in one of the most objective awards systems, which looks at the entire dining experience, rather than a single food or service dimension," Mr Hart said.

Albany Entertainment Centre will now compete with other regional finalists at the National Savour Australia Restaurant and Catering HOSTPLUS Awards for Excellence in Victoria on Monday 27 October 2014.

Contact: Jessica Van Der Waag
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Above left: Guests at the GSDC Medal dinner.

Above right: On the night of the GSDC Medal dinner, the Kalyenup Room at the Albany Entertainment Centre was decorated with 'upcycled' materials largely sourced from the Greenskills Denmark Tip Shop.



Left: Table settings in the Kalyenup Room.



WoW factor wins medal

Honour for south coast communicator

Innovator and enthusiastic educator Gary Muir was presented with the 2014 GSDC Medal by Regional Development Minister Terry Redman at a gala dinner at the Albany Entertainment Centre on Friday 20 June.

The medal is awarded biennially by the Great Southern Development Commission to celebrate innovation and leadership in the management of the region's natural resources.

An independent assessment panel selected Mr Muir as the eleventh Medallist from an extremely strong field, which also included Narrikup farmer and founder of Australian Mineral Fertilisers Stephen Frost and Greenskills project leader Basil Schur, from Denmark.

The panel noted Mr Muir's significant long-term contribution as a communicator and ambassador for natural resource management at local, state and international levels.

With a unique brand of humour, science and history, he has been raising



Regional Development Minister Terry Redman presents Gary Muir with the GSDC Medal.

awareness, inspiring the community and developing innovative solutions to common environmental threats for more than thirty years.

"The ultimate for an interpreter is to inspire passion and change in others," Mr Muir said, quoting Democritus. "Understanding and enjoyment are the same thing."

Mr Muir has developed and plays a key role in a range of projects, supported by his tour business WoW Wilderness Eco-Cruises. These include the UR Walpole school

eco-education program (now in its 10th year) and the Nuyts Wilderness Invertebrate Fire Research Project, which brings together community, agency staff and researchers through a community laboratory.

Mr Muir is also involved with Project Dieback, which communicates the risks of *Phytophthora dieback* and develops treatment methods for the devastating killer of native vegetation. He developed the 'Phytofighter' boot cleaning station for bushwalkers, which is gaining international interest in the control of dieback, and is hoping to develop designs for similar stations for other bush track users including horse riders, drivers and bicyclists.

Mr Muir is set to provide a stimulating and inspiring tour through his projects at the Medallist's Field Day in Albany in mid-September 2015. Visit the GSDC website or sign up on twitter for updates (@NRM_Medal), and visit Mr Muir's website at www.wowwilderness.com.au

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Saleyard benefits flow for Katanning

Huge selling facility is open

WA Premier Colin Barnett officially opened the \$25 million Katanning Regional Sheep Saleyards on the 28 May 2014.

Guests at the ceremony included Agriculture Minister Ken Baston, South West MLC Jim Chown and O'Connor MHR Rick Wilson, along with about 1,000 people from the local community and region.

The backdrop to the opening was the inaugural sale, with 20,000 head of sheep going under the hammer.

The state-of-the-art facility, located three kilometres east of Katanning, comprises more than 1,000 pens under a 4.2 ha roof and has the capacity to accommodate

up to 45,000 sheep at any one time. It is projected that the saleyard will trade 1.5 million sheep annually.

The facility meets current standards for environmental sustainability, occupational health and safety, and animal handling and welfare. Design features include modern loading facilities, large holding pens, water for all stock, solar power generation and storm water capture and recycling.

Water harvested from the site has aided the development of another key project in Katanning: the rehabilitation and extension of Piesse Dam. This large freshwater lake will be in the town and will be fed via a pipeline from the saleyards.

The saleyard roof can capture 45 mega-litres of water per year, which, with other harvested water, will be used to maintain a consistent level in the lake. The water body and proposed surrounding parkland will create a unique recreational area and improve the amenity of the town.

The saleyards project was funded through grants of \$17 million from the State Government and \$7.4 million from the Australian Government. The Shire of Katanning contributed a significant amount of in-kind work and more than \$1 million in cash.

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Track named in world top 20

Bibbulmun Track earns National Geographic approval

National Geographic magazine has conferred world top 20 status on Western Australia's Bibbulmun Track, which stretches from Albany to Kalamunda.

The iconic magazine included the Bibbulmun Track as one of the world's top 20 'epic hikes', alongside walk trails such as the West Highland Way in Scotland, Cinque Terre in Italy, Great Himalaya Trail in Nepal and Mount Kailash Pilgrimage in Tibet.

National Geographic said the list comprised 'the holy grails of trails across the world' and the Bibbulmun was 'south-western Australia's answer to the Appalachian Trail'.

The Bibbulmun Track, the only Australian trail included, is noted for the level of facilities for walkers and for the experience of walking in remote wilderness. Hikers on the Bibbulmun have free use of 49 shelters along the way, each with sleeping platforms, bench and table, rainwater tank and simple bush toilets.

The GSDC partnered with the South West and Peel Development Commissions to gain \$1.1 million of Commonwealth funding for a major redevelopment of the track in 1998.

Until then, the track had limited facilities but the funding supported the provision of 48 shelters that set the Bibbulmun apart as a walker's delight.

The track is marked with yellow triangular markers depicting the Waugal, the rainbow serpent of Aboriginal Dreaming.

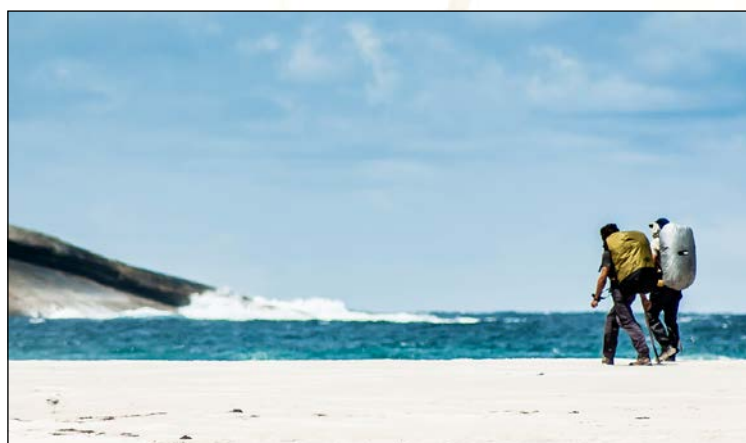
It passes through nine towns. In the Great Southern, the Bibbulmun Track takes in the Tree Top Walk and the boardwalk at the Albany Wind Farm.

Walking the track from end to end takes six to eight weeks. Many walkers complete it in sections over years, and many more access it for day walks or short sections.

The National Geographic listing lauds the flora and fauna encountered on the track and says the social aspect of the trail makes it most Australian.

"At the campsites you will meet hikers from around the globe as well as regular Australians who have fulfilled the original promise of the trail and are spending time simply walking for weeks to better understand themselves and the unique place where they live," the National Geographic said.

Contact: Linsey McFarlane, ph. 9842 4888



Epic world-class walk trail the Bibbulmun Track: the southern terminus in Albany (top), walkers on the south coast (middle) and Muttonbird campsite (bottom).



Scholarship enhances harbour knowledge

Research targets seagrass fauna

Research by a GSDC scholarship winner is expanding understanding of the marine environment in Princess Royal Harbour.

UWA Albany student Justin Benson, the recipient of the 2014 GSDC NRM Sustainability Research Scholarship, recently achieved a Bachelor of Science degree with first class honours.

Mr Benson's degree included a research project into the natural seagrass recovery in Princess Royal Harbour and its impact on the harbour's invertebrate fauna.

Seagrass meadows in Princess Royal Harbour contracted by 90 per cent in the 20th century. Research in 1988-1990 suggested that the degraded state of the ecosystem was evident in the lack of distinction between the types of marine fauna found in seagrass patches and those found in bare sand.

Subsequent changes in management practices within the catchment led to significant regrowth of seagrass, but there had been little assessment of the recovery of marine fauna.

Mr Benson's research showed that naturally regenerating seagrass patches and adjacent patches of bare sand now contain distinctly different fauna, and suggested that the change was indicative of improved conditions in the harbour.



Justin Benson at work on samples from Princess Royal Harbour.

Dr Barbara Cook, acting director of the UWA Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management, said the university was extremely proud of Mr Benson's achievement.

"His research will contribute to a fuller understanding of the ecosystem of Princess Royal Harbour," Dr Cook said.

Contact: Paula Phillips, ph. 9842 0810

Mastering ecotourism

New degree unique to Great Southern

Expanding opportunities in ecotourism provide an incentive for students in a new UWA Master degree available only in the Great Southern.

The Master of Ecotourism degree, through the UWA Albany Centre, covers the necessary knowledge and skills for involvement in ecotourism and nature-based tourism.

Subjects covered include biodiversity

and habitats, cultural heritage and Indigenous knowledge, entrepreneurship, innovation and small business management, interpretation and science communication, and environmental law, policy and planning.

Studies will take place in the context of the Great Southern's superb environment, with its natural attractions, rich biodiversity and assets such as the Bibbulmun Track and the Munda Biddi Trail.

The course includes hands-on field work, industry placements and the development of partnerships with the tourism industry.

Graduates of the two-year, full-time course (also available part-time and with exit points at graduate certificate and graduate diploma levels) will be positioned to take part in the fastest-growing segment of the international tourism market.

Contact: Paula Phillips, ph. 9842 0810

Spring sun to shine on Bloom Festival

Celebration of hidden treasures

Spring sunshine is about to brighten the Great Southern and draw visitors to the region's hidden treasures.

Hidden Treasures of the Great Southern, the sub-regional tourism group of the northern part of the region, has released the program for the 2014 Bloom Festival.

More than 40 events or activities are listed in the program, including guided bush walks, open gardens, photographic exhibitions and self-drive tours.

Hidden Treasures of the Great Southern chairperson Di Holly said there was something for everyone in the festival program, which runs from 13 September to 19 October.

Bloom Festival events focus on the floral riches of the Great Southern's eight northern shires: Broomehill-Tambellup, Cranbrook, Gnowangerup, Jerramungup, Katanning, Kent, Kojonup and Woodanilling.

The events take in 15 communities in the associated shires.

Hidden Treasures 2014 Bloom Festival is supported by \$15,000 in funding from the GSDC, which contributes to the event coordination, marketing and redevelopment of the Hidden Treasures website.

GSDC Chairman Peter Rundle said the festival provided a great opportunity for locals and visitors to enjoy the region's abundant natural and cultivated attractions and to experience the delights of locally grown foods, award-winning wines and a range of related activities.

The Hidden Treasure 2014 Bloom Festival program is available through the participating local governments, visitor centres, community resource centres and online at www.hiddentreasures.com.au.

Contact: Linsey McFarlane, ph. 9842 4888



Floral riches abound in the Hidden Treasures Bloom Festival program.

Work starts on lake facilities

Ewlyamartup enhancement continues

Lake Ewlyamartup is getting closer to regaining its status as an aquatic playground for residents of the Upper Great southern with the first ground being broken for installation of new facilities at the site.

Upgrades are part of the major restoration project which has been supported by the GSDC and will include shelters, picnic tables, barbecues, a new boat ramp and ablutions.

An excavator was recently on site at Lake Ewlyamartup to break the ground on the construction of the new facilities.





October celebration for Discovery Bay

Flora and wildlife displays to open

A week of celebration will follow the official opening in October of Discovery Bay's Botanic Gardens and Australian Wildlife displays.

The Albany tourist attraction, formerly known as Whale World, has planned a Discovery Bay Spring Festival to follow the official opening on Sunday 5 October.

An opening event for invited guests will take place from 10.30am to noon, following which the site will be open to the community until 4pm, with family-oriented activities and performances.

The Ukeladies, Moondog J Trio and Bogans of Democracy, as well as street performers, guided tours of the Botanic Gardens and information sessions will be a feature of the afternoon.

Discovery Bay general manager Glenn Russell said the new displays would then be the setting for a festival program from Monday 6 October to Friday 10 October (10.30am to 3pm daily) including a range of interesting and varied workshops, activities, performances, demonstrations and static displays.

The final weekend, 11 and 12 October, will feature concerts as well as a range of workshops, activities, lectures, demonstrations and static displays.



Discovery Bay's grand amphitheatre will be alive with visitors during the week-long opening celebration in October.

Mr Russell said Discovery Bay hoped the festival could become an annual event.

Opening the botanic and wildlife displays will cap off years of work at Discovery Bay, which built new access roads, car parks, a 2000-capacity amphitheatre and a series of six linked ponds for water management.

Royalties for Regions funding of \$380,000, via the Great Southern Regional Grants

Scheme, supported the construction of the access roads and car parks.

Wildlife on show includes possums, kangaroos, reptiles and birds.

More than 130,000 native plants form the botanic display, which focuses on flora of the south coast.

Contact: Linsey McFarlane, ph. 9842 4888

Options for Mount Barker seniors

Collet Barker project progresses

Mount Barker seniors can access more affordable, low maintenance accommodation in their own community as the first stage of the Collet Barker Court project nears completion.

Managed by Plantagenet Village Homes, the new village of two- and three-bedroom units is located near the town's central business area.

It addresses a shortage of such accommodation at Mount Barker, allowing

seniors to downsize without moving away from the community, family and friends that provide much-needed support.

The GSDC has been a strong supporter of the project, providing \$137,914 in Royalties for Regions funding through the Regional Grants Scheme towards the first stage of the project.

Each unit is designed to be environmentally friendly, modern and easy care, and adaptable to the needs of seniors.

Demonstrating the high demand, one of five units constructed in the first stage of the project has already been sold. Construction of the remaining units will be staged as sales progress. For sales information, contact Sheryl Bennett on 9851 1666.

The Collet Barker Court development will be formally opened on Friday 17 October 2014.

Contact: Christine Grogan, ph. 9842 4888

Main street open for business

Enhancement project shapes up

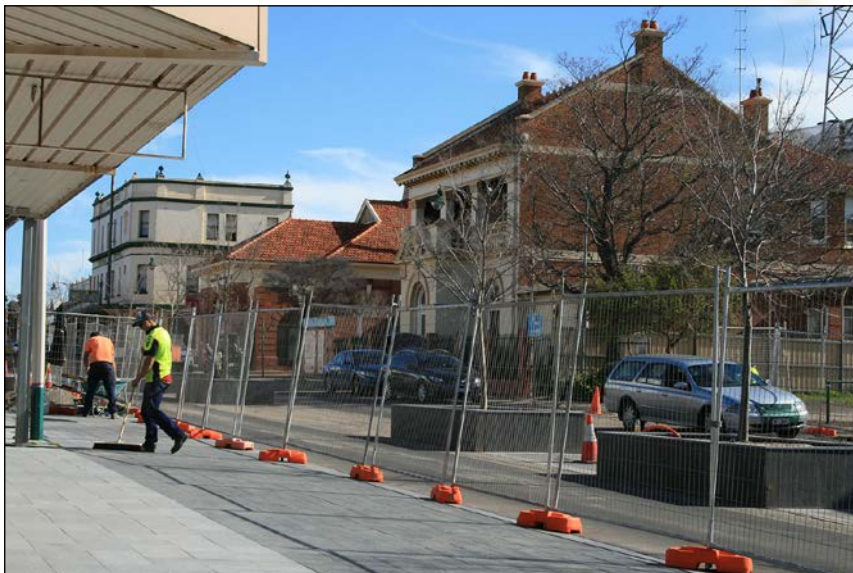
New drainage is installed, the tree pits are finished, the elms are in, the paving is under way and the main street is open for business.

Enhancement and beautification work in the main street of Katanning is part of the \$8.7 million Town Centre Enhancement project, funded through the Royalties for Regions SuperTowns program.

The street scaping has been designed to address issues of flooding in the street and walkways, and uneven pavement resulting from tree root intrusion. It will also provide upgraded parking and lighting and create a public open space with a new town square.

The Shire has also launched the complementary Clive Street Revitalisation Front Facade Incentive, which provides support for business owners to upgrade their shop facades.

Now that the street has reopened to traffic, the Shire is in the process of developing an 'Open for Business' campaign with the aim of encouraging people to renew local



Shire of Katanning workers complete the first section of paving along Clive Street during the town centre enhancement.

shopping habits and support the town's businesses, particularly in the lead-up to the busy Christmas period.

For updates on the project and other events

in Katanning, the Shire has launched a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/shireofkatanning.

Contact: Laura Hellard, ph. 9821 9999