

Solid gains in 2016

Projects spread benefits across Great Southern

Boardroom changes, major project funding, continuing grant rounds and a variety of completed projects mark the passage of 2016 at the Great Southern Development Commission.

Long-serving Board Chair Peter Rundle, who had held the position since 2009, left the Board in April 2016. Former Deputy Chair Ross Thornton was named the new Chair, and Ronnie Fleay became the Deputy Chair of the Board.

Highlights of the year included the record-setting SEGRA conference and the production of the feature film *Breath*.

TV star Simon Baker directed and took the lead role in the film of *Breath*, Tim Winton's award-winning novel. Filmed on location in Denmark, *Breath* is now in post-production and is expected to be released in 2017.

The Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia conference attracted a record audience in October (see page 5).

Major projects in the Growing Our South initiative continued to build the region in 2016. The GSDC supported the development of the business cases that back the Growing Our South projects.

Announcements during the year included the Denmark East Development Precinct, the Katanning SuperTown Heritage Centre Project, Bremer Bay Town Centre and Trail Project, Stage 2 of the Affordable Student Housing project and the William Bay and Denmark Tourism Infrastructure Renewal (see page 3).



GSDC Chair Ross Thornton



GSDC Deputy Chair Ronnie Fleay



Above: new visitor facilities at The Gap and Natural Bridge.

Left: Star and director of *Breath* Simon Baker on location.

Growing Our South projects announced in 2016 were allocated a total of \$45 million in Royalties for Regions funding and the total project value was more than \$61 million. New visitor infrastructure at The Gap and Natural Bridge, funded by Growing Our South, was completed during 2016 and opened in May.

Grant programs administered by the GSDC continued in 2016. In July, 13 projects were approved for funding through the GSDC's Regional Grants Scheme, sharing \$1.5 million, and 21 projects were allocated grants through the Community Chest Fund, sharing \$555,555. Between the two schemes, large and small projects have been funded across the region, from the Nyabing Community Hub (page 7) to the Denmark Riverside Club (page 6) and the Gnowangerup Pool (page 3).

GSDC activities in 2016 also featured four promotional videos, support for growth in aquaculture, pursuit of further film productions and the award of the 2016 GSDC Medal to world seagrass restoration pioneer Geoff Bastyan.

Details of the Commission's activities can be found on the recently-refurbished GSDC website at www.gsdc.wa.gov.au.

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Sun shines on pool celebration

Gnowangerup set for summer

Gnowangerup residents turned out in force as the sun shone on the opening of the town's new swimming pool on Saturday 5 November.

Once the ribbon was cut by GSDC Chair Ross Thornton, Gnowangerup Shire President Keith House and Wagin MLA Terry Waldron, the pool quickly filled with watery fun and laughter.

The Shire of Gnowangerup's \$3 million project was supported by the GSDC with \$200,000 in funding through the GSDC's Regional Grants Scheme, made possible by the State Government's Royalties for Regions program.

Funding also came through the Department of Sport and Recreation, Lotterywest and the Shire of Gnowangerup.



GSDC Chair Ross Thornton (left) joined Gnowangerup Shire President Keith House and Wagin MLA Terry Waldron to cut the ribbon on the swimming pool project.

The new facility is co-located with the Gnowangerup Sporting Complex.

GSDC Chair Ross Thornton said the pool was a great asset for the town and surrounding areas.

"New health and lifestyle benefits will be available to people in Gnowangerup through the heated pool which will provide year-round service," Mr Thornton said.

"Children will have a convenient place to learn to swim, families will enjoy the recreation, and the pool will offer potential health benefits for seniors.

"People living in surrounding areas will be able to use a local facility instead of travelling to Katanning, Mount Barker or Albany," Mr Thornton said.

Gnowangerup's new, centrally-located modern aquatic centre replaces an 80-year-old pool on the edge of town which had reached the end of its serviceable life.

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Research reveals new water resources

Boost to reserves may benefit industry, agriculture

Albany's available water resources have been boosted by up to ten gigalitres following groundwater mapping by the Department of Water.

Water Minister Mia Davies visited Albany on Wednesday 30 November to release the Albany Hinterland Prospective Groundwater Resource map.

Ms Davies said a four-year water investigation funded by Royalties for Regions revealed billions of litres of good quality groundwater in palaeochannel aquifers that could meet regional development needs for decades.

The research revealed up to five gigalitres of good quality water with a further five gigalitres of lesser quality that could be suitable for agricultural or industrial uses.

"The Department of Water has used a

combination of aerial electromagnetic surveys and targeted drilling and sampling, to produce a detailed map that outlines prospective zones, depth, quality and potential quantity of water available for use," Ms Davies said.

"This could potentially have huge benefits to local industry and investment opportunities in the region."

GSDC Chair Ross Thornton said the Great Southern Regional Investment Blueprint included a key project area targeting secure water supplies.

"Water supply and security was a common theme raised by stakeholders over the course of more than 100 interviews conducted during the development of the Blueprint," Mr Thornton said. "These findings open up the possibilities of horticulture precincts supplying domestic

and export markets with more high quality product.

"Information from this groundwater study will be a valuable guide for industry proponents as they conduct their own further investigations into specific hinterland locations based on the map."

Development of the water resource map involved 8,810 line kilometres of aerial surveys, more than 60 sample locations and 1,000 metres of exploratory drilling.

According to Department of Water projections, demand for water in the Great Southern will increase by more than 20 gigalitres by 2043 under a medium growth scenario. Agricultural expansion is expected to account for seven gigalitres a year of the projected increase.

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William Bay set for makeover

New facilities to benefit visitors and locals

William Bay National Park, one of the Great Southern's favourite coastal destinations, is set to get a \$10.5 million upgrade of facilities for visitors.

New trails, roads, car parks, lookouts and picnic tables will enhance visitors' enjoyment of the popular locations of Greens Pool, Elephant Rocks, Madfish Bay and Waterfall Beach.

Funding for the upgrade includes \$9.3 million from the State Government's Royalties for Regions Growing Our South initiative, \$1.46 million from the Department of Parks and Wildlife and \$100,000 from the Shire of Denmark.

Regional Development Minister Terry Redman visited William Bay on Friday 11 November to announce the funding.

"The new and improved facilities will create positive visitor experiences and contribute towards the sustainability of the tourism industry in Denmark, Walpole, Mount Barker and Albany," Mr Redman said.

"Projects such as this also create jobs for local contractors and services, with long-lasting social and economic



Regional Development Minister Terry Redman (second from left) visited William Bay with (from left) Denmark Shire CEO Bill Parker, GSDC Chair Ross Thornton and DPW Warren Regional Manager Luke Bentley.

benefits flowing back through to regional communities."

GSDC Chair Ross Thornton said the improvements would serve the Commission's aim to see tourism doubling to 20 per cent of regional turnover.

"We want the Great Southern to be an exemplar of best practice management of land, water and coastal assets, including tourism icons such as Greens Pool, Elephant Rocks and Madfish Bay," Mr Thornton said.

The park draws more than 238,000 visits a year and the number is growing.

The upgrade also includes realignment of the Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail, and a further upgrade of the Wilderness to Ocean Trail.

The works will provide 'access for more' trails and facilities. Where possible, universal access will be provided for people with disabilities.

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Mobile coverage expands

Borden launched, new sites announced

Borden is the latest Great Southern town to benefit from improved mobile phone coverage under the Royalties for Regions-funded Regional Telecommunications Project (RTP).

A new mobile base station was officially launched in the town on Wednesday 28 September.

An announcement on Thursday 1 December revealed that a further nine Great Southern locations have been added to the schedule of base stations under the RTP.

The full list of RTP sites, available online through the industry and innovation pages of the Department of Commerce website,

shows that six sites have been activated in the Great Southern through the RTP so far.

Including the latest announcement, the Great Southern is set to gain a further 33 sites by 2019, with 16 of them scheduled for activation by the end of 2017.

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GSDC festive season closure

GSDC offices in Albany and Katanning will close for the Christmas break at 5pm on Friday 23 December, and reopen at 8.30am on Tuesday 3 January.

Board and staff members wish all project partners and supporters the compliments of the season and look forward to continue working together in 2017.

Sports codes team up for pavilion

New venue for soccer and cricket

Cricket and soccer players and supporters celebrated the opening of their \$2.2 million shared pavilion at Centennial Park on Tuesday 29 November.

Sport and Recreation Minister Mia Davies joined City of Albany Mayor Dennis Wellington, Noongar elder Treasy Woods and sports club representatives to cut the ribbon on the new building.

Ms Davies said the completion of the pavilion was a major step towards the completion of the \$27 million re-development of Centennial Park.

Construction of the pavilion was supported by Lotterywest, the Department of Sport and Recreation and the City of Albany.

Royalties for Regions funding of \$49,500 through the GSDC's Community Chest Fund supported the fit-out of the pavilion, providing kitchen, audio-visual, furniture



Minister for Sport and Recreation Mia Davies (left) cut the ribbon to open the sports pavilion with Noongar elder Treasy Woods and City of Albany Mayor Dennis Wellington.

and office equipment, along with some portable soccer goals.

GSDC Chair Ross Thornton lauded the collaboration between the sporting codes.

"Junior and senior levels of the cricket

and soccer clubs have all worked together on this project," Mr Thornton said. "They have certainly achieved a better result as a team than they could as individual organisations."

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From African harmony to rock and soul

Music, film and writers feature

Soul-stirring vocal harmonies from South Africa and a formidable force from the heart of American rock and soul will entice Great Southern Festival fans in 2017.

South African culture will be celebrated in the intricate rhythms and harmonies of the Vuyani Ensemble.

American rock, soul and blues outfit Nathaniel Rateliff and the Night Sweats are also on the festival program, which was launched on Wednesday 16 November in Albany.

The Great Southern Festival is a program of events from the Perth International Arts Festival (PIAF). The Great Southern program began in 2003 with the support of the GSDC, which continues as the festival's Founding Partner.

PIAF artistic director Wendy Martin outlined

the 2017 program and said events such as the Great Southern Festival were about bringing people together to celebrate diverse aspects of their community.

GSDC Chair Ross Thornton said the festival connected the regional community to artistic and cultural experiences that are usually only available to metropolitan audiences.

"It's a wonderful enhancement to life in this region and it's another reason that the Great Southern is a natural choice for opportunity and lifestyle," Mr Thornton said.

The GSDC is supporting the 2017 festival with \$65,864 of Royalties for Regions funding through the Great Southern Regional Grants Scheme.

Classical music events include the Calder

Quartet and the piano collaboration of Elena Kats-Chernin and Tamara-Anna Cislowska.

PIAF artist-in-residence Amy Sharrocks, from the UK, will invite public participation in the Museum of Water project that gathers samples of water and associated stories that will become part of the permanent collection of the WA Museum.

Authors William McInnes, Jessie Burton, Ian McGuire, Amy Stewart and Kate Summerscale appear in the writers program and the festival features a cinema program of 12 international films.

The Great Southern Festival runs from Tuesday 7 February to Thursday 16 March 2017. Ticketing information is available through perthfestival.com.au.

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SEGRA draws record numbers

Conference examines regional development

Australia's premier national conference on regional economic growth drew a record audience to its 20th annual event, held in Albany and the Great Southern in October.

The Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA) conference, from 26 to 28 October, was hailed as an outstanding success by GSDC Chair Ross Thornton.

"Attracting a record number of delegates to the Great Southern for a conference of national significance is a great achievement for SEGRA at its 20th conference and a strong endorsement of the GSDC's commitment to bid for the event," Mr Thornton said.

"Proceedings at the conference explored some critical issues for continuing regional development, including the need to foster innovation, create agile organisations and build resilient communities.

"Keynote speakers confirmed directions set by the GSDC, for example, the potential of aquaculture as outlined in the *Great Southern Regional Investment Blueprint*.

"SEGRA delivered a wealth of information and new perspectives, and it was pleasing to host the event in such a wonderful location," Mr Thornton said.

Mr Thornton acknowledged the support of co-host partners the City of Albany and



Conference convenor and founder Kate Charters and GSDC Chair Ross Thornton on the first day of SEGRA 2016.

Regional Development Australia-Great Southern.

He said the Commission also valued the support of the other 14 partners in the bid process.

"Bringing SEGRA 2016 to Albany and the Great Southern was a cooperative effort that extended across the region, and the contributions of all supporters were invaluable," Mr Thornton said.

"Their support enabled us to showcase Albany and the region and bring in a wealth of impressive speakers."

Speakers at the event presented a wide range of issues, strongly featuring leadership, collaboration and innovation.

WA Chief Scientist Professor Peter Klinken

described research on science, innovation and growth, and advised, for example, that small to medium enterprises were net creators of jobs but big enterprises were net destroyers of jobs.

Idea Couture CEO Idris Mootee said design thinking was not just about new ideas but was a serious way of mapping and visualising the future by analysing the dynamics and the behaviour of individuals and organisations.

Delegates attended two days of plenary sessions and workshops, and many also took part in informative regional tours on the final day of the event.

SEGRA 2017 will be held on 18-20 October in Port Augusta, South Australia.

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New meeting place for men

Purpose-built premises for Men's Shed

Men in Albany have a new place to meet, yarn and make things.

Albany Men's Shed opened on Wednesday 7 December and invited guests to look over the workshop and meeting spaces.

Royalties for Regions funding of \$20,000 through the GSDC's Community Chest Fund supported the construction of the new facility, located behind the Albany PCYC.

Foundation members of The Albany MenShed Mike Taylor, Graham McBeath and Brad Mewburn outlined the organisation's long path to securing its own premises.

Mr Mewburn acknowledged the long-term support of the Albany Agricultural Society, which hosted the Men's Shed in its Centennial Park premises for many years.

Construction of purpose-built premises has

enabled the provision of function space, work space and a machinery section that is behind a soundproof wall.

The Albany Men's Shed project was also supported by the City of Albany, \$400,000 through Lotterywest and \$50,000 through the Jack Family Trust, along with support from a range of local businesses and organisations.

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Natural play for children

Child care centre builds natural connections

A new nature playground at the Albany Occasional Child Care Centre is the latest step in the movement to strengthen children's connections with the natural world.

At a ceremony on Wednesday 7 December, excited children from the centre took the limelight to officially cut the ribbon and declare the playground open.

GSDC Chair Ross Thornton said the facility would be a healthy play and learning setting for children attending the centre. Mr Thornton said that in previous generations, children had usually had stronger connections to nature.

"It is now well acknowledged that our society has lost something along the way in recent decades, as we provided more structures and boundaries around children's play experiences," Mr Thornton said.

"We inadvertently started to disconnect children from nature, to their detriment. Nature playgrounds restore some of that connection to the natural world.



Ivy Hull and Noah Piercy (both 4), helped by outgoing AOCCC Committee Chair Kelly Hull (left) and coordinator Brittany Elmer, cut the ribbon to open the centre's nature playground.

"Connections to nature are healthy for children, and the Commission supports initiatives that build better experiences for children in the Great Southern."

The nature playground project was supported with \$30,000 through the Community Chest Fund, which is made

possible by the State Government's Royalties for Regions program. Mr Thornton said the funding decision aligned with the *Great Southern Regional Investment Blueprint*, which has a key project area on building strong communities.

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Riverside clubhouse for Denmark

Building set to be community asset

Denmark Riverside Club opened its new clubhouse, featuring environmentally-aware design, on Wednesday 26 October.

Member for O'Connor Rick Wilson and Regional Development Minister Terry Redman jointly declared the facility open, making a significant asset available to the Denmark community.

The \$2.2 million clubhouse on the east bank of the Denmark River was supported by the GSDC with \$200,000 in funding through the Great Southern Regional Grants Scheme, made possible by the State Government's Royalties for Regions program.

The Commission also supported a

business case that helped to secure grant funding for the project.

Other funding for the project came from a Commonwealth Government Community Development Grant, Lotterywest and the Shire of Denmark.

GSDC Chair Ross Thornton said the clubhouse would not only benefit the club members, but would offer significant opportunities to the wider community.

"Denmark Riverside Club members will enjoy pursuing their sports and activities in this attractive and well-appointed building," Mr Thornton said.

"Members of the wider community now

have access on a commercial basis to a 200-seat venue, something that has been lacking in Denmark.

"This offers new opportunities for community groups and organisations to host a wider range of functions and events.

"The GSDC is pleased to support projects that demonstrate hard work and commitment by community organisations, and which produce broader benefits for the town," Mr Thornton said.

The solar-passive clubhouse includes a kitchen, bar, administration offices, toilet and shower block, and storage space.

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Map sets out project spread

Royalties for Regions data online

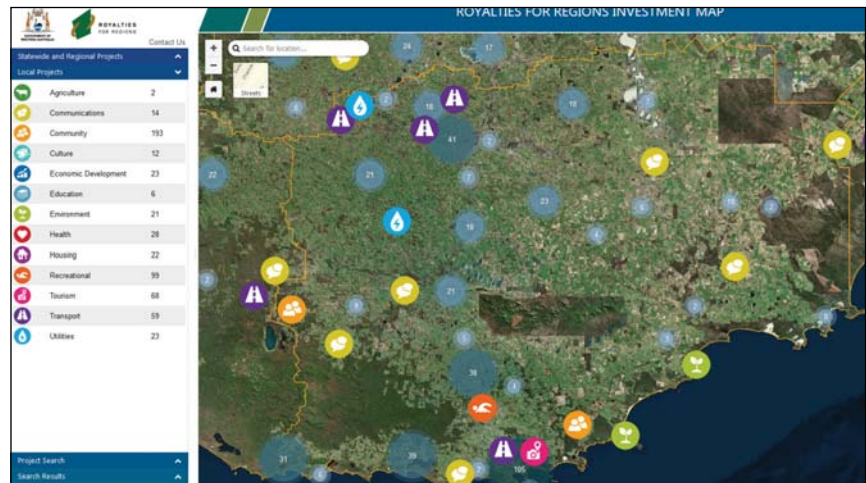
Information about Royalties for Regions projects in the Great Southern and throughout Western Australia is now available in an online map through the Department of Regional Development.

The interactive map, powered by Landgate, displays information about Royalties for Regions projects across more than 4,700 locations across the State. Users can zoom in to locations of interest to find individual project listings.

GSDC Chair Ross Thornton said the online map provides a unique opportunity for regional communities to see, in context, the planned or completed projects in their area delivered as part of the Royalties for Regions program.

"Since 2008, more than \$6.9 billion has been invested through Royalties for Regions, and this is just the start," Mr Thornton said.

"Big things are happening in our regions – and the RfR Investment Map provides



Users can zoom in to the Royalties for Regions map to find project listings.

Western Australians with the opportunity to see the difference Royalties for Regions is making to our state.

"Investment in projects such as infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, communications and health contributes to creating vibrant regions with strong

economies where people want to live, work and raise their children."

The RfR Investment Map is accessible via smartphone, tablet or computer by visiting <https://rfrmap.drd.wa.gov.au>.

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Welcome mat out at Nyabing

First stage of community hub opens

Shire of Kent residents took time out from harvesting to celebrate the opening of the first stage of their new community hub in Nyabing on Monday 5 December.

Harvests have played a big part in the development of the community hub, as the Nyabing Progress Association has organised five fundraising community cropping programs.

The fundraising combined with a \$150,000 grant through the GSDC's Regional Grants Scheme, along with support from the Federal Government's National Stronger Regions Fund and the Shire of Kent.

Stage 1 is a \$527,413 project providing accommodation facilities suitable for seasonal workers and tourists.

Later stages of the project will deliver a new

community hub building and manager's residence, which are also supported through the Regional Grants Scheme with a \$200,000 grant.

GSDC Chair Ross Thornton said the opening of the six accommodation units in Stage 1 of the project was exciting for Nyabing.

"A great deal of community effort has gone into this project," Mr Thornton said.

"The Commission is pleased to be able to support that kind of commitment."

Nyabing Progress Association Vice Chair Fiona Hobley said the opening was a great day for the community.

"Nyabing is open for business as a welcoming place for people to come and

stay and enjoy our small town," Ms Hobley said.

Mr Thornton said the later stages of the project will provide a venue to support services that might not otherwise be available in the town.

The \$1.47 million Stage 2 of the Nyabing Community Hub will deliver a new building that will include a conference room, meeting room, offices, reception, commercial kitchen, dining and licensed area.

The office facilities will be available to visiting professionals including doctors and representatives of government and community agencies.

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Young House turns 30

Birthday celebrations for homeless youth support

Young performers created a buzz at Albany's town square on Thursday 24 November when the Albany Youth Support Association (AYSA) celebrated the 30th anniversary of its flagship Young House program.

Young House has provided support for homeless youth since 1986 and is the core of AYSA programs that also include Open Access Youth Arts, Reconnect and Albany Youth Outreach.

The anniversary event was supported by the GSDC as part of a \$34,555 grant through the Community Chest Fund (CCF).

The grant is for activities through the Open Access Youth Arts program, which involves young people from Albany and Denmark. A previous CCF grant of \$20,000 supported art and music activities that included the creation of the Anzac mural near Dog Rock.

AYSA Chief Executive Officer Rick England acknowledged the support of the GSDC and



Celebrating the Young House milestone, from left, GSDC Chair Ross Thornton, Albany MLA Peter Watson, City of Albany Mayor Dennis Wellington and Noongar elder Lester Coyne.

paid tribute to other agencies that worked in partnership with the organisation, such as Headspace.

He said young people who contacted the organisation often did so when their immediate need was for shelter.

"The issues that they face are a lot more complex than that," Mr England said. "It's

not just about housing, it's often about the journey to get stability back in their lives.

"It might be about their mental health, it might be about issues with drugs or parental drug use, it might be parental mental health.

"There's so many issues that face young people which need all those agencies to pull in and provide that support, and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts," Mr England said.

GSDC Chair Ross Thornton said the Commission's support for AYSA was part of its aim to keep regional communities strong.

Mr Thornton joined City of Albany Mayor Dennis Wellington, Albany MLA Peter Watson and Noongar elder Lester Coyne to cut a cake as the beginning of the birthday celebrations.

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