

MEDIA RELEASE

PS Oscar W 114th Birthday 12 October 2022

Our iconic paddle steamer is celebrating 114 years of sailing this weekend. The rich history of the PS Oscar W has seen it journey across the country and play a part in some important operations over its lifetime.

The Council-owned paddle steamer was built in Echuca, Victoria, in 1908 and was originally used to service the Murrumbidgee River and Upper Murray trade. Since 1942, the vessel has called Goolwa home and has become a well-known icon in the region. Alexandrina Council purchased the PS Oscar W from the Tourism Commission for \$1 in 2001 and the vessel was put back into Survey in 2008 for her 100th birthday. Some fourteen years on, 54 active volunteers play an integral part in maintaining and operating the paddle steamer.

Council has committed to a five-year Wooden Boat Strategy as a commitment to maintaining the boat, promoting our heritage, and supporting the traditional shipwright industry. Another successful maintenance slipping was completed in September by Chief Engineer Wayne Burford and the many volunteers from the 'Friends of the PS Oscar W'. We are so thankful for their contribution and time dedicated to the slipping project. This biennial work keeps the vessel in premium condition for operation for years to come.

The PS Oscar W promotes our heritage and history by providing educational opportunities for visitors and locals to engage with our past. The vessel allows them to experience the living history of Goolwa, the Alexandrina region, and South Australia.

Council is incredibly fortunate to be able to support the traditional ship building and shipwright industry through having an array of retired and skilled professionals who maintain their qualifications for the maintenance and operations of the PS Oscar W. Qualifications required to operate the PS Oscar W include Master IV, Coxswain, Marine Engine Driver Steam, Shipboard safety, Fireman, Engineer, tender boat driver and deckhands. With the diverse range of skillsets and qualifications, supporting these volunteers not only keeps our PS Oscar W running but allows Council to continue to support an important industry that makes up our history.

"It is exciting that our very own PS Oscar W has such a legacy in our community", said Chief Executive Officer, Nigel Morris.

"We are not only celebrating the great paddle steamer, but also all those who put their time and effort into ensuring the vessel operates at its best. The recent maintenance work that has been completed was a phenomenal job and will keep the paddle steamer running like new. The PS Oscar W continues to serve our community well and is a great piece of history that is in operation today".

Alexandrina Council have a number of historic vessels, with more than 16,980 volunteer hours from over 125 dedicated volunteers each year going into the maintenance, preservation and activation of these vessels. Most volunteers are local residents, who with skill and enthusiasm, authentically maintain and activate Council's wooden boats and seasonal boating events.

We are excited to run the SA Wooden Boat Festival in 2023, where PS Oscar W will be the jewel in the crown. This award-winning event attracts visitors from across the country and is held biennially in the River Port of Goolwa. The festival promises boats aplenty, on water and land, ranging from canoes and rowing skiffs to traditional wooden boats large and small, powered, under sail and by steam.

The Fleurieu Peninsula is the most visited region in SA and it is the iconic assets like the PS Oscar W that keep bringing people back.

The PS Oscar W birthday celebrations will be held on Sunday 16 October with cake, speeches, and cruises throughout the day. This event is open for the public to attend and join in on the celebrations.

