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MEDIA RELEASE

Alexandrina Council accepts SA Ombudsman finding in relation to the Goolwa Wharf Recreational Boating Facility (Goolwa Pontoons) project

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In early 2010, Alexandrina Council commenced planning for the construction of floating pontoons at the Goolwa Wharf Precinct to widen an existing boardwalk, known as Hector's Jetty. Due to structural faults, the pontoons associated with the facility were later removed.

We acknowledge comments made by the South Australian Ombudsman this week regarding a finding of maladministration pertaining to Council's practices associated with development approvals for the Goolwa Wharf Recreational Boating Facility (Goolwa Pontoons) project in 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Alexandrina Council accepts this finding and takes its responsibilities with respect to major capital projects and expenditure of public funds very seriously. We note that the Ombudsman has made no formal recommendations in relation to the finding, and recognises that Council has implemented improved practices relating to major capital projects since the construction of the Goolwa Pontoons, and has also prepared a detailed implementation response to address the finding of the report.

Alexandrina Council Chief Executive Officer, Glenn Rappensberg while noting the historical nature of the matter, acknowledges and accepts the finding within the report and is confident measures have been implemented which will prevent a similar occurrence in the future.

"We appreciate the effort of the SA Ombudsman to provide a thorough and considered report. Since commencing my role in May 2017, we have taken steps to improve the culture and practice of financial and major project administration. This has included an organisation restructure in 2018, Executive oversight of all major projects, and a position on the Executive for a CPA-trained professional, responsible for providing financial advice and another level of scrutiny of major projects undertaken by this Council."

"We have also prepared an implementation response to the finding of this report to further strengthen our project management and associated governance practices. This response will be led by Council's recently appointed General Manager of Growth, who brings substantial experience in other councils, implementing major capital projects.

“We are confident the Alexandrina community can have assurance in the future leadership of the organisation to expend public funds in a careful, considered and appropriate manner, consistent with legislative obligations,” said Mr. Rappensberg.

Alexandrina Council Mayor Keith Parkes has confidence in the current administrative processes of Council, noting improvements during his time as Mayor since 2014.

“We note this as a lesson for our organisation to ensure all legislative requirements are followed in relation to projects of this nature. I have witnessed improvements in the administration’s handling of major projects in recent years and assure the Alexandrina community that its elected members will perform an ongoing role of diligent oversight and leadership,” he said.

Alexandrina Council accepts the finding of the SA Ombudsman’s report and looks forward to a future of improved practices in relation to the delivery of major projects and strengthened bonds with its passionate and enthusiastic community.