

MEDIA RELEASE

Funding win sees SA Wooden Boat Festival return to Goolwa Wharf Precinct in 2024

9 August 2023

The South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) has awarded funding to the SA Wooden Boat Festival, ensuring it will dock again in Goolwa next year in time to launch the redeveloped waterfront precinct.

The Festival, currently scheduled for late October 2024, has secured funding through the SATC Regional Event Fund to support this popular event over two years in 2024 and 2026.

It was awarded under the Fund's Established Event category which supports events that can demonstrate a strong track record of growth and strategic tourism value to the state.

Alexandrina Council Mayor Keith Parkes welcomed the announcement, saying the State Government sponsorship highlighted the importance of the Festival and Goolwa Wharf as a tourism hot spot and is a 'show of confidence' in the evolving redevelopment project.

"The SA Wooden Boat Festival is normally a biennial event with this year's successful festival being held on Hindmarsh Island because of the redevelopment work underway at the Wharf Precinct," Mr Parkes said.

"With the support of the Regional Event Fund over two years, the Festival Committee and the Council will be able to host another festival in 2024, showcasing not only the wooden boat traditions and river heritage of South Australia but our \$14.55 million investment into Goolwa's historic Wharf Precinct.

"This year's festival attracted 12,000 visitors and injected an estimated \$2.8 million in economic benefits into our region, earning the event a finalist position in the 2023 National Economic Development Awards.

"I have no doubt our special 2024 festival will be just as successful and will be an opportunity for the community to celebrate the new vision for the Goolwa Wharf Precinct.

"The SATC funding will also support a second event in 2026 and ensure that our SA Wooden Boat Festival will be held in alternate years to the biennial Australian Wooden Boat Festival in Hobart which is scheduled for February 2025."

Goolwa Wharf was built in the early 1850s and was Australia's first inland port, supporting a thriving wooden boat industry and the freight of goods down the river to the sea to Victor Harbor via rail.



In 2020, Alexandrina announced a major upgrade of the wharf precinct after securing \$3.74 million from the Australian Government through Building Better Regions Fund and \$1.25 million from the Government of South Australia.

Work on Stage 1, upgrading the site's Signal Point building, is well underway and will be finished in November 2023.

The remaining works are expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

The SA Wooden Boat Festival has been running as a biennial event since the 1980s.

The event celebrates South Australia's river port history and promotes the attractions and award-winning food and wine offerings of the region.

"Alexandrina Council is extremely grateful to SATC for this funding investment for the Festival, which just adds to the State Government's support for our Santos Tour Down Under Stage 4 finish in Port Elliot on 19 January 2024," Mayor Keith Parkes said.

"These events and others demonstrate the importance of Goolwa and the Fleurieu Peninsula in building South Australia's reputation as a premiere visitor destination.

"Council is excited about the progress of the redevelopment of Goolwa Wharf Precinct and is currently calling for Registrations of Interest from prospective businesses and community groups looking to become involved in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to activate this site through building tenancies in the Precinct."

For further information about the SA Wooden Boat Festival, log onto www.sawoodenboatfestival.com.au/

For further information about the activation strategy for the Goolwa Wharf Precinct, head to www.mysay.alexandrina.sa.gov.au/wharf-activation

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