

Water-Based Recreation Management Plan



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Report Summary

Background and Scope

The development of a Water-Based Recreation Management Plan (WBRMP) for the Rural City of Murray Bridge (RCMB) was a recommendation of the RCMB Riverfront Strategy 2016. The purpose of that strategy was to identify opportunities for rejuvenation along the Murray River Corridor, encompassing future potential for residential land uses, recreational uses and sustainable environmental management.

The strategy identified opportunities and constraints relating to a broad range of environmental and economic considerations and noted that Murray Bridge hosts a broad range of water-based tourist activities including boating, fishing, water-skiing and jet-boat activities, kayaking, swimming, houseboats, paddle-steamer cruising and short paddle-boat cruises. Event based tourism was flagged as a great opportunity for the town.

Item MBR9 (High Priority) Develop a management plan for water-based recreation, outlining preferred uses within the river and recommending restrictions if required.

Xyst Australia Pty Ltd was engaged by RCMB in November 2019 to undertake the development of the WBRMP.

The WBRMP considers preferred water-based recreation uses and the resultant levels of service required to support the recreational river uses and any identified opportunities as well as sustainable environmental management.

Strategic Context

The general thrust of strategic planning and policy approaches seek to leverage off the region's natural assets and proximity to Adelaide, to support a thriving, healthy, connected and active community, providing fit for purpose facilities, attracting visitation and enabling sustainable economic development across the region, whilst preserving, promoting and enhancing environmental and cultural heritage values.

At a more local and detailed level, individual master plans and concept plans articulate proposals to upgrade various infrastructure to support both water-based and land-based recreation activities in riverfront reserves, meet the needs of local residents and promote increased visitation to the region.

Drivers for Change

Evolving recreation preferences, technological advances and population growth trends are likely to lead to increased pressures on all community infrastructure and services, in particular the riverfront reserves and the most popular sections of the river that draw in visitors from across the region and beyond.

Reserve Assessments

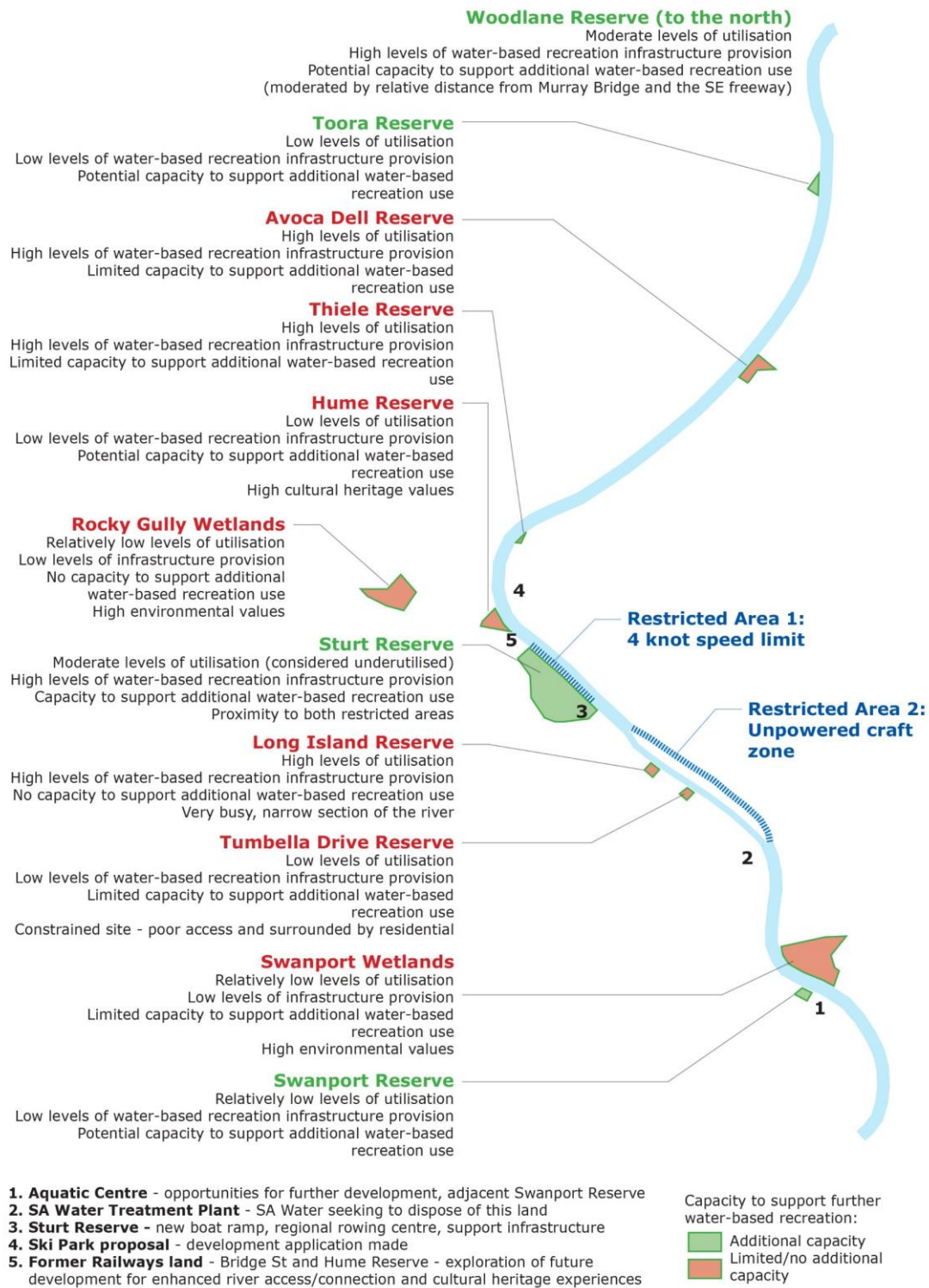
Each riverfront reserve within the project scope was visited on several occasions during the course of developing this plan to gain a better understanding of how each reserve supports water-based recreation, with a focus on infrastructure provision and each reserve's relationship with the adjoining section of river (and any activity restrictions in place on the water). Findings from background research and community and key stakeholder engagement also informed this analysis.

For each reserve the following components were analysed to inform the recommendations of the WBRMP:

- Key site issues for consideration
- Suggestions/priorities identified through consultation processes
- Key characteristics of the reserve and its usage
- Key characteristics of the adjacent section of river and its usage
- Current development proposals already underway or under consideration

Reserve Capacity and Potential

Drawing together the findings of the background research and riverfront reserve analysis the map below articulates the relative levels of capacity of each riverfront reserve to accommodate additional usage to support water-based recreation activities. The map also identifies other facilities and current proposals that are considered relevant to the development of the WBRMP (refer 1-4).



Consultation

Extensive community and key stakeholder consultation processes were embedded into the development of the WBRMP. These consultation opportunities were promoted widely, including via RCMB social media posts and RCMB directly mailing 385 letters to riverside land and shack owners to alert them to intercept survey dates, the online survey and listening post.

The following consultation processes were conducted during December 2019 and January 2020:

- Intercept Surveys – 212 separate groups (ranging in size between 5 and 15 individuals) utilising various riverfront reserves were surveyed over a period of 5 days during the Christmas to New Year period
- Online Survey – the survey was open during January 2020 and received 110 responses
- Community Listening Post – event held at Sturt Reserve on 18 January 2020 to coincide with two other community events - open event advertised to all members of the community (engagement with around 25 individuals and small groups)
- Telephone interviews and face to face meetings with community and key stakeholders:
 - Community Group Representatives and Individuals (10)
 - Members of the local business community (4)
- State government departments (3; Maritime Safety DPTI, Department of Environment and Water and SA Water)
- Peak Sporting Bodies/Associations and Industry Groups/Representatives (6)
- Ngarrindjeri consultation – engagement and consultation with Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation

In addition, initial discussions/workshops about the project were held with internal stakeholders including RCMB staff and elected members. Written representations were also received from 3 parties.

Guiding Principles

Based on the identified opportunities and challenges discovered during the development of the WBRMP the following set of guiding principles have been established to guide the recommendations of the WBRMP, inform the continuing development of the levels of service framework, and broadly support and sustain water-based recreation on the River Murray in RCMB:

- Supporting RCMB strategic policy approaches, including in relation to the activation of the riverfront and capitalising on the river to drive economic development and attract people to Murray Bridge
- Delivering safe, equitable access that supports a broad range of water-based recreation activities (and complementary land-based recreation activities)
- Providing appropriate levels of infrastructure at strategic locations to encourage additional use of riverfront reserves (and adjacent stretches of the river) where there is capacity for increased use and, conversely, discouraging additional usage of already popular locations that are at capacity, particularly at peak times
- Protecting and promoting high environmental, cultural heritage and amenity values at key locations (all regulatory and planning approvals and permits should be secured, with adherence to appropriate legislation, protocols and construction methodologies to protect those identified values e.g. no-dig construction techniques)
- Long term financial sustainability and affordability to develop, operate and maintain and renew facilities and assets

Recommendations

1. Establish a new water-based recreation 'hub' to the north

Presently, there are significant pressures being exerted on the most accessible and popular riverfront reserves and adjacent sections of river, particularly during peak periods such as weekends, public and school holidays.

The development of Toora Reserve (broadly in line with existing concept proposals) will establish a new water-based recreation hub for the local community and visitors to access the river, drawing recreators away from the busier reserves and stretches of river, and located within relatively easy reach of Murray Bridge and the South East Freeway.

2. Establish a new water-based recreation 'hub' to the south

Similarly, in order to draw recreators away from those most popular and busiest riverfront reserves and stretches of water, a second water-based recreation hub to the south of the City should be established. A couple of options are currently considered worthy of further investigation, however both options are reliant to varying degrees on third party negotiations.

Swanport Reserve and the adjacent Aquatic Centre could present an excellent opportunity to establish a new hub to the south, building on existing water-based recreation infrastructure at both sites. Alternatively, and a little closer to the CBD and Long Island Reserve, SA Water are currently in the process of disposing of land previously accommodating the water treatment plant, in an area to the immediate south of Long Island, and beyond the narrow river channels.

3. Continue to progress the development of Sturt Reserve to accommodate major water-based recreation events and also establish an unpowered water-based recreation hub in the region

Council are currently progressing with detail design components of the Sturt Reserve Master Plan. Key components particularly relevant to the WBRMP include the Regional Rowing Facility and associated landing/launching facilities, and boat ramp improvements. These proposals will improve capacity at the reserve and enable continuing support of larger scale events on the river, for both powered and unpowered water-based recreation activities.

Current water craft and speed restrictions (as defined by the Harbors and Navigation Regulations 2009) will remain in place adjacent to Sturt Reserve and on the east side of Long Island Reserve. These restrictions will support the continuing development of the reserve and adjacent stretches of river for unpowered water-based recreation, providing a suitable environment for these types of activities, whilst protecting the overall amenity values and appeal of Sturt Reserve (and Long Island) for all water-based and land-based recreators and visitors to this important regional open space destination.

4. Progressively develop other RCMB riverfront reserves

A range of concept plans and master plans for various riverfront reserves subject to the WBRMP have been developed over recent years, with proposals implemented to varying degrees. Broadly speaking, these development proposals continue to be relevant, and are supported in principle; many proposals that are yet to be implemented will address priority needs and reflect many of the suggestions raised by the community and key stakeholders during consultation processes (e.g. toilet amenity upgrades, improved accessibility, DDA compliance).

A clearly articulated development level of service should be developed, establishing the appropriateness (or otherwise) of specific assets for each riverfront reserve.

5. Further investigate the establishment of a Personal Water Craft activity zone within RCMB jurisdiction

Community and key stakeholder consultation feedback raised concerns in relation to user conduct, inappropriate behaviours on the river and conflict between different water-based recreation user groups. Personal Water Craft (jetskis) were frequently cited as particularly problematic, likely due to the power, speed and manoeuvrability of these craft. The relative affordability and popularity of these types of craft are reflected in industry trends that show they are the fastest growing sector of powered vessels.

The intention of establishing this type of activity zone is not to exclude the use of Personal Water Craft beyond the confines of such a zone, but to clearly identify and promote an area where activities such as 'irregular riding' or 'freestyling' (e.g. donuts, circles, sharp turns, wave jumping, weaving) can be safely conducted without impinging on the experiences of other river recreators.

6. Improved Communications Strategy

As detailed in previous recommendations, there are significant pressures being exerted on the most accessible and popular riverfront reserves and adjacent sections of river, in particular Long Island Reserve, Avoca Dell Reserve and Thiele Reserve. Concerns in relation to user conduct, inappropriate behaviours on the river and conflict between different water-based recreation user groups have also been outlined above.

As well as improving infrastructure at alternative riverfront reserves, communicating the availability of other reserves that provide safe and easy access onto the river is equally as important, as is reinforcing messages that promote acceptable behaviours in and around the water.

Approaches to the provision of information in relation to what facilities are provided and what recreation activities are supported at each reserve should be improved. This will provide clarity and presents an opportunity to improve local community and visitor knowledge to enable them to make informed decisions and actively avoid the busiest reserves during peak periods. This is relevant for information provided online (Council website, social media, third party review sites) to information available at the Visitor Information Centre, to the signage installed on the ground in each reserve.

7. Provide in principle support to other water-based recreation ventures within RCMB

Where other ventures (including private ventures) associated with water-based recreation comply with the guiding principles set out in this plan (and secure all other necessary regulatory and planning approvals and permits), these proposals should be supported in principle, recognising that several privately owned facilities located along the river already facilitate access onto the river (or have the potential to do so), and also provide many other facilities that support visitation to the region.

Through the development of this plan it is clear that there are significant opportunities to improve and highlight the importance of the river to the Ngarrindjeri people. This may include enriching river experiences, including through provision of interpretation at significant locations along the river. Areas associated with the former railways land between Bridge St and Hume Reserve have the potential to accommodate sensitive new development that could support future community and visitor experiences with a strong focus on enhanced accessibility and communicating cultural values associated with the river. These experiences would be developed to strongly correlate with and complement other projects with a similar focus currently being pursued (including current projects at Sturt Reserve). These strategically important opportunities should be explored further in close consultation with Ngarrindjeri representatives.

At this stage there is no commitment from Council to fund all or any of these recommendations, noting that several projects supporting water-based recreation in RCMB are already underway and are at various stages of implementation. Once completed, these projects will support the above recommendations and comply with the guiding principles underpinning the WBRMP.

Several of the recommendations will require further investigation to ultimately establish viability, including the need for further consultation with the community and key stakeholders, and also to consider other riverfront reserves and stretches of river within RCMB but beyond the scope of this plan.



1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The development of a Water-Based Recreation Management Plan (WBRMP) for the Rural City of Murray Bridge (RCMB) was a recommendation of the RCMB Riverfront Strategy 2016. The purpose of that strategy was to identify opportunities for rejuvenation along the Murray River Corridor, encompassing future potential for residential land uses, recreational uses and sustainable environmental management.

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1.2 Scope

The WBRMP considers preferred water-based recreation uses and the resultant levels of service required to support the recreational river uses and any identified opportunities as well as sustainable environmental management.

The scope of the project includes a focus on the following reserves and adjacent stretches of the River Murray:

- Woodlane Reserve
- Toora Reserve
- Avoca Dell Reserve
- Thiele Reserve
- Rocky Gully Wetlands
- Hume Reserve
- Sturt Reserve
- Long Island Reserve (and Long Island)
- Tumbella Drive Reserve
- Swanport Reserve
- Swanport Aquatic Centre
- Swanport Wetlands

1.3 Approach

A four stage methodology was utilised to deliver the WBRMP:

- Stage 1 Inception and Research
- Stage 2 Consultation and Assessments
- Stage 3 Develop Draft WBRMP
- Stage 4 Develop Final WBRMP



2 Research and Assessment

2.1 Strategic Context

The following legislation, strategic planning and policy documents were reviewed to provide background information and contextual understanding to the development of the WBRMP:

SA Legislation

- Harbors and Navigation Regulations 2009 (under the Harbors and Navigation Act 1993)

RCMB Strategic Plans, Management Plans and Agreements

- Community Plan 2016 – 2032
- Strategic Plan 2020-24 (Draft)
- Kungan Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement
- Ngarrindjeri Murrundi Management Plan No.1
- RCMB Riverfront Strategy 2016
- Murray Bridge Riverfront Management Strategy 2007
- Murray Bridge Council Development Plan 2019
- Murray Bridge Town Centre Master Plan and Urban Design Framework
- Murray Bridge Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2013
- Murraylands River Trail Feasibility Study 2015

RCMB Riverfront Reserves Master Plans and Concept Designs

- Sturt Reserve Master Plan 2017
- Sturt Reserve Master Plan Detailed Design 2020-
- Toora Reserve Master Plan and Concept Design
- Murray Bridge Great Outdoors Concept Plan
- Murray Bridge Reserves – Final Concept Package 2019

Other Strategic Documents

- Land Use Study and Development Plan Review for the Lower Murray Flood Plain 2013
- Sustainable Recreation Site Planning and Implementation Guide 2003
- Nature Like Nowhere Else – Activating Nature-based Tourism in South Australia
- Murray River, Lakes and Coorong Strategic Tourism Plan 2017-2020

The general thrust of strategic planning and policy approaches seek to leverage off the region's natural assets and proximity to Adelaide, to support a thriving, healthy, connected and active community, providing fit for purpose facilities, attracting visitation and enabling sustainable economic development across the region, whilst preserving, promoting and enhancing environmental and cultural heritage values.

At a more local and detailed level, individual master plans and concept plans articulate proposals to upgrade various infrastructure to support both water-based and land-based recreation activities in riverfront reserves and meet the needs of local residents and promote increased visitation to the region.

2.2 Drivers for Change

Sport and Recreation ‘Mega Trends’

A 2013 CSIRO report for the Australian Sports Commission identified six megatrends likely to shape the Australian sports sector over the next 30 years.

A number of these ‘mega trends’ are relevant to the water-based recreation activities subject to this plan, notably the ability to participate in many river-based recreation activities at your own convenience (‘A Perfect Fit’), with many activities likely to be considered as lifestyle, adventure or alternative sports, requiring complex/advanced skills with an element of inherent danger and/or thrill-seeking (‘From Extreme to Mainstream’). The benefits to mental and physical health and wellbeing are also recognised (‘More than Sport’) with such benefits supported by other studies, specifically in relation to the sight and sound of water, and the experience of being on the water.

Water-Based Recreation Activity Trends

Up until 2010, the Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) provided participation data specific to South Australia in relation to the following water-based recreation activities. The 2010 survey reported:

- Swimming/diving – 4.8% total participation rate
- Fishing (includes angling) – 0.8% total participation rate*
- Surf sports – 0.3% total participation rate*
- Canoeing/kayaking (excludes dragon boat racing) – 0.4% total participation rate*
- Water skiing/powerboating (includes jet skiing and wakeboarding) – 0.3% total participation rate*
- Sailing – 0.2% total participation rate**
- Wind surfing/sailboarding – 0.1% total participation rate**

**Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution*

***Estimate has a relative standard error of greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use*

Swimming/diving was the most participated in activity at that time. The reliability of data relating to the other recreation activities is variable, however fishing, surf sports, canoeing/kayaking, water skiing/powerboating, sailing and windsurfing all record some level of participation at the time.

Since the last completed Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (2010), participation data in relation to water-based recreation activities has become increasingly limited.

The latest annual data from Sport Australia’s AusPlay survey (period July 2018-June 2019) reveals Australia’s top 20 sports and physical activities, and provides detailed ‘state of the play’ reports on each of the top 20 sports. Two water-based recreation activities appear in the top 20 sports; swimming and surfing. Noting the continuing popularity of swimming, it is considered likely that a relatively small proportion of swimming activities in South Australia would be conducted in a river setting.

Boating Industry Trends

The Boating Industry Association advised of the following broader trends across the boating industry:

- New boat registrations number approximately 15,000 a year across Australia (State boating registration agencies, July 2019).
- More than 2 million Australians have a boat licence with more than 910,000 registered boats across Australia. There are 289,000 licence holders in South Australia, and 59,000 registered boats (State boating registration agencies, July 2019).
- Personal Water Craft (i.e. jet skis) are the fastest growing sector of powered vessels, with 76,000 now registered across Australia (State boating registration agencies, July 2019).

- Technologies are reducing environmental and amenity impacts through improved waste containment and treatment, pollutant capture, reduced engine noise and emissions, and improved fuel efficiency (including electric powered boats which produce zero emissions and virtually no noise).
- Technologies are also enabling the development of larger, faster, more powerful boats (with the potential for increased impacts on the environment, amenity values and other recreation activities).

Technological Advances

Whilst there is no hard data to substantiate increases in participation levels, it can certainly be said that specialised equipment, supporting a broad range of water-based recreation activities, has generally become more accessible to a greater number of people, whether that be in terms of cost, storage (spatial) requirements and/or useability (design, materials, weight). This is particularly true of canoe/kayak equipment and also jet skis.

Water-Based Recreation Clubs/Groups

Currently active clubs based in the Rural City of Murray Bridge include the Mypolonga Aquatic and Ski Club (based at Woodlane Reserve), the Murray Bridge Rowing Club and Sailability (both based at Sturt Reserve). Other clubs that are currently in recess include Murray Bridge Angling Club and Pink Victory Dragon Boats club. Historically the Adelaide Water Ski Club was based out of Hume Reserve but has not been active in some time.

Population Growth

The 2018 RCMB Estimated Resident Population is 22,165 (profile.id), with the population currently forecast to increase to 28,143 by 2041, which is approximately a 28% increase over 20 years (forecasts last updated in May 2018, forecast.id). The population for Greater Adelaide is projected to increase from 1.3 million (June 2017) to between 1.4 million and 1.5 million by 2027.

Evolving recreation preferences, technological advances and population growth trends are likely to lead to increased pressures on all community infrastructure and services, in particular the riverfront reserves and the most popular sections of the river that draw in visitors from across the region and beyond.

2.3 Management Approaches

Regulatory Framework

In terms of the regulatory framework in South Australia, the Harbors and Navigation Regulations 2009 implement the Harbors and Navigation Act 1993, covering a variety of issues including the identification of restricted areas and restrictions on the use of certain waters across the State.

Within RCMB, there are two main restricted areas identified:

- Restricted Area 1: Area adjacent riverbank at Sturt Reserve/wharf precinct (subject to speed, vessel and activity restrictions)
- Restricted Area 2: Area to the north east of Long Island (subject to exclusion of vessels with engines i.e. powered craft)

Several other more localised areas are identified for bathing (localised areas adjacent to Swanport Reserve, Long Island Reserve, Sturt Reserve, Thiele Reserve and Woodlane Reserve). There are a range of other restrictions and controls employed around South Australia to manage water-based recreation activities, outlined in the Harbors and Navigation Regulations 2009.

The current approach to the management of water-based recreation activities along stretches of the River Murray within RCMB is broadly guided by the Riverfront Management Strategy (2007), which recommended the retention of the restrictions that were previously in place (Restricted Area 1 and Restricted Area 2), and provision for a flexible approach to make 'minor' adjustments in relation to specific issues identified as circumstances evolved.

Interstate, along the River Murray, and at other river and coastal locations, various approaches to the management of water-based recreation have been implemented, or have been recently considered, in response to a variety of identified management issues including user conflict, safety, environmental and amenity impact. These approaches have included the establishment of activity specific zoning, speed restrictions/'no wake' zones and activity exclusion zones.

Alternative approaches

In addition to the regulatory framework, there are alternative approaches to the management of water-based recreation activities that seek to influence and modify behaviours on the water to mitigate a range of potential issues including user conflict, and adverse impact on environmental and amenity values. Such approaches include the promotion of codes of conduct that respond to the specific circumstances, situations and activities of a particular location. In response to the identified need to improve behaviours on the river, the River Murray Boating and Recreational Advisory Group (RMBRAG), alongside the Boating Industry Association and the Department of Planning Transport and Infrastructure, developed an 11-point code of conduct to guide appropriate behaviours in relation to a range of water-based recreation activities, including skiing, wakeboarding and jet skiing. This code was supported by three educational videos to promote good behaviours on the water.

Other approaches involve influencing recreator decisions and behaviours through the provision of critical infrastructure at strategic locations to support various water-based recreation activities. Conversely, limiting the provision of certain infrastructure at other locations could assist in influencing water-based recreation user behaviour, with the intention of directing or re-directing usage away from reserves with the highest level of use and towards locations with latent capacity. Limiting, or at least not expanding, vehicle and trailer capacity at some locations for instance may encourage recreators to seek alternative access points to the river, as long as adequate infrastructure is provided at alternative, accessible locations.

Conveying key information about the availability of facilities in individual reserves (via a range of media) is also essential to ensure that all water-based recreation user groups are fully aware of their available options and can make informed decisions about where to recreate and which reserves will best suit their individual needs.

2.4 Riverfront Reserve Analysis

Each riverfront reserve was visited on several occasions during the course of developing this plan to gain a better understanding of how each reserve supports water-based recreation, with a focus on infrastructure provision and each reserve's relationship with the adjoining section of river (and any activity restrictions in place on the water). Findings from background research and community and key stakeholder engagement have also informed this analysis.

For each reserve the following components were analysed to inform the recommendations of the WBRMP:

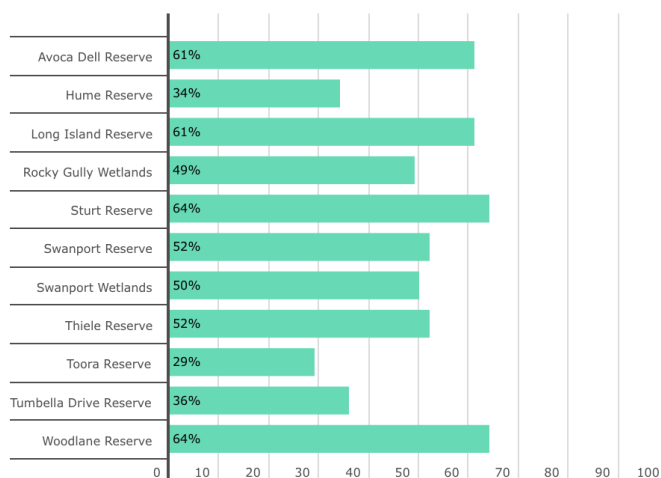
- Key site issues for consideration
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- Key characteristics of the reserve and its usage
- Key characteristics of the adjacent section of river and its usage
- Current development proposals already underway or under consideration

As a discrete part of this process a series of performance assessments were undertaken at each reserve. An holistic approach to these assessments was adopted, taking into account all aspects of each reserve that support, facilitate and attract a wide variety of users for both water-based and land-based recreation activities.

The following criteria were considered as part of the performance assessment of each reserve:

- Location, access and geography
- Design, appeal and activity
- Trees and gardens
- Park furniture
- Water-based recreation features
- Other assets and services (paths/trails, lighting, signage, barriers/vehicle management)
- Playspaces
- Accessibility/inclusive access
- Public toilet
- Safety and security
- Attractiveness and appeal

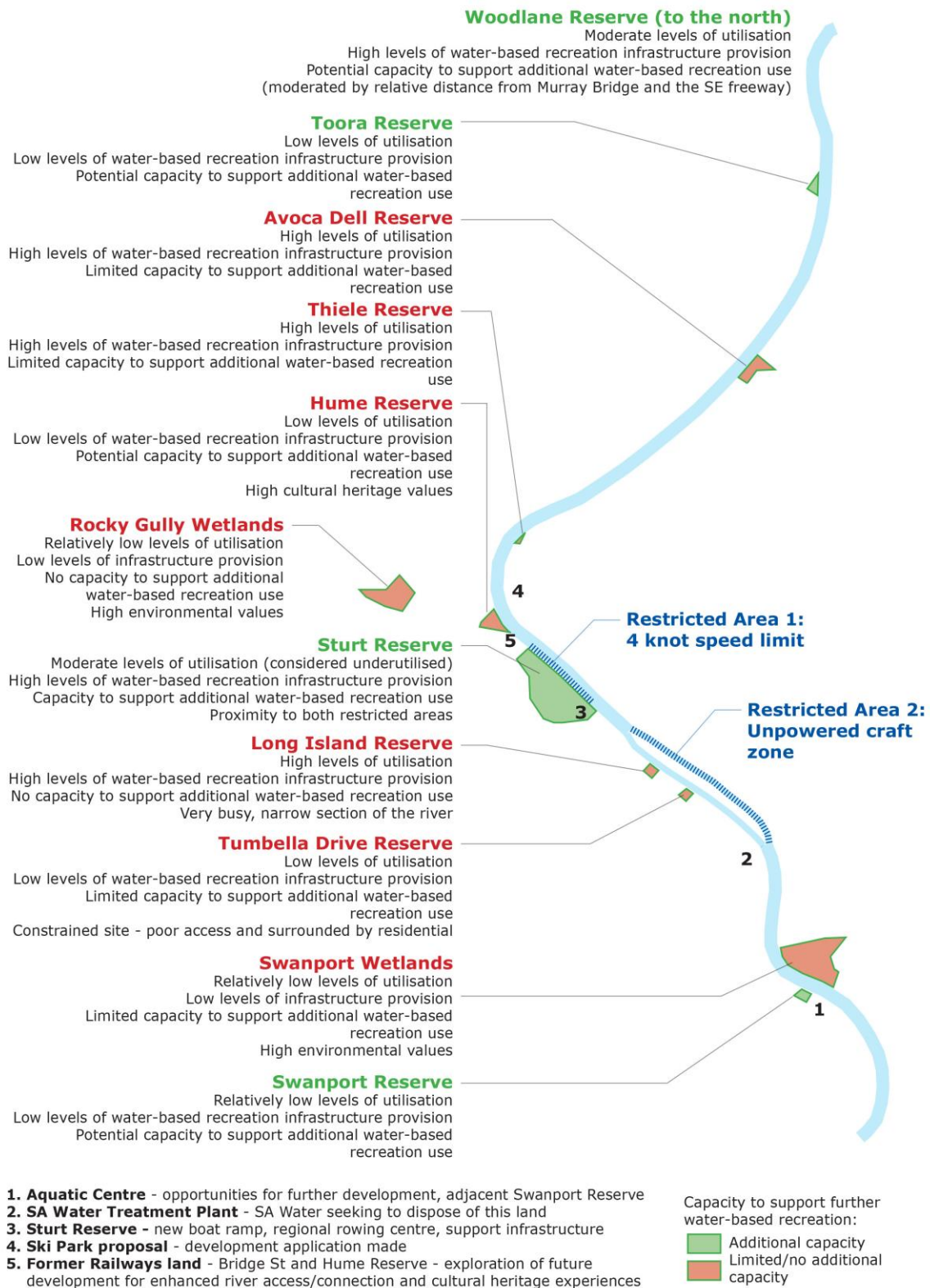
As part of the performance assessment an overall score was determined for each reserve:



A high level overview of the findings from the site analysis and performance assessments are included within Appendix 1 Riverfront Reserve Profiles.

2.5 Capacity and Potential

Drawing together the findings of the background research and riverfront reserve analysis the map below articulates the relative levels of capacity of each riverfront reserve to accommodate additional usage to support water-based recreation activities. The map also identifies other facilities and current development proposals that are considered relevant to the development of the WBRMP (refer 1-4).





3 Consultation

3.1 Overview

Extensive community and key stakeholder consultation processes were embedded into the development of the WBRMP. These consultation opportunities were promoted widely, including via RCMB social media posts and RCMB directly mailing 385 letters to riverside land and shack owners to alert them to intercept survey dates, the online survey and listening post.

The following consultation processes were conducted during December 2019 and January 2020:

- Intercept Surveys – 212 separate groups (ranging in size between 5 and 15 individuals) utilising various riverfront reserves were surveyed over a period of 5 days during the Christmas to New Year period
- Online Survey – the survey was open during January 2020 and received 110 responses
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- Telephone interviews and face to face meetings with community and key stakeholders:
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- State government departments (3; Maritime Safety DPTI, Department of Environment and Water and SA Water)
- Peak Sporting Bodies/Associations and Industry Groups/Representatives (6)
- Ngarrindjeri consultation – engagement and consultation with Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation

In addition, initial discussions/workshops about the project were held with internal stakeholders including RCMB staff and elected members. Written representations were also received from 3 parties.

3.2 Key Findings

Key findings and significant points raised through each of these processes are outlined below.

Intercept Surveys

- 33% of respondents were residents of Murray Bridge. 60% of respondents were from Adelaide and the wider region, 6% were from interstate (Australia) and 1% international visitors
- 77% of respondents were involved in water-based recreation activities at the time of the survey
- Of those respondents, around 80% were engaged in recreation involving powered craft (boating, water skiing, jet skiing, wakeboarding, towing kneeboards, biscuits, tubes); the remaining 20% were engaged in other activities such as swimming, kayak/canoeing, paddle boarding and fishing
- Levels of overall satisfaction is relatively high, with only 8 out of 212 respondents being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and a further 2 being dissatisfied. No respondents were very dissatisfied.
- The most important amenity or service overall were toilets, followed by cleanliness, gardens/trees and grass maintenance. Boat ramps, jetties, moorings and launching zones rated moderate in importance.
- Satisfaction was highest with cleanliness and grass maintenance, and lowest with provision of picnic and BBQ areas. Satisfaction levels were also at the lower end for toilets.
- Location, accessibility and convenience was the number one factor respondents suggested influenced their decision to use a particular reserve. The availability of appropriate and fit for purpose facilities was another significant determining factor.

- A wide range of improvements were suggested for various riverfront reserves and the management of water-based recreation activities more broadly, with the most popular responses suggesting toilet upgrade (20%), more shade/shelter (15%), and better management/activity zoning improvements (14%)
- 60% of respondents confirmed they spent money in the local economy, estimating spending in the region of \$45 per person per day as part of their visit to the riverfront reserves and activities on the river.

Community Online Survey

- Relatively even distribution of uses of different reserves for different activities, with most activities represented to some degree at most reserves.
- Houseboating seems particularly prevalent at Sturt Reserve and Avoca Dell.
- Boating, water skiing and wake boarding are popular activities at Avoca Dell Reserve, Long Island Reserve, Thiele Reserve and Woodlane Reserve.
- Swimming is also a popular activity at Avoca Dell Reserve, Long Island Reserve, Sturt Reserve and Woodlane Reserve.
- Location, accessibility and convenience were identified as the most popular responses in relation to reasons why respondents chose particular reserves to conduct their water-based recreation activities. The provision of good facilities to support those activities was also frequently cited.
- Overall respondents reported a relatively even split in terms of use of riverfront reserves over weekdays and weekends, with slightly higher proportions of those involved with boating, wake boarding and water skiing participating in their activities on the weekends.
- In terms of the times of day respondents were participating in their activities, again there is a relatively even distribution of times reported. Rowers marginally favouring early morning slots, and boating, wake boarding, water skiing and swimming favouring daytime hours (9-5pm).
- Around 55% of survey respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with facilities provided and the opportunities afforded to participate in their chosen activities at the riverfront reserves. Around 25% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the situation, with the remaining respondents neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Suggestions for improvements and other comments typically related to improving the management of water-based recreation (including activity zoning and limiting certain types of uses), behaviour/ conflict/ safety concerns, environmental impact concerns, and infrastructure upgrade proposals to support various recreation activities.

Community Listening Post

- Very busy on west side of Long Island; speed restrictions on the east side of Long Island are a waste
- Improved education program for river users and better policing of river activities
- Improved accessibility to the water through appropriate riverbank treatments, removal of submerged debris/rocks and provision of jettys/pontoons
- Extensions to existing reserves to accommodate additional facilities and support a wider range of activities and specific water-based recreation events

Community Group Representatives and Individuals

- Most riverfront reserves are at capacity, particularly at peak times, long weekends, during the summer
- More facilities at more reserves would help to redistribute activity over a larger area on the river
- Need facilities to enable safe embark/disembarking passengers from the bigger cruise boats at Woodlane Reserve – there are strong tourism opportunities

- Signage/markers on the river are not great – only 1 buoy at the northern end and the sign at the southern end is in very poor condition; often see power boats entering the unpowered watercraft zone to east of Long Island
- Issues with river users not obeying the rules and adversely impacting on environment and amenity values, together with insufficient policing of activities on the river
- Residents are not always advised of major events occurring on the river
- Suggest putting a jetty or pontoon adjacent to all boat ramps so there is somewhere to tie up your boat while parking up etc
- Wakeboats presenting a significant nuisance for shack owners along the river; typically go round in circles, encroaching too close to jetties, moorings, boats
- Main concerns are: big boats getting too close to the banks. Jet skis – poor behaviour, fast and growing numbers, operated by inexperienced users

Local Business Community

- More public landings are needed
- Water park/cable park proposal – development application submitted – east side of river, south of Thiele Reserve
- Have the ability to accommodate big events but also need to prioritise regular events and use, with the ability to restrict/control access and charge for entry to regular/monthly events and race meetings
- Aquatic hire business – there are a few business operators in the area - ski boats, dinghies, outboards, canoes/kayaks - most are mobile operators and deliver equipment to wherever it is needed (often to people on house boats)
- Would be good to see greater presence on the water from DPTi, particularly during summer
- Jet skis will become more and more popular, as people are living in apartments etc and no longer have the space for a boat
- Murray Bridge should be better known for running major events on the water; Sturt Reserve is the only reserve and stretch of water suitable to accommodate large scale events

Internal stakeholders

- Need to attract tourist boats – there is unmet demand for cruises and currently not enough availability – there are proposals for a new 2 tier wharfage and additional capacity for mooring (part of the historic transport precinct)
- Need to activate the riverfront precincts, in particular Sturt Reserve
- Opportunities to improve connectivity and accessibility between Swanport Reserve and the Aquatic Centre and coordinate water-based recreation facility provision
- Need to provide more boat ramps in less busy parts of the river to better distribute recreational use along the river
- Murray Bridge will be experiencing growth over the next few years which will result in increased participation and volumes of river traffic; investment in Sturt Reserve is the starting point
- Need to activate the reserves and attract visitors
- Land-based activities need to complement water-based rec activities and vice versa
- Generally, a lack of facilities e.g. pontoons/jetties to provide for different user groups along the riverfront
- Limited access to RCMB riverfront generally
- Need to cater for all the unpowered water-based rec activities e.g. kayaking, sailing – not just for the powered craft

- Need to consider as part of the wider river network, neighbouring Councils, and recognise that not all stakeholders are residents
- If you don't own a boat/other equipment then there are not that many opportunities to get on the river; would be great to see opportunities for people who can't afford to buy boats, jet skis etc to hire equipment e.g. kayaks, tinnies, boats
- Key thing is to ensure that there are suitable facilities/amenities to support all different types of river user and promote use of the river
- Need to provide the right number of boat ramps, and they need to be in the right locations to provide good access/egress on the river
- Promote more come and try days, encourage more entrepreneurs and local business development
- A balance needs to be struck between use of local rate payer money on upgrading and beautifying the recreation reserves (for use by locals and visitors) and the money visitors bring into Murray Bridge
- Tourism dollars are very important – need the facilities to support this visitation, new accommodation

State Government Departments

- Navigation Regulations outline all the relevant restrictions; any proposed changes to these zonings would require regulation change and sign off from DPTI CE and the relevant Minister (and require significant consultation, and an evidence supported case made, addressing safety concerns)
- Can be challenging to navigate through stretch of river to the west of Long Island – all powered craft are directed down this channel – presence of the island minimises the width of the river at this point
- Additional zoning could potentially offer a solution to some of the current issues – encouraging certain activities away from more sensitive locations e.g. jet ski area at Goolwa
- No wash zones are designated in other states to manage this issue, but very difficult to manage/enforce
- Any zoning needs to be simple and logical, and ideally zones defined by obvious features/landmarks (e.g. bridges, islands) – signs/buoys can assist but can also be missed/ignored – needs to be practical and understandable
- Primary area of interest for DEW around riverbank collapse on Crown land and Minister's levy banks
- Proposals for new infrastructure should be supported by geotechnical engineer input and expertise, particularly around issues of cracking and movement
- DEW will support nature based activities in line with document adopted 'Activating nature-based Tourism in South Australia'
- SA Water's main interests at this time in this area lies with the relocation of the existing wastewater plant and future disposal of associated land.

Peak Sporting Bodies and Industry Groups

- Strategically Murray Bridge is closest to Adelaide on the River Murray – national wakeboard competition held every couple of years and received good feedback about Murray Bridge from interstate competitors
- All the key facilities are available at Sturt Reserve to run events: toilets, car parking, boat ramp is ok
- There may be opportunities presented by the new Murray Bridge Regional Rowing Centre at Sturt Reserve – floating pontoons are ideal for canoe/kayak access to the river
- Wake and wash issues remain a concern for all stakeholders, wakeboats, surfgates generate huge wash
- Need to continually educate around appropriate behaviours e.g. getting away from busy sections of river, locations with nearby residential, do your activity and then offload ballast before heading back
- Bank reconstitution – issues for skiers – sand bags, deep channel– not conducive to boating use
- Vessel development – ski boat – surf gate – wake boat – wave boat - Ski boat more like a party boat these days - wake and wash issues

- Issue is proximity to Adelaide, Personal Water Craft – lots of activity in a confined space - strategy needs to be to try and get the boats away from Long Island
- Need more stakeholders on board to promote code of conduct, better behaviours
- Houseboats (flat fronted) can approach straight up to the bank/square on and need strong mooring posts; more traditional craft would certainly benefit from the provision of floating pontoons
- Larger commercial boat operators also need their space on the river, typically away from other river users
- Main concern relates to the new large wakeboard craft – impacts on the riverbank, banks eroded, no sand and exposed rocks – not good for mooring ski boats etc
- Ideally for the large events, it would be great to have a fenced off area so that people are charged to spectate – it costs a lot of money to run these types of events.



4 Opportunities and Challenges

Based on the background research, consultation processes and site analysis previously undertaken, the table below summarises the key opportunities and challenges relevant to all sections of the river and the overall development of the WBRMP.

Strategic Opportunities	Strategic Challenges/Issues/Constraints
<p>Development of additional riverfront locations to redistribute / disperse water-based recreation activities away from popular high activity / high impact locations</p> <p>Develop cultural heritage visitor experiences associated with the river to activate the river frontage and support the local economy</p> <p>Facilitation of improved access and connection to the river with the Ngarrindjeri people (with opportunities to further develop community and visitor experiences</p> <p>Water park/cable park proposal – development application submitted – east side of river, south of Thiele Reserve</p> <p>Accommodation of powerboat racing / circuit boat racing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and major one-off events • Controlled access points to enable charging of fees <p>Attract entrepreneurs to establish permanent (seasonal) business for equipment hire and open up recreation opportunities to all members of the community</p> <p>Jet skis provide opportunity for more people to access the river and enjoy water-based recreation – less expensive than boats and require less storage space – need to be accommodated and managed appropriately</p> <p>Attract more tourist boats – insufficient availability currently leading to unmet demand – appropriate facilities need to be provided</p> <p>Improve access and connectivity along the riverfront more broadly</p> <p>Activation of the riverfront reserves (including through water-based recreation) will attract more visitors and encourage spending in the local economy</p>	<p>Meeting recreational user expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water-based recreation • land-based recreation <p>Restriction areas on the river:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speed restrictions • powered/unpowered craft restrictions • bathing area restrictions • high impact activity restrictions <p>Riverbank access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vehicle access • vessel/craft access <p>Bank stability and erosion issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riverbank access at reserves • High impact activity control <p>Accommodating larger vessels (houseboats, cruisers, tourist/sightseeing vessels):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mooring (daytime/overnight stays) • Embarking/disembarking passengers <p>Protecting and enhancing environmental and biodiversity values</p> <p>Protecting and enhancing cultural heritage values</p> <p>Growing population of the Rural City of Murray Bridge and the Greater Adelaide region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased visitation and usage, and further pressure on existing infrastructure and popular sections of the river

Strategic Opportunities	Strategic Challenges/Issues/Constraints
<p>Potential to delegate authority to a Council officer with powers to enforce appropriate activities in restricted areas</p> <p>In principle support to promote nature-based activities in line with State government policy position</p> <p>Murray Bridge benefits from a great location strategically on the river – proximity to Adelaide, interstate and international connections via the airport</p> <p>Re-evaluate priorities to develop Toora Reserve as an additional water-based recreation destination reserve (based on Concept Plan)</p> <p>Explore potential to secure community access and develop new facilities to support water-based recreation at a number of locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.g. Aquatic Centre • E.g. SA Water Treatment Plant land <p>Opportunities to improve connectivity between and through riverfront reserves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.g. Narooma Wetlands / Wildens Way (Sturt Reserve - Long Island Reserve - Tumbella Drive Reserve) • E.g. Swanport Reserve and Aquatic Centre <p>Explore potential to develop more short stay houseboat opportunities and increase capacity for visitors</p> <p>Explore viability of floating moorings (pontoons) at all boat ramps for launching/retrieving boats</p> <p>Encourage use of certain reserves for particular activities through provision of infrastructure to support those specific activities; conversely do not provide infrastructure that supports activities you wish to discourage at those locations</p> <p>Consider designating areas for specific types of activity e.g. personal watercraft zone / jet ski zone</p>	<p>Moderating impacts on amenity of the river and adjacent residential areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • noise and nuisance • wake impacts on moored vessels <p>Significant competing interests on the river and in the reserves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • powered water-based recreation / high energy and high-speed activities • unpowered water-based recreation • land-based recreation • residents • visitors <p>Hosting major events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • balancing competing interests • closed waters/advising other river users and residents • encouraging visitation and increasing profile of the area <p>Managing user behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disregard for restrictions • Policing/enforcement • Education programs <p>Regulatory framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive procedures and consultation involved in amending restrictions currently in place <p>Establishing consensus between all stakeholders</p> <p>Infrastructure development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated costs • Prioritisation • Meeting the needs of different user groups and stakeholders

Strategic Opportunities	Strategic Challenges/Issues/Constraints
<p>Broad community support for additional facilities along the riverfront to support water-based recreation</p> <p>Broad community support for improvements to communication and management of behaviours/code of conduct</p> <p>Community support for review of existing restriction zones and investigations of activity zoning on the river</p>	<p>Risk and safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncomplementary uses in same areas • Limited resources to enforce restrictions <p>Popular riverfront reserves are at capacity, particularly at peak times</p> <p>Limited opportunities to access the river if you don't own the right equipment</p> <p>Advancing technologies/equipment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boats increasing in size and power • Jet skis now more affordable and increasing in power <p>Communication of information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of appropriate behaviours • Increasing community awareness of the range of facilities available to support water-based recreation (away from those sites already at capacity)

Strategic opportunities, challenges, issues and constraints were also identified for each riverfront reserve individually and these have informed the development of priority directions and actions for each reserve (refer Appendix 1 Riverfront Reserve Profiles).



5 Principles and Framework

5.1 Guiding Principles

Based on the identified opportunities and challenges discovered during the development of the WBRMP the following set of guiding principles have been established to guide the recommendations of the WBRMP, inform the continuing development of the levels of service framework, and broadly support and sustain water-based recreation on the River Murray in RCMB:

- Supporting RCMB strategic policy approaches, including in relation to the activation of the riverfront and capitalising on the river to drive economic development and attract people to Murray Bridge
- Delivering safe, equitable access that supports a broad range of water-based recreation activities (and complementary land-based recreation activities)
- Providing appropriate levels of infrastructure at strategic locations to encourage additional use of riverfront reserves (and adjacent stretches of the river) where there is capacity for increased use and, conversely, discouraging increased usage of already popular locations that are at capacity, particularly at peak times
- Protecting and promoting high environmental, cultural heritage and amenity values at key locations (all regulatory and planning approvals and permits should be secured, with adherence to appropriate protocols and construction methodologies to protect those identified values e.g. no-dig construction techniques)
- Long term financial sustainability and affordability to develop, operate and maintain and renew facilities and assets

5.2 Levels of Service Framework

The purpose of levels of service is to essentially to define what it is we are delivering to our community, including how many and what time of facility is provided, what standard of facility is provided, what service can be expected, what will it cost and determining a way of measuring 'are we delivering?'.

A workshop with internal staff was conducted on 25 November 2019 (attendees included Managers of Community Services, City Infrastructure, Regulation and Compliance and Asset and Infrastructure, Team Leader Youth Sport and Recreation, Compliance, Community Biodiversity and Senior Environment Officers, Coordinator Open Space and Economic Development Planner).

For each riverfront reserve within the scope of the project the primary activities supported by the reserve were identified together with supporting infrastructure (relevant to both water-based and land-based recreation). Opportunities and challenges associated with each reserve were also flagged and current improvement programs identified.

Establishing an initial levels of service framework was workshopped with internal staff, primarily informed by desired (rather than existing) levels of utilisation for each riverfront reserve, establishing 'higher utilisation' and 'lower utilisation' reserves.

The table below summarises the outcomes of the workshop and findings from this report.

Higher Utilisation Riverfront Reserves (Higher LoS)	Lower Utilisation Riverfront Reserves (Lower LoS)
Avoca Dell Reserve Thiele Reserve Long Island Reserve Woodlane Reserve Sturt Reserve* Toora Reserve* Swanport Reserve*	Hume Reserve Tumbella Drive Reserve Rocky Gully Wetlands Swanport Wetlands Swanport Aquatic Centre**
<i>*riverfront reserve that currently isn't 'high utilisation' but is considered strategically important to meet current and future demands (i.e. should be developed to achieve 'high utilisation')</i>	<i>**currently leased to Department of Education, with no public access</i> <i>**subject to determining the location of a southern water based recreation hub, the Aquatic Centre may be integrally linked to Swanport Reserve and transferred to the 'Higher Utilisation' category</i>

Extending this approach (beyond the riverfront reserves subject to the scope of this project), a third tier of 'Lowest Utilisation Reserves' should be considered to incorporate and address other relatively less well used RCMB riverfront reserves. Such reserves include Hill Road Reserve (Mypolonga), Queen Louisa Park, Bells Landing Reserve and Baker Reserve (Wellington).

Also to be acknowledged are several privately owned facilities located along the river that also facilitate access onto the river. Examples include Whitesands Riverfront Caravan Park, Ukee Boat Club, Murray Bridge Marina Camping and Caravan Park, and Riverglen Marina. Development within RCMB riverfront reserves should be cognisant of the assets provided at these privately owned facilities.

A recommendation of the WBRMP is to further develop this framework, assigning development level of service to each utilisation category (refer Section 6 Recommendations). This work will be undertaken in the coming years, subject to budget allocations, and detail a comprehensive approach to the future development (and operation) levels of service for all RCMB riverfront reserves.



6 Recommendations

Based on background research, community and key stakeholder consultation outcomes the following are the recommendations of the WBRMP:

1. Establish a new water-based recreation 'hub' to the north

Presently, there are significant pressures being exerted on the most accessible and popular riverfront reserves and adjacent sections of river, particularly during peak periods such as weekends, public and school holidays. Such reserves include Long Island Reserve, Avoca Dell Reserve and Thiele Reserve. Issues at Long Island Reserve in particular are compounded by its central location and accessibility, and the relatively narrow section of adjacent river (due to presence of Long Island), resulting in high levels of usage and restricted available space on the water.

The development of Toora Reserve (broadly in line with existing concept proposals) will establish a new water-based recreation hub for the local community and visitors to access the river, drawing recreators away from the busier reserves and stretches of river, and located within relatively easy reach of Murray Bridge and the South East Freeway.

2. Establish a new water-based recreation 'hub' to the south

Similarly, in order to draw recreators away from those most popular and busiest riverfront reserves and stretches of water, a second water-based recreation hub to the south of the City should be established. A couple of options are currently considered worthy of further investigation, however both options are reliant to varying degrees on third party negotiations.

Swanport Reserve and the adjacent Aquatic Centre could present an excellent opportunity to establish a new hub to the south, building on existing water-based recreation infrastructure at both sites. The Aquatic Centre is currently leased by Council to the Department of Education, which primarily utilises the facility for a variety of water-based recreation activities during the week and school holiday periods. Further consultation will be required with all key stakeholders to establish the viability of this option. Improving connectivity between the two land parcels will also be a key consideration.

Alternatively, and a little closer to the CBD and Long Island Reserve, SA Water are currently in the process of disposing of land previously accommodating the water treatment plant, in an area to the immediate south of Long Island, and beyond the narrow river channels. Exact timeframes for the disposal of this land parcel are currently unclear, however it is recommended that Council initially approach SA Water with an expression of interest in the land.

Both of these options are considered worthy of further investigations to establish a new hub to the south of the City.

3. Continue to progress the development of Sturt Reserve to accommodate major water-based recreation events and also establish an unpowered water-based recreation hub in the region

Council are currently progressing with detail design components of the Sturt Reserve Master Plan. Key components particularly relevant to the WBRMP include the Regional Rowing Centre and associated landing/launching facilities and boat ramp improvements. These proposals will improve capacity at the reserve and enable continuing support of larger scale events on the river, for both powered and unpowered water-based recreation activities.

Current water craft and speed restrictions (as defined by the Harbors and Navigation Regulations 2009) will remain in place adjacent to Sturt Reserve and on the east side of Long Island Reserve. These restrictions will support the continuing development of the reserve and adjacent stretches of river for unpowered water-based recreation, providing a suitable environment for these types of activities, whilst protecting the overall amenity values and appeal of Sturt Reserve (and Long Island) for all water-based and land-based recreators and visitors to this important regional open space destination.

As is the current situation, the hosting of events will require the obtaining of approvals from relevant authorities, and enabling temporary relaxation of any speed restrictions (if required).

4. Progressively develop other RCMB riverfront reserves

A range of concept plans and master plans for various riverfront reserves subject to the WBRMP have been developed over recent years, with proposals implemented to varying degrees. Broadly speaking, these development proposals continue to be relevant, and are supported in principle; many proposals that are yet to be implemented will address priority needs and reflect many of the suggestions raised by the community and key stakeholders during consultation processes (e.g. toilet amenity upgrades, improved accessibility, DDA compliance).

Development priorities should focus on the riverfront reserves within the scope of the WBRMP (those reserves that experience higher levels of utilisation). This approach is not intended to preclude development of other lesser utilised riverfront reserves where such development would address clearly identified needs of the community and/or support visitation to the region.

Avoiding continual development (and potentially overdevelopment) of certain riverfront reserves is of equal importance to ensure that investment is focused at the right locations and that water-based recreators are encouraged to access the river away from the most popular reserves and busiest stretches of river. For example, restricting vehicle and trailer parking provision and availability through appropriate design treatments will naturally limit the ability of recreators to park and access the river at specific locations once parking reaches capacity. This is another tool that could be employed to encourage recreators to access the river at alternative, less busy locations.

A clearly articulated development level of service should be developed, establishing the appropriateness (or otherwise) of specific assets for each riverfront reserve. Priority actions for each riverfront reserve are outlined in Appendix 1 Riverfront Reserve Profiles.

5. Further investigate the establishment of a Personal Water Craft activity zone within RCMB jurisdiction

Community and key stakeholder consultation feedback raised concerns in relation to user conduct, inappropriate behaviours on the river and conflict between different water-based recreation user groups (considered both perceived and real). Personal Water Craft (jetskis) were frequently cited as particularly problematic, likely due to the power, speed and manoeuvrability of these craft. The relative affordability and popularity of these types of craft are reflected in industry trends that show they are the fastest growing sector of powered vessels.

The intention of establishing this type of activity zone is not to exclude the use of Personal Water Craft beyond the confines of such a zone, but to clearly identify and promote an area where activities such as 'irregular riding' or 'freestyling' (e.g. donuts, circles, sharp turns, wave jumping, weaving) can be safely conducted without impinging on the experiences of other river recreators. It is these types of activities that appear to be of greatest concern to other recreators on the water.

Identifying a suitable location for such activities will potentially require consideration of broader stretches of the River Murray that are within RCMB jurisdiction (but outside the scope of this plan), and beyond stretches of river currently experiencing high levels of utilisation but still relatively accessible and appealing to attract this particular user group.

6. Improved Communications Strategy

As detailed in previous recommendations, there are significant pressures being exerted on the most accessible and popular riverfront reserves and adjacent sections of river, in particular Long Island Reserve, Avoca Dell Reserve and Thiele Reserve. Concerns in relation to user conduct, inappropriate behaviours on the river and conflict between different water-based recreation user groups have also been outlined above.

As well as improving infrastructure at alternative riverfront reserves, communicating the availability of other reserves that provide safe and easy access onto the river is equally as important, as is reinforcing messages that promote acceptable behaviours in and around the water.

Approaches to the provision of information in relation to what facilities are provided and what recreation activities are supported at each reserve should be improved. This will provide clarity and presents an opportunity to improve local community and visitor knowledge to enable them to make informed decisions and actively avoid the busiest reserves during peak periods. This is relevant for information provided online (Council website, social media, third party review sites) to information available at the Visitor Information Centre, to the signage installed on the ground in each riverfront reserve.

The River Murray Boating and Recreational Advisory Group (RMBRAG), alongside the Boating Industry Association and the Department of Planning Transport and Infrastructure, developed an 11-point code of conduct to guide appropriate behaviours in relation to a range of water-based recreation activities, including skiing, wakeboarding and jet skiing. Opportunities should be taken to continually promote and advocate for this code.

Through provision of comprehensive, useful and accurate information, utilising a range of media, behaviours can start to be influenced and modified.

Working in partnership with key stakeholders, peak bodies and industry representatives will also assist in communicating accurate information to a broader audience, whether that be in relation to the usage of specific riverfront reserves, or recreator behaviours on the water.

7. Provide in principle support to other water-based recreation ventures within RCMB

Where other ventures (including private ventures) associated with water-based recreation comply with the guiding principles set out in this plan (and secure all other necessary regulatory and planning approvals and permits), these proposals should be supported in principle, recognising that several privately owned facilities located along the river already facilitate access onto the river (or have the potential to do so), and also provide many other facilities that support visitation to the region.

Through the development of this plan it is clear that there are significant opportunities to improve and highlight the importance of the river to the Ngarrindjeri people. This may include enriching river experiences, including through provision of interpretation at significant locations along the river. Areas associated with the former railways land between Bridge St and Hume Reserve have the potential to accommodate sensitive new development that could support future community and visitor experiences with a strong focus on enhanced accessibility and communicating cultural values associated with the river. These experiences would be developed to strongly correlate with and complement other projects with a similar focus currently being pursued (including current projects at Sturt Reserve). These strategically important opportunities should be explored further in close consultation with Ngarrindjeri representatives.

One example of another current private venture is a development application currently being considered for a cable water sports park, proposed to be located on the eastern bank of the river, to the south of Thiele Reserve and bound by the river, Old Princes Highway and Siesta Drive. The vision for this proposal is to establish Murray Bridge as South Australia's water sports capital (noting this proposal has emerged independently from the development of the WBRMP).

As another example of a potentially viable private venture, several water-based recreation equipment hire companies operate in the area, however none actually have an on the ground base and presence in Murray Bridge. Key stakeholder consultation revealed that there may be a gap in the current market to establish an equipment hire company, seasonally based out of Sturt Reserve. Such an operation might begin to address some of the barriers to participation in water-based recreation activities, relating to equipment affordability, lack of storage space for large equipment.

At this stage there is no commitment from Council to fund all or any of these recommendations, noting that several projects supporting water-based recreation in RCMB are already underway and are at various stages of implementation. Once completed, these projects will support the above recommendations and comply with the guiding principles underpinning the WBRMP. Several of the recommendations will require further investigation to ultimately establish viability, including the need for further consultation with the community and key stakeholders, and also to consider other riverfront reserves and stretches of river within RCMB but beyond the scope of this plan.

The WBRMP should be reviewed annually with progress monitored and reported. A full review of the WBRMP should be undertaken within a 5 year timeframe, recognising the evolving nature of recreational preferences, population growth, local community and visitor demand and the potential impacts these changes may have on water-based recreation.



Appendix 1

Riverfront Reserve Profiles

A1.1 Avoca Dell Reserve

Overview

Avoca Dell Reserve is located approximately six kilometres from Murray Bridge city centre, located on the eastern bank of the river.

The reserve is popular with a wide range of water-based recreation users, with core facilities (including boat ramp, mooring and launching areas) supporting activities such as powered and unpowered boating, canoe/kayaking, swimming, fishing and houseboat mooring. The reserve is located adjacent to a caravan park, making this a very popular reserve with visitors to the area.

Performance Assessment

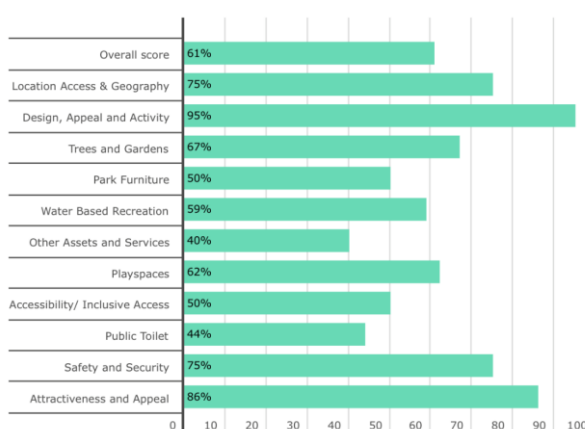
Overall, the reserve performed relatively well as part of the assessment, with higher scores relating to the organisation and layout of the activities and facilities, the welcoming, attractive and appealing nature of the reserve.

The reserve performed less well in relation to toilet provision, vehicle management considerations and the provision of park furniture (seats, tables etc), although it is acknowledged that many of the reserve's users tend to be self-sufficient in this regard.

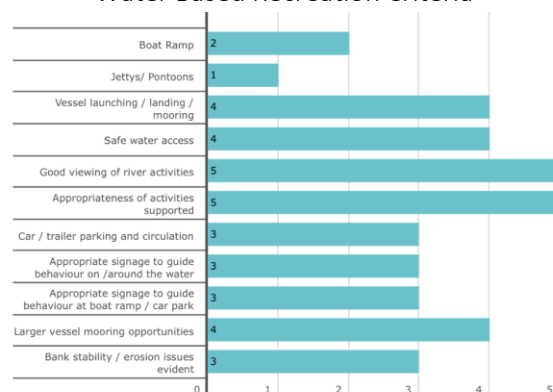
In terms of water-based recreation criteria, the reserve scored highly for viewing areas and the capacity of the adjacent river space to accommodate a range of water-based activities.

The reserve fared less well with regard to the boat ramp provision (single lane at a busy reserve) and the absence of a jetty or pontoon.

Core Criteria



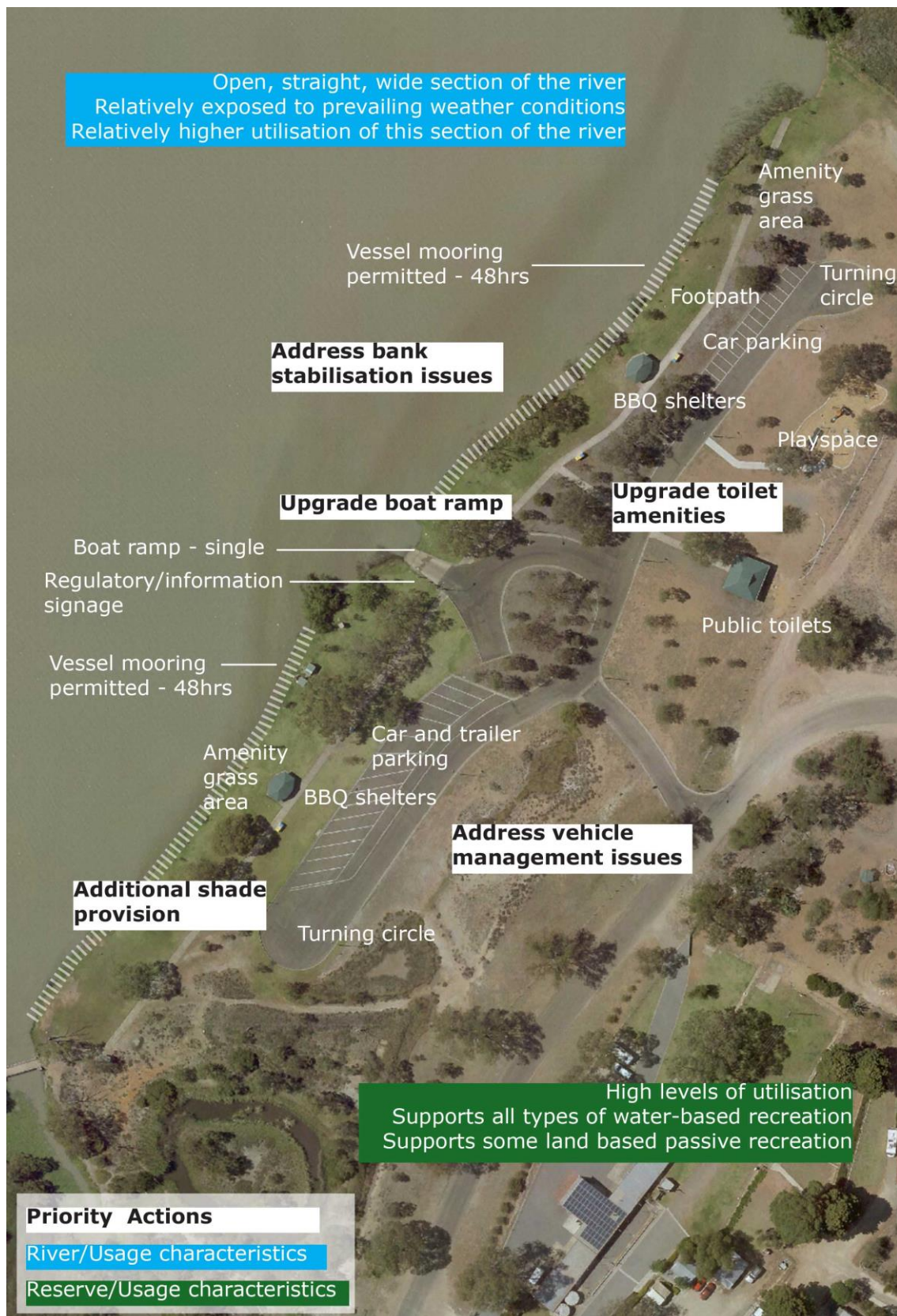
Water Based Recreation Criteria



Priority Actions

- Progress implementation of concept plan for this reserve, in particular the following components:
 - Upgrade boat ramp
 - Address vehicle management issues
 - Bank treatment/stabilisation works
 - Upgrade toilet amenities
- Introduce additional shade through new tree planting and shelters

A1.1 Avoca Dell Reserve



A1.2 Hume Reserve

Overview

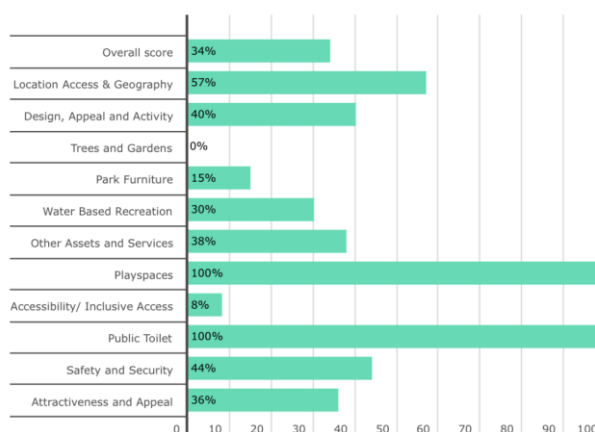
Hume Reserve is located within walking distance of Murray Bridge city centre, located on the western bank. The reserve has significant cultural heritage values and is relatively undeveloped. As such, the reserve does not receive the visitation levels of many of the other riverfront reserves, although it remains popular with locals who find it a quiet and convenient spot to access the river. It is also popular for fishing and other unpowered boating, canoe/kayaking activities. The boat ramp (which is in poor condition) is still utilised on occasion by locals with smaller craft.

Performance Assessment

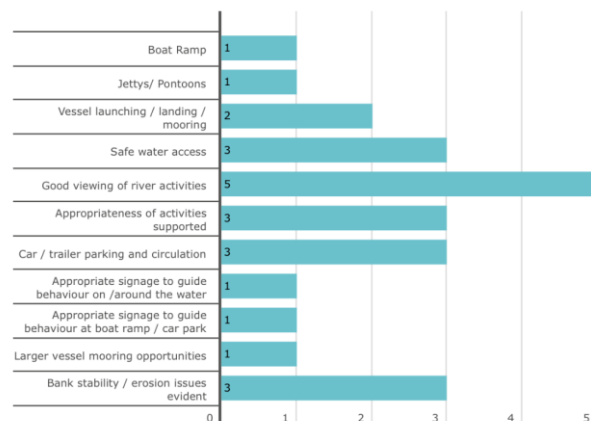
Over recent times there has been some limited development of the reserve, primarily to manage and contain vehicle movements across the reserve through use of large rocks. Bins and signage have also been introduced. Overall the reserve performed poorly in relation to other riverfront reserves, primarily due to the limited level of facilities provided, and its limited appeal and attractiveness. The reserve scored highest for its proximity to the city centre and location on the Murray Coorong Trail (vehicular access to the reserve remains challenging). The high performance scores relating to both playspaces (100%) and public toilets (100%) reflects that it is considered appropriate that these types of facility are not currently provided at this reserve.

In terms of water-based recreation criteria, the reserve scored highly for viewing areas and the capacity of the adjacent river space to accommodate a range of water-based activities. The lack of other facilities, and the poor condition of the boat ramp, is reflected in overall poor performance scores.

Core Criteria



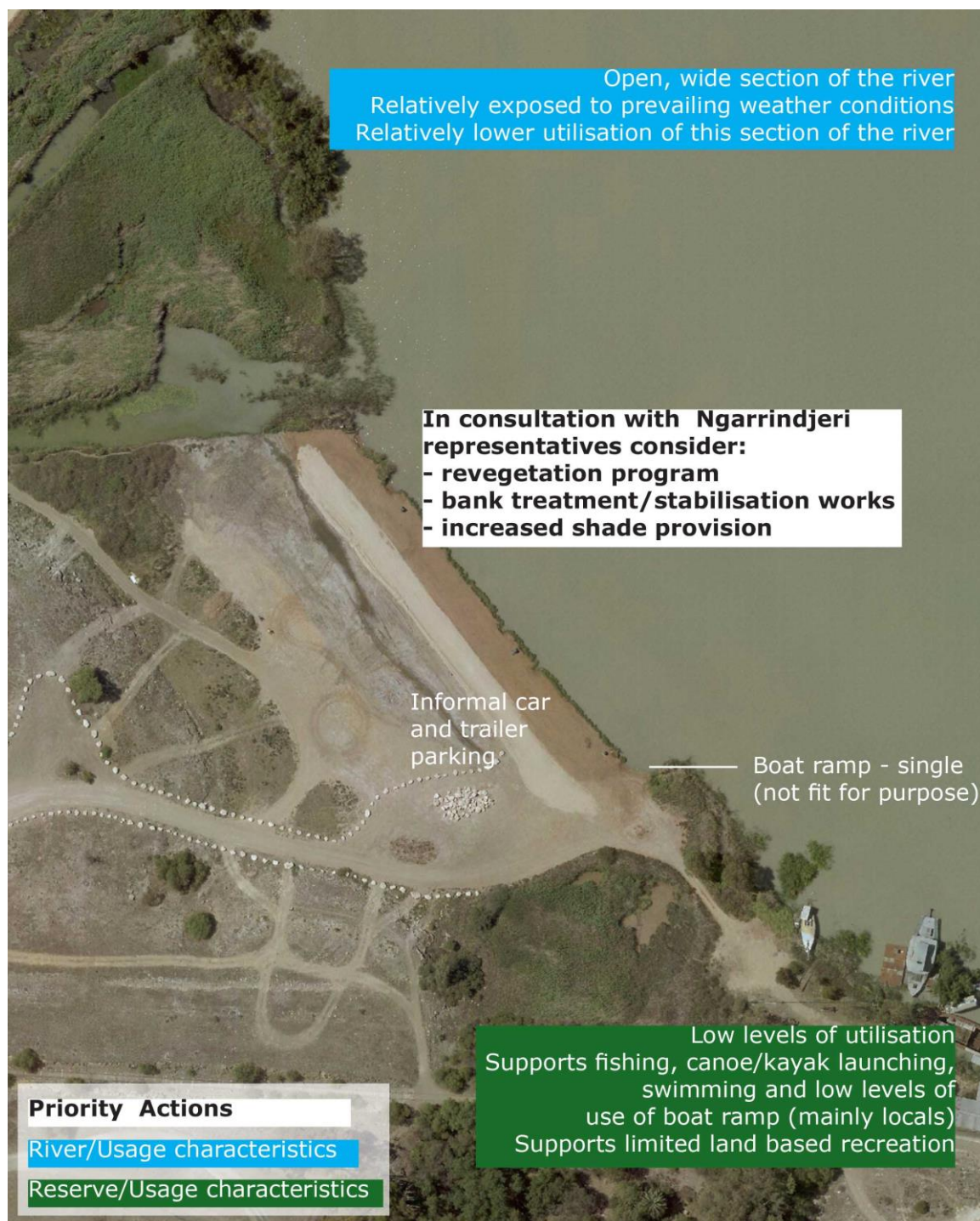
Water Based Recreation Criteria



Priority Actions

- Continue ongoing discussions with Ngarrindjeri representatives to enhance the amenity of Hume Reserve, with consideration given to:
 - Revegetation programs
 - Bank treatment/stabilisation works
 - Increased shade provision
- Review any proposals for Hume Reserve in the context of potential future development at the former Railways land between Bridge Street and Hume Reserve

A1.2 Hume Reserve



A1.3 Long Island Reserve

Overview

Long Island Reserve is located approximately three kilometres from Murray Bridge city centre, located on the western bank of the river.

The reserve is popular with a wide range of water-based recreation users, with core facilities (including boat ramp, jetty, mooring and launching areas) supporting activities such as powered and unpowered boating, canoe/kayaking, swimming, fishing and houseboat mooring. The central location and close proximity to both the city centre and the South East Freeway make this one of the most popular reserves with locals and visitors.

Performance Assessment

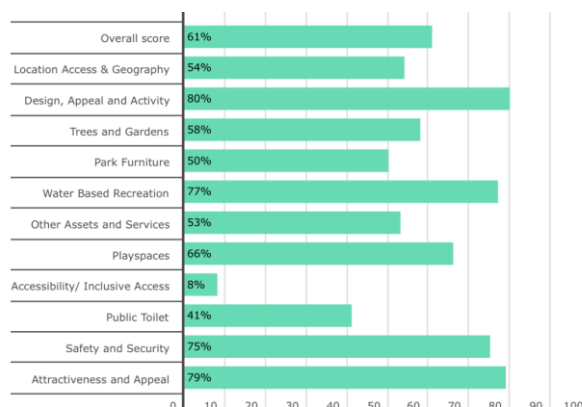
Overall, the reserve performed relatively well as part of the assessment, with higher scores relating to the natural appeal of the site, the wide variety of activities catered for at the reserve and the welcoming, attractive and appealing nature of the reserve.

The reserve performed poorly in relation to the provision of accessible footpaths connecting key reserve facilities and specific features for people with impaired mobility.

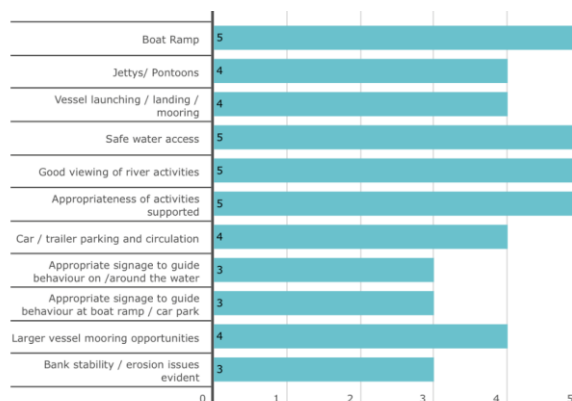
In terms of water-based recreation criteria, facilities such as the double boat ramp, jetty and the provision of launching/landing/mooring areas scored well.

Whilst signage is provided to guide behaviours both on and off the water, it was apparent that at this location, based on observed behaviours there may be some room for improvement.

Core Criteria



Water Based Recreation Criteria



Priority Actions

- Bank treatment/stabilisation works
- Improve accessibility and connectivity between key reserve facilities, and links to adjacent reserves via footpaths/shared use paths (as part of delivery of Murray Coorong Trail)
- Upgrade toilet amenities
- Carefully consider any proposals that would increase the current capacity of the car and trailer parking (thereby exacerbating reserve capacity issues at peak times)

A1.3 Long Island Reserve



A1.4 Rocky Gully Wetlands

Overview

Rocky Gully Wetlands is located to the north west of Murray Bridge city centre, located on the western bank of the river, and set back behind Hume Reserve with no direct river frontage aspect.

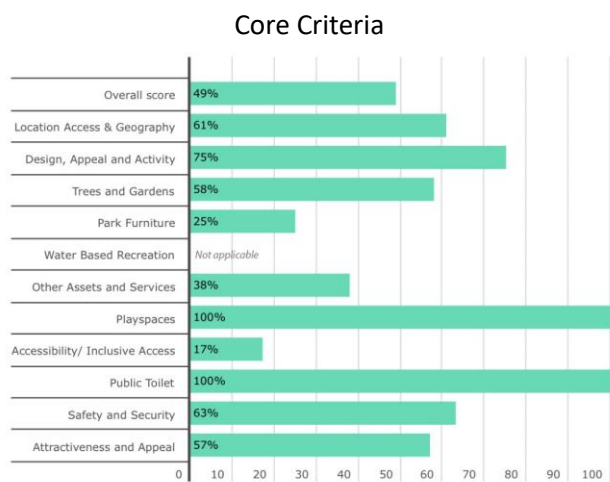
The reserve has significant environmental values and is supported by low key facilities primarily for land-based passive recreation activities such as walking, cycling and bird watching etc. Little use of the reserve has been observed during site analysis and intercept survey visitations.

Performance Assessment

Overall, the reserve performed averagely, with higher scores relating to the natural appeal of the site, and the appropriateness of the activities supported. The facilities that are provided are fairly low key and there is significant room to enhance the experience for users of this reserve. The reserve performed poorly in relation to the provision of accessible footpaths connecting key reserve facilities and specific features for people with impaired mobility.

The high performance scores relating to both playspaces (100%) and public toilets (100%) reflects that it is considered appropriate that these types of facility are not currently provided at this reserve.

Given the environmental and conservation focus of this reserve it was not considered relevant to evaluate its performance on the water based recreation criteria.



Priority Actions

- Continue to prioritise the protection and enhancement of environmental and conservation values when considering any new development at this reserve
- Revegetation program
- Consider upgrades/provision of additional seating, shade/shelters and interpretation

A1.4 Rocky Gully Wetlands



A1.5 Sturt Reserve

Overview

Sturt Reserve is located adjacent to Murray Bridge city centre, located on the western bank of the river, and is RCMB's regional, destination reserve, and popular with both locals and visitors.

The reserve accommodates a range of water-based recreation users, with core facilities (including boat ramp, wharfs, jetties, mooring and launching areas) supporting activities such as powered and unpowered boating, canoe/kayaking, swimming, houseboat mooring and river cruises. As RCMB's premier reserve it also supports a wide range of land-based recreation activities and includes a riverfront footpath, BBQ shelters /seating, a youth precinct (including destination playspace, skate park) and hosts community events both on and off the water.

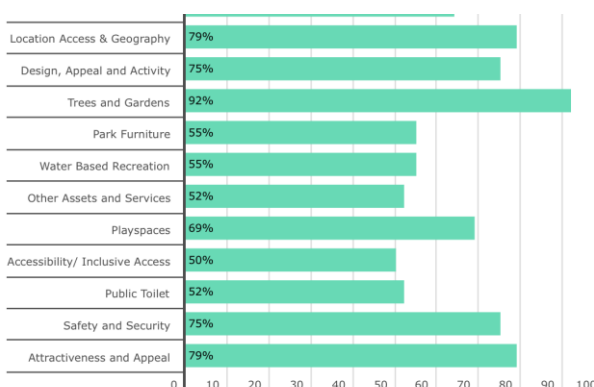
Performance Assessment

Overall, the reserve performed well as part of the assessment, with higher scores relating to the natural appeal of the site, trees and shade, the playspace, sense of security, the wide variety of activities catered for at the reserve and the welcoming, attractive and appealing nature of the reserve.

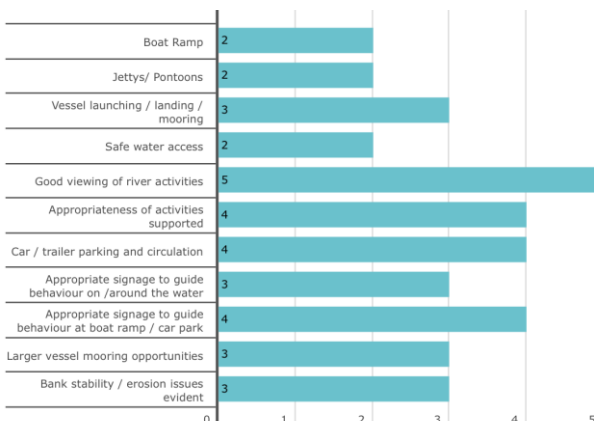
The reserve performed relatively less well in relation to the provision of picnic tables, BBQ shelters, lighting and signage.

In terms of water-based recreation criteria, the single boat ramp and the provision and condition of the wharfs/jetties/pontoons scored relatively poorly. Facilities provided to support activities appropriate to the adjacent 4 knot speed limit on the river score well, as did car parking capacity, and signage to inform behaviours.

Core Criteria



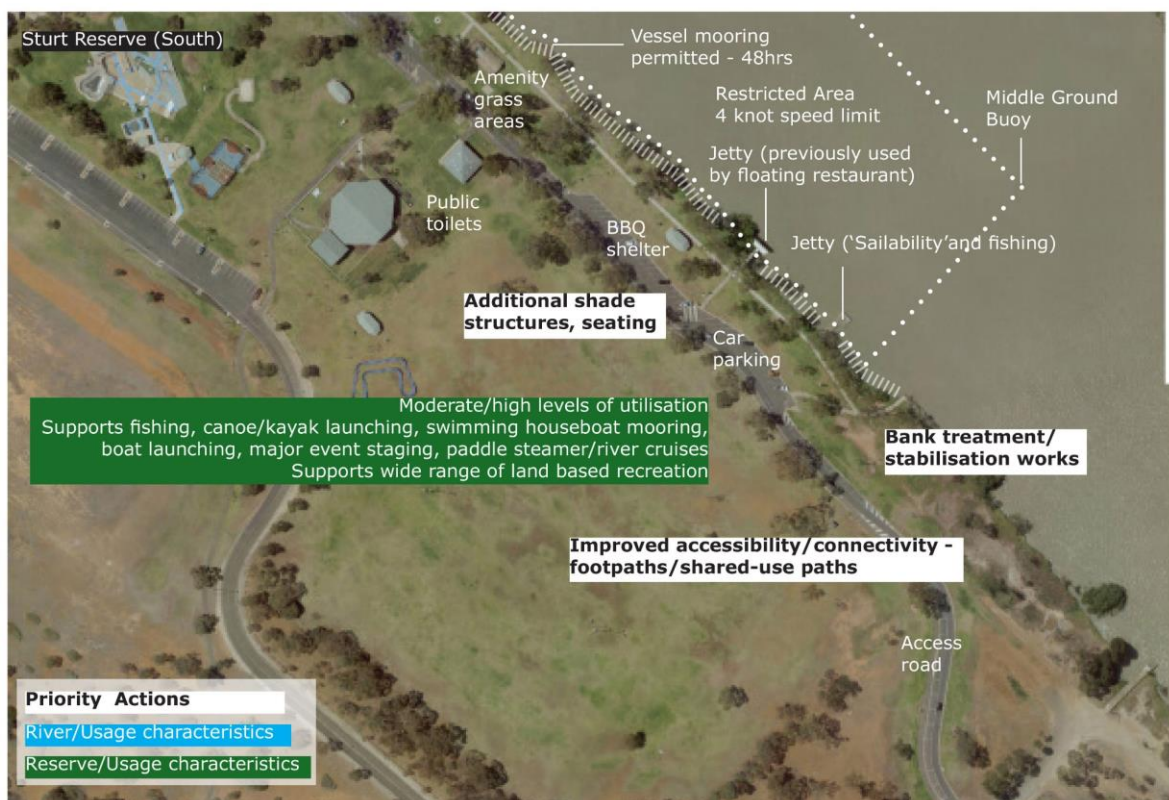
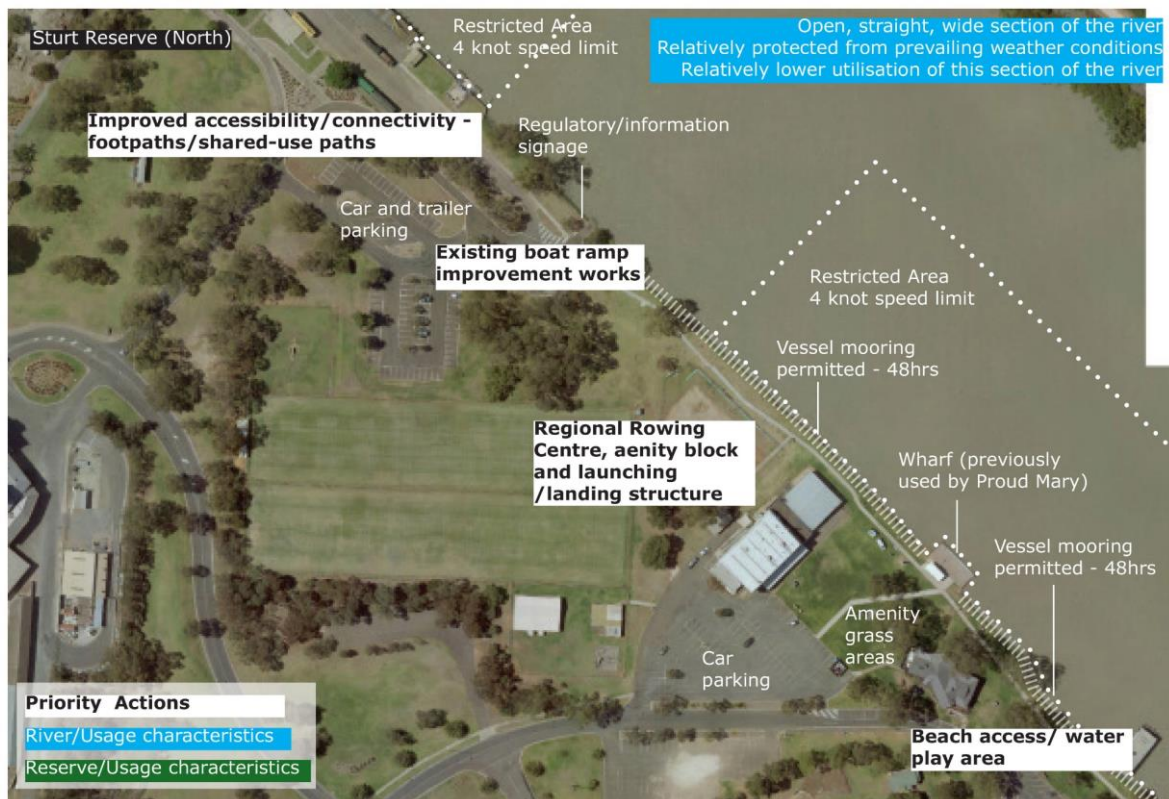
Water Based Recreation Criteria



Priority Actions

- Progress detailed design and implementation of Sturt Reserve Master Plan, including components such as:
 - Regional Rowing Centre, amenity block and launching/landing structure
 - Improvements to existing boat ramp
 - Bank treatment/stabilisation works
 - Shared use path adjacent riverbank (forming part of the Murray Coorong Trail)
- Additional shade structures and seating

A1.5 Sturt Reserve



A1.6 Swanport Reserve

Overview

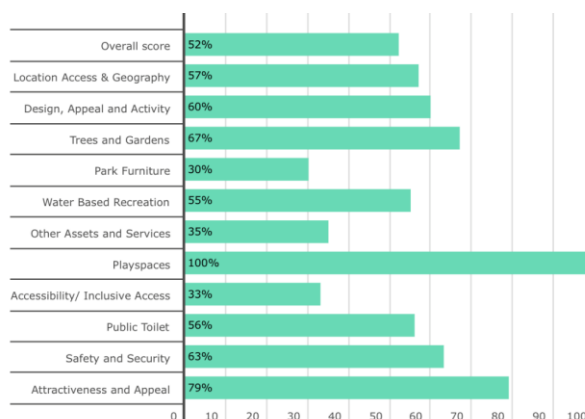
Swanport Reserve is located approximately eight kilometres south of Murray Bridge city centre, located on the western bank of the river. The reserve is relatively quiet and primarily supports swimming, fishing and canoe/kayaking (plus houseboat mooring) on the water and a range of land-based passive recreation activities in the reserve. Facilities are relatively limited however include an accessible toilet, shelters and seating, access to the water and mooring posts and benefits from shade from a good number of established trees.

Performance Assessment

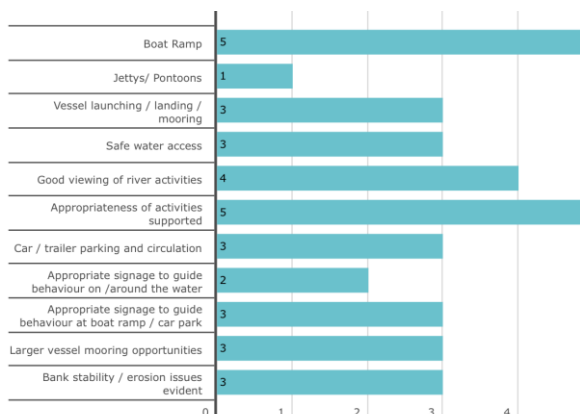
Overall, the reserve performed reasonably well as part of the assessment, with higher scores relating to the organisation and layout the activities and facilities, trees and shade, the welcoming, attractive and appealing nature of the reserve. The reserve performed less well in relation to the quality and provision of park furniture (seats, tables etc), and lack of footpath connecting key facilities, and control of vehicle access onto the reserve.

Facilities provided to support envisaged water-based recreation activities at the reserve were considered appropriate, and opportunities to view activities on the river were also good, however accessing the river with canoes/kayaks would be a challenge given distance to the car parking. Available space to access the river is also constrained, particularly if occupied by users fishing, or if a houseboat is moored at the reserve.

Core Criteria



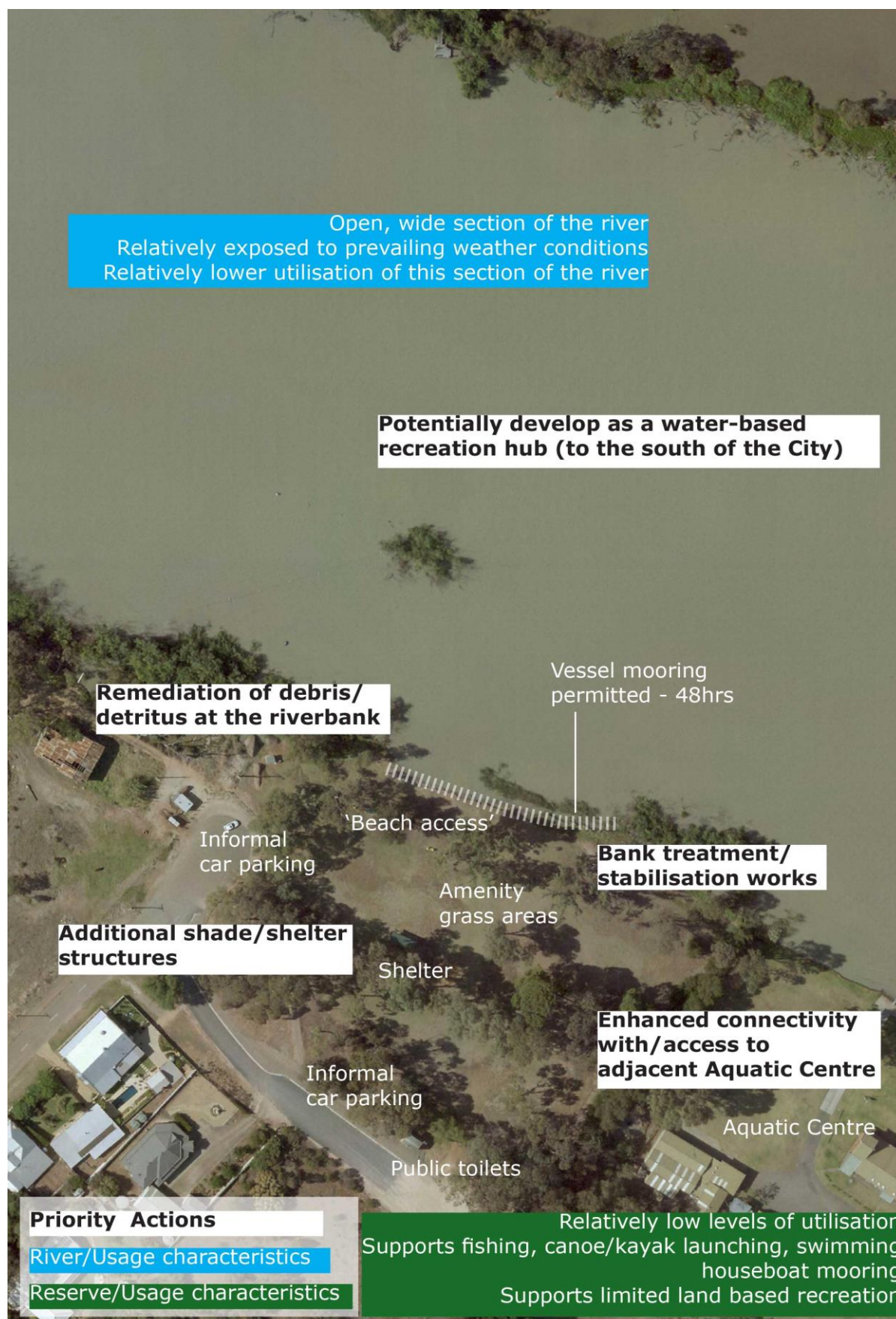
Water Based Recreation Criteria



Priority Actions

- Explore opportunities to develop Swanport Reserve/the Aquatic Centre and establish as an enhanced water-based recreation hub to the south of the City
- Explore opportunities to provide some level of public access to facilities at the Aquatic Centre, whilst improving connectivity between the Aquatic Centre and the adjacent Swanport Reserve
- Improve accessibility and connectivity between key reserve facilities through provision of footpaths and links to adjacent reserves via footpaths/shared use paths
- Bank treatment/stabilisation works
- Remediation of debris/detritus at the riverbank
- Additional shade/shelter structures

A1.6 Swanport Reserve



A1.7 Swanport Wetlands

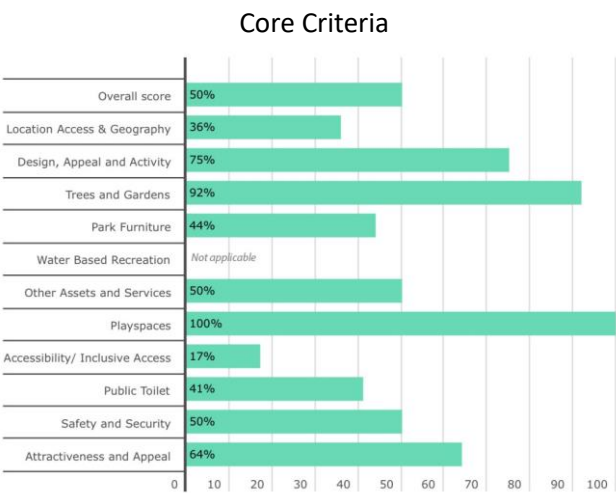
Overview

Swanport Wetlands is located around nine kilometres to the south of Murray Bridge city centre, located on the eastern bank of the river, and directly opposite Swanport Reserve on the other side of the river. The reserve has significant environmental values and is supported by low key facilities primarily supporting land-based passive recreation activities such as walking and bird watching etc. No use of the reserve has been observed during site analysis and intercept survey visitations.

Performance Assessment

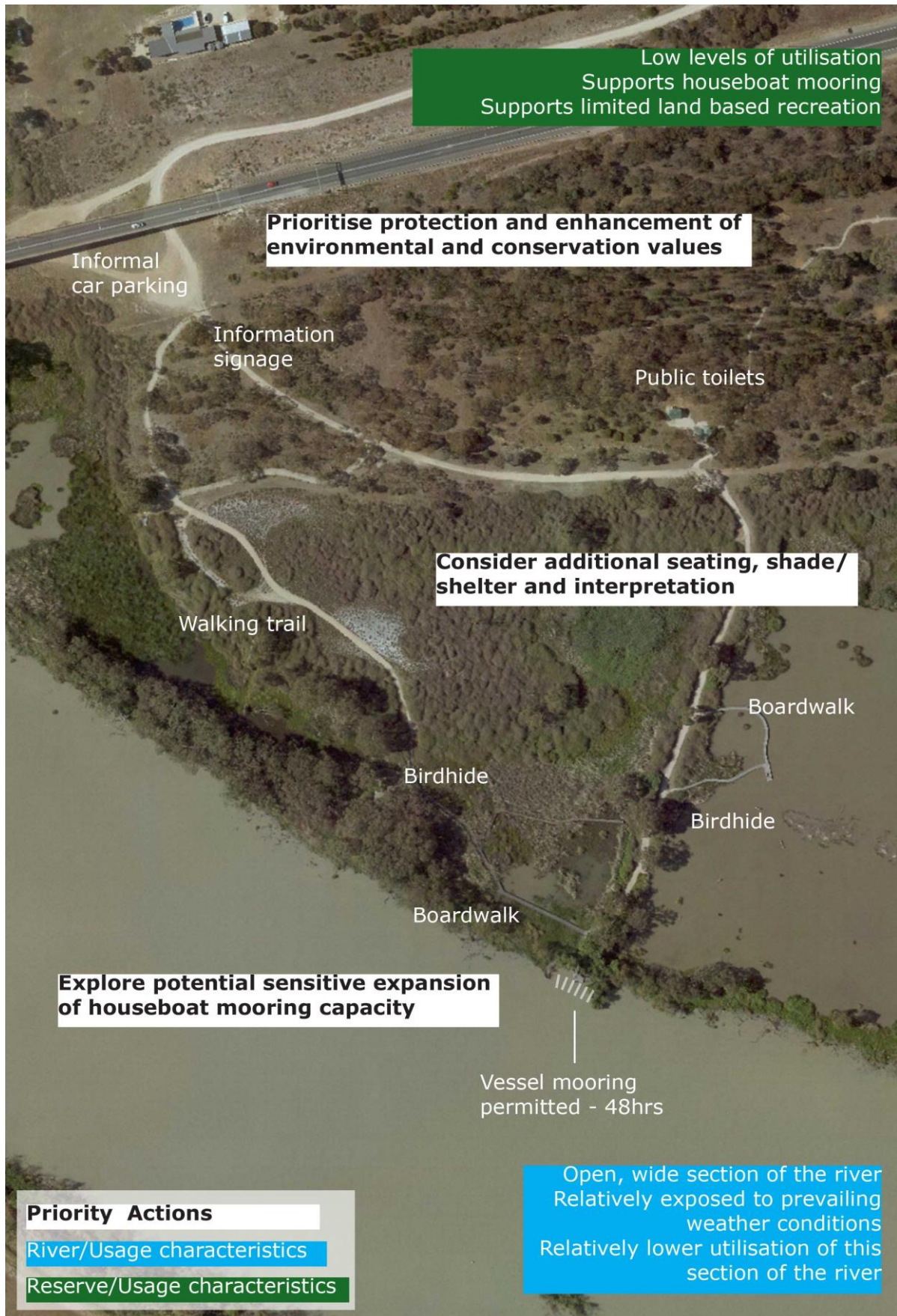
Overall, the reserve performed reasonably, with higher scores relating to the natural appeal of the site, and the coverage of trees and native plantings. The facilities that are provided are fairly low key and there is significant room to enhance the experience for users of this reserve. The reserve performed poorly in relation to its accessibility (by vehicle or on foot), the provision of accessible footpaths connecting key reserve facilities and specific features for people with impaired mobility. The relatively low performance score for the public toilet (41%) reflects the relatively low levels use of this reserve, typical overall time a visitor may spend at this reserve on a visit, and its relatively inaccessible location (noting the facility itself is suitably designed and DDA compliant).

Given the environmental and conservation focus of this reserve it was not considered relevant to evaluate its performance on the water based recreation criteria (noting low key facilities at the reserve to accommodate a limited level of houseboat mooring)



Priority Actions

- Continue to prioritise the protection and enhancement of environmental and conservation values when considering any new development at this reserve
- Consider upgrades/provision of additional seating, shade/shelters and interpretation
- Explore opportunities to sensitively increase houseboat mooring capacity at the reserve



A1.8 Thiele Reserve

Overview

Thiele Reserve is located approximately two kilometres from Murray Bridge city centre, located on the eastern bank of the river.

The reserve is popular with a wide range of water-based recreation users, with core facilities (including boat ramp, mooring and launching areas) supporting activities such as powered and unpowered boating, canoe/kayaking, swimming, fishing and houseboat mooring. The relatively close proximity to both the city centre and the South East Freeway make this one of the most popular reserves with locals and visitors.

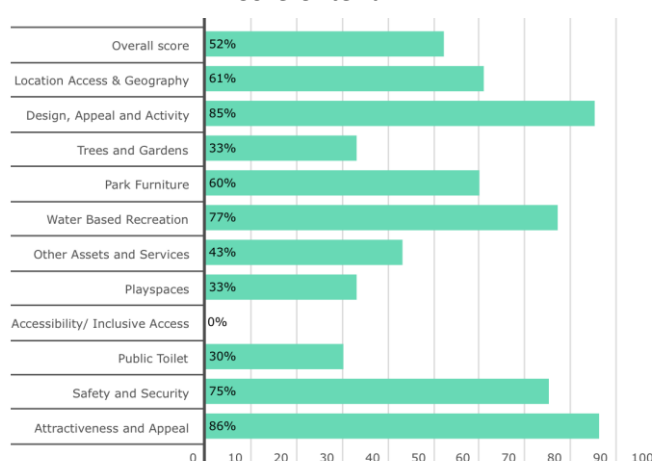
Performance Assessment

Overall, the reserve performed relatively well as part of the assessment, with higher scores relating to the natural appeal of the site, the wide variety of activities catered for at the reserve and the welcoming, attractive and appealing nature of the reserve.

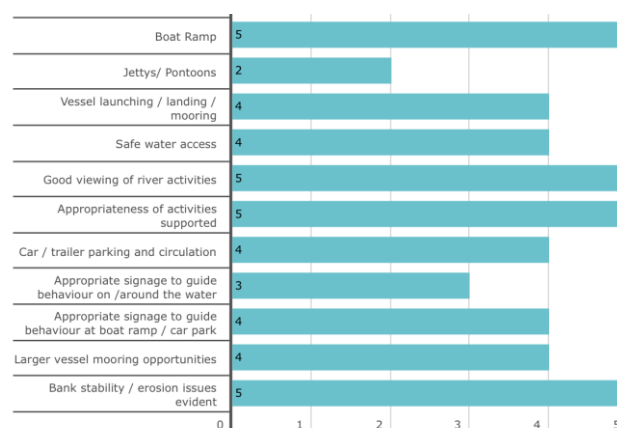
The reserve performed notably poorly in relation to the toilet and provision of accessible footpaths and specific features for people with impaired mobility.

In terms of water-based recreation criteria, facilities such as the double boat ramp and the provision of launching/landing/mooring areas scored well. The absence of a jetty or pontoon negatively impacted on the overall score for that criteria.

Core Criteria



Water Based Recreation Criteria



Priority Actions

- Progress implementation of concept plan for this reserve, in particular the following components:
 - Upgrade toilet amenities
 - Address vehicle management issues (i.e parking on verges)
 - Improve accessibility and connectivity between key reserve facilities through provision of footpaths
 - Additional shade/shelter structures
 - Potential to provide additional houseboat moorings to the south

A1.8 Thiele Reserve



A1.9 Toora Reserve

Overview

Toora Reserve is located approximately twelve kilometres to the north east of Murray Bridge city centre, located on the western bank of the river.

The reserve is effectively undeveloped, with provision made for some informal car parking on the road side, limited signage at the entrance and a relatively large expanse of amenity grass and pockets of established trees. No use of the reserve has been observed during site analysis and intercept survey visitations.

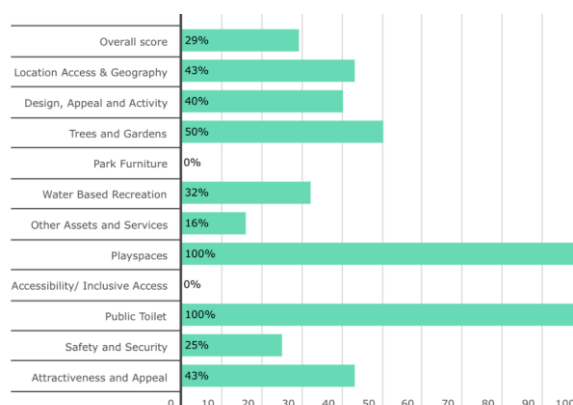
Performance Assessment

Overall, the reserve performed poorly as part of the assessment, with higher scores relating to the attractive and appealing nature of the reserve and its broader setting. The reserve performed poorly on most other criteria, including water based recreation criteria.

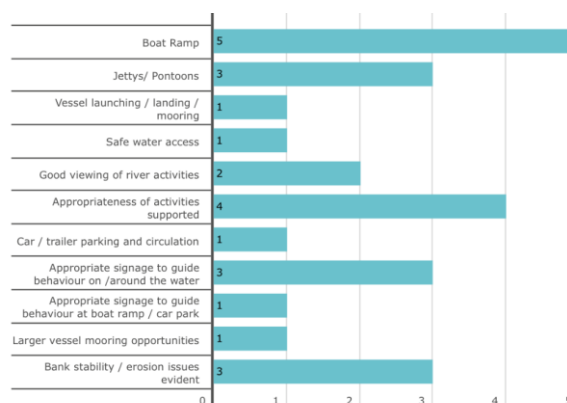
However, it is considered that the fundamentals exist to develop this reserve in the future for the purposes of supporting water-based recreation.

The high performance scores relating to both playspaces (100%) and public toilets (100%) reflects that it is considered appropriate that these types of facility are not currently provided at this reserve.

Core Criteria



Water Based Recreation Criteria



Priority Actions

- Progress implementation of master plan for this reserve, to establish as a new water-based recreation hub to the north of the City, in particular the following components:
 - New boat ramp and formalised parking and circulation
 - Toilet amenities and shade/shelter structures
 - Environmental values protection and bank treatment/stabilisation works
- Review feasibility of delivering sealed road access from reserve back to Murray Bridge/main road network
- Consider viability of hosting regular power boating events at this reserve (necessitating control of public access to the reserve and adjacent waters during these events)

A1.9 Toora Reserve



A1.10 Tumbella Drive Reserve

Overview

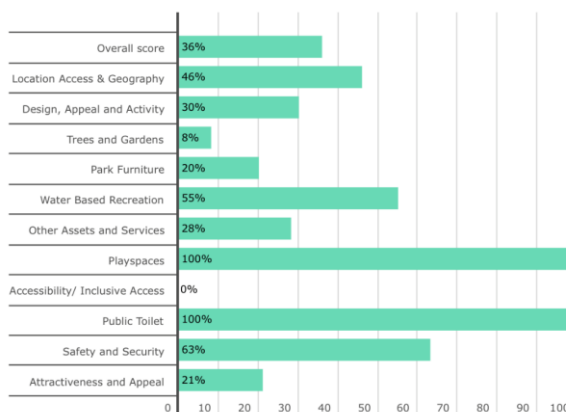
Tumbella Drive Reserve is located approximately three kilometres south of Murray Bridge city centre, located on the western bank of the river. The reserve is relatively undeveloped, with provision made for some informal car parking on the road side, limited signage at the entrance and an area of amenity grass (unirrigated) and a stormwater detention basin.

Performance Assessment

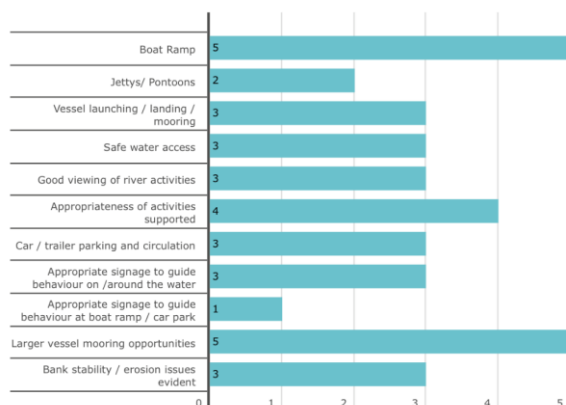
Only limited use of the reserve has been observed during site analysis and intercept survey visitations, including sunbathers and a small group of kayakers. The reserve would also likely support fishing, however there is limited access to the water from the reserve and the small reserve is surrounded by residential properties.

Overall, the reserve performed poorly as part of the assessment, with higher scores relating to the safety and security (good passive surveillance from adjacent residences). The reserve performed poorly on most other criteria, including water based recreation criteria. The scoring also reflected the fact that, in terms of water-based recreation, current facility provision was considered appropriate at this location (i.e. no boat ramp provision and limited opportunities to moor larger vessels).

Core Criteria



Water Based Recreation Criteria



Priority Actions

- Revegetation program, including tree planting for shade
- Bank treatment/stabilisation works
- Enhanced pedestrian/cycle connections through reserve with links to Long Island Reserve, Sturt Reserve and beyond (as part of delivery of Murray Coorong Trail)

A1.10 Tumbella Drive Reserve



A1.11 Woodlane Reserve

Overview

Woodlane Reserve is located approximately twenty kilometres to the north east of Murray Bridge city centre, located on the western bank of the river.

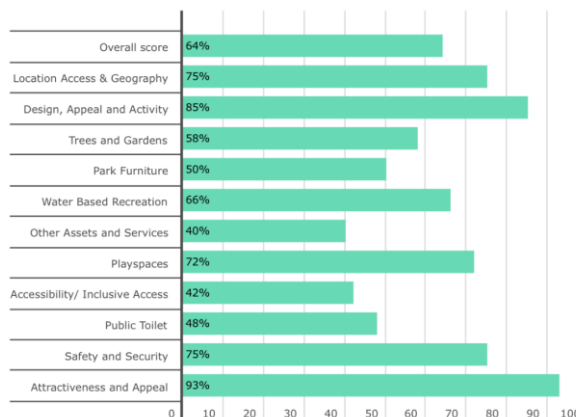
The reserve is popular with a wide range of water-based recreation users, with core facilities (including boat ramp, jetty mooring, launching areas, river cruise docking and private ski club) supporting activities such as powered and unpowered boating, canoe/kayaking, swimming, fishing and houseboat mooring.

Performance Assessment

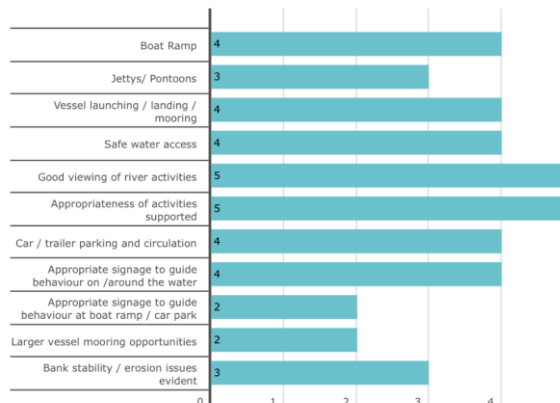
Overall, the reserve performed relatively well as part of the assessment, with higher scores relating to the organisation and layout the activities and facilities, the welcoming, attractive and appealing nature of the reserve. The reserve performed less well in relation to toilet provision, accessible path network connecting key facilities and the provision of park furniture (seats, tables etc), although it is acknowledged that many of the reserve's users tend to be self-sufficient in this regard.

In terms of water-based recreation criteria, the reserve scored highly for viewing areas and the capacity of the adjacent river space to accommodate a range of water-based activities. The reserve fared less well with regard to vehicle/trailer parking and challenges associated with dis/embarking passengers on the Proud Mary.

Core Criteria



Water Based Recreation Criteria



Priority Actions

- Progress implementation of master plan for this reserve, in particular the following components:
 - Upgrade toilet amenities
 - Bank treatment/stabilisation works
 - Additional shade shelters
 - Review of options to manage vehicles and formalise parking arrangements
- Improve accessibility and connectivity between key reserve facilities, and links to adjacent reserves via footpaths/shared use paths (as part of delivery of Murray Coorong Trail)
- Explore viability of creating new dedicated mooring area for larger vessels (i.e. tourist boats) to the north of the existing boat ramp

A1.11 Woodlane Reserve

