

Natural Resources Management Plan 2015–2025

Have Your Say

Discussion paper No 9: Thriving Community



This discussion paper is part of a series covering all of the 'Big Issues' raised by the community during meetings and workshops about the new Kangaroo Island NRM Plan. It provides a summary of the current state of knowledge about the issue, suggests courses of action and identifies who might work together with us in addressing it.

We now invite your comments, suggestions, criticisms and ideas.

Introduction

Life on Kangaroo Island is characterised by a good community spirit, the KI wave, mucking in to help each other, a sense of belonging, multiple interest groups and clubs to join, well supported sporting activities, high rates of volunteering, a safe and healthy environment and a shared sense of appreciation for living here. This is not to say that all is rosy. Challenges include a lower than state average income level for many, higher than state average unemployment, the social isolation of some members of the community, growing rates of substance abuse, domestic violence and increasing petty crime. There are also limited professional development opportunities for school leavers on the island and many depart to study and work elsewhere, occasionally returning later in their lives. This has led to a situation where the majority of residents are either children, youths or middle aged/retirees.

There are a number of elements that contribute to individual and [community wellbeing](#)¹. These include meeting people's basic needs (e.g. nutritious food, clean water) and others such as income and livelihoods, education, essential social services and social connectedness.



¹ Norris, T and Pittman, MPH. 2000. *The Healthy Communities Movement and the Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities*. Public Health Reports, Vol. 115.



Natural Resources
Kangaroo Island



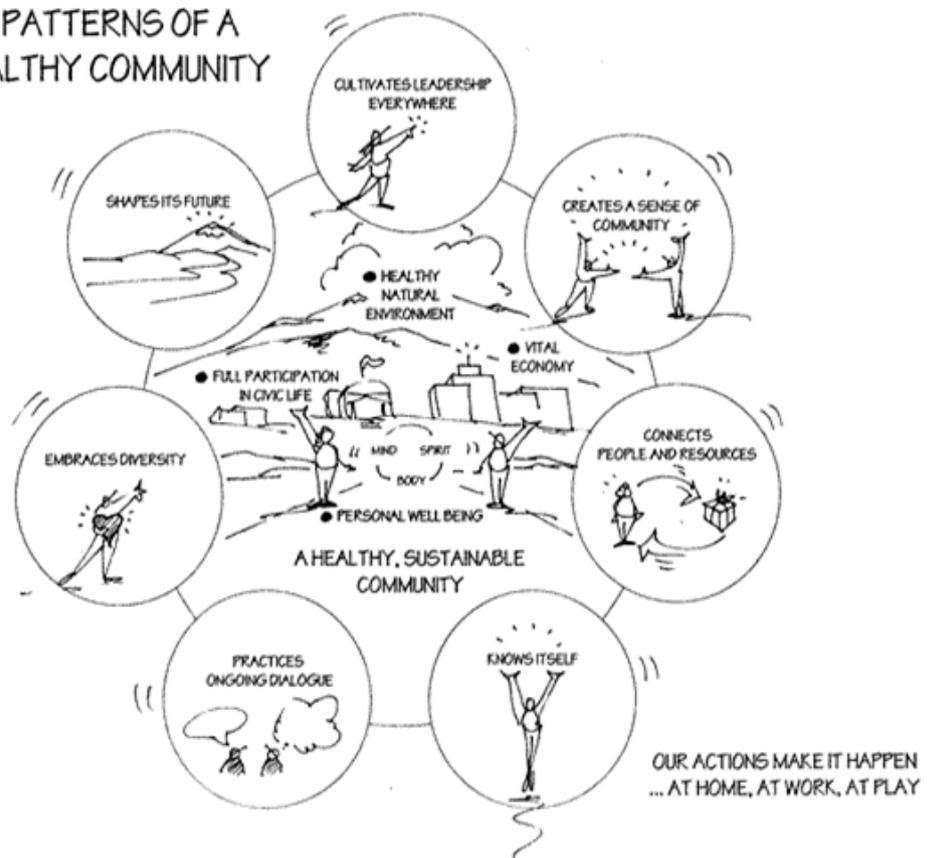
Government
of South Australia

Around the world, people are rethinking the ways in which they live and interact with each other and with the natural world. A number of concepts and initiatives are gaining traction and may have relevance for KI. Whilst not exhaustive, this paper seeks to share some key ideas for further investigation.

» [Placemaking](#)² is central to many of the powerful trends shaping the world today. The stumbling global economy, a vulnerable energy supply, and loss of confidence in far-flung markets are balanced by an upsurge of interest in things local: producing local food; promoting local businesses; preserving local character; protecting local open space and public places; finding meaningful ways to belong to a local community. Cities and regions that thrive in the 21st century will be differentiated by their lively neighborhoods and business districts, cultural and recreational attractions, great sense of place, protected natural areas, and deep pride in local character, products and foods. They will achieve this through an open collaborative process with their citizens.

» In [thriving and resilient communities](#)³, information and resources flow smoothly through the community. People feel cared for and acknowledged and there is a sense that the community becomes greater than the sum of the parts. The community is resilient to shifting outside forces, becoming increasingly self-sufficient and resourceful, able to withstand and recover from hard times. Even in the case of a widespread emergency, residents can meet their basic needs including food, water, [energy](#)⁴, transportation, housing, and economic and social services. A thriving community encourages connection and meaningful engagement, fostering a sense of common purpose and shared endeavour, and highlights small as well as large successes. For more information have a look at this [Community Resilience Tool Kit](#)⁵ which provides access to an array of resources and read about [Regenerative Adelaide](#)⁶.

7 PATTERNS OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY



² <http://www.pps.org/reference/howyourcommunitycanthrive-evenintoughtimes/>

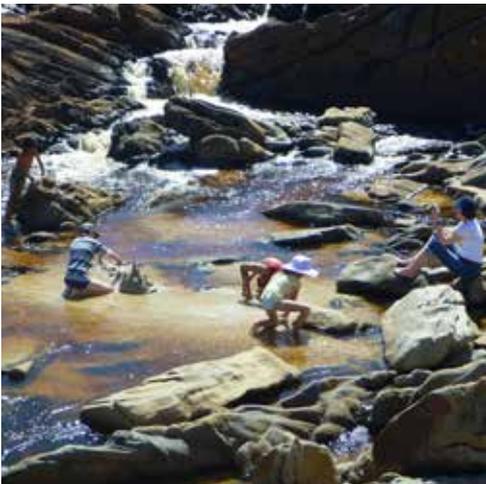
³ <http://thrivingresilience.org/the-common-story/>

⁴ <http://www.communitypowernetwork.com/node/9220>

⁵ <http://www.baylocalize.org/toolkit>

⁶ <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.org/node/1153>

- » The [Transition Movement](#)⁷ is comprised of vibrant, grassroots community initiatives that seek to build community resilience in the face of such challenges as climate change and economic crises. It seeks to mitigate these by engaging communities in home-grown, citizen-led education, action, and multi-stakeholder planning to increase local self-reliance and resilience. It succeeds by using local assets (including knowledge and creativity, relationships, institutions, infrastructure, and natural resources), innovating, networking, collaborating, replicating proven strategies, and respecting the patterns of nature and diverse cultures in their place. [Transition Initiatives work](#)⁸ to create a fulfilling and inspiring local way of life that can withstand the shocks of rapidly shifting global systems.
- » [Co-creation](#)⁹ is about building trust and social cohesion by working together to innovate and create a desirable future, whilst collaborative decision making allows all voices to be heard, with various supporting practices and new tools (such as [Loomio](#)¹⁰) facilitating this growing body of practice. To do this we each need to put our egos aside and allow or even embrace differences. We need to enter into dialogue and then listen deeply for understanding rather than rushing to judgements, for a moment suspending our own belief systems in order to be able to see other [possibilities](#)¹¹. In order to achieve a desired future, we first need to agree on it and then undertake well-informed actions that will expand our knowledge, enhance our competencies, and overcome challenges for arriving at that future.
- » A syndrome known as [nature deficit disorder](#)¹² has recently been identified and, even on KI, many people and particularly the youth are spending less time outdoors, resulting in a loss of connection with nature and reduced wellbeing. The role that nature plays in human wellbeing is undeniable as we feel the sun on our faces, hear the birds singing, and witness the beauty that surrounds us. Many recent studies are confirming this currently [undervalued](#)¹³ role and are pointing to nature's power to improve physical health and psychological wellbeing, cognitive ability and [social cohesion](#)¹⁴. [Nature Play](#)¹⁵ is one way of addressing this problem for children and youth at risk.
- » [Urban food hubs](#)¹⁶ and [community vegetable gardens](#)¹⁷ are taking off around the world with multiple benefits including making nutritious food locally available, providing livelihoods and reducing food miles. The connection between a [healthy diet and a healthy environment](#)¹⁸ is integral.
- » A number of communities around the world are also working together to reduce their [environmental footprint](#)¹⁹ at the individual and the household level. Simple steps include reducing food waste, eating locally grown food, reducing energy use, driving more efficiently, cycling or walking when possible, reducing air miles, etc.



⁷ <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/jun/15/transition-towns-way-forward>

⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jun/26/healthy-society-about-community-alongside-healthcare>

⁹ <http://www.cocreateadl.com/>

¹⁰ <https://www.loomio.org/>

¹¹ <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol16/iss1/art34/>

¹² <http://www.education.com/topic/nature-deficit-disorder/>

¹³ Maller, C, Townsend, M, St Leger, L, Henderson-Wilson, C, Pryor, A, Prosser, L and Moore, M. 2008. *Healthy Parks, healthy people: the health benefits of contact with nature in a park context. A review of relevant literature.* Deakin University and Parks Victoria.

¹⁴ Keniger, LE, Gaston, KJ, Irvine, KN, and Fuller, RA. 2013. *What are the benefits of interacting with nature?* International journal of environmental research and public health 10, 913-935

¹⁵ <https://natureplaysa.org.au/>

¹⁶ <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.org/node/237308>

¹⁷ <http://www.communitycentressa.asn.au/documents/item/26>

¹⁸ <http://theconversation.com/healthy-diet-healthier-planet-26152>

¹⁹ <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/ecologicalfootprint/calculators/personal/introduction.asp>

- » Volunteering has always been a strong tradition in Australia and particularly so on KI, but a [University of Adelaide study](#)²⁰ has now revealed the true extent of its monetary value to the Australian economy — more than \$200 billion a year! Its economic contribution to Australian society outstrips revenue sources from mining, agriculture and the retail sector, though the real contribution it makes is immeasurable. Volunteers gain a broad range of new skills that are transferable to their workplace, are healthier, fitter, more mentally alert and more socially connected than people who do not volunteer.
- » Around the world youth movements and youth leaders are taking action and inspiring others to do likewise, leading the way with new innovations and ideas, such as the ['Kid Warrior'](#)²¹. The importance of youth in community activities cannot be overstated. As a community we need to ensure that our youth is adequately educated and skilled, and encouraged to be creative and free-thinking, to develop a real sense of purpose, to believe in themselves and their power to make a difference and to build a better world. We need to encourage them to express their views and stand up for causes that they believe are important. Activities such as volunteering provide them with an opportunity to develop their skills whilst contributing to the community.

Climate Change

Climate change has the potential to impact significantly on community wellbeing directly and indirectly. It is also likely to act as an increasingly significant destabilising force globally as food becomes scarce due to natural disasters, conflicts over water escalate, climate change refugees increase dramatically in number and emergency response funds are depleted. The global effects of climate change will have knock-on effects locally and building the resilience and [adaptive capacity](#)²² of the KI community is essential in responding to this. Our community is especially vulnerable due to a greater than normal proportion of very young and much older people. This will require careful consideration as will issues like food and energy security.

The KI community prides itself on being independent, innovative and resilient and these qualities will be extremely helpful in the coming decades if appropriately nurtured and further developed. Adaptation will be required on a number of levels and people will need to be flexible in their thinking and approach to challenges.

Building the resilience of the natural resource base will act as an insurance policy and stand us in good stead in the future. In order to do this we need to reduce the pressures on the natural environment (e.g. by reducing pollution) and improve our understanding of how we might work to help it adapt too (e.g. by protecting large areas of undisturbed natural habitat and maintaining habitat connectivity).



²⁰ <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/news/news55621.html>

²¹ <http://ecowatch.com/2015/04/22/kid-warrior-xiuhtezcatl-martinez/>

²² <http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/7/3/034022/>

Strategies and priorities

It is important to note that the NRM plan is intended to guide and coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders in the region and responsibility for its implementation is a joint one.

- » Actively pursue different ways of building cooperation and collaboration between all sectors of the community, improving information flows and creatively exploring new ways of thinking and acting together to create a desirable future for KI that is built on our common vision, sense of purpose and place.
- » Actively engage in cross-agency collaboration to deliver integrated community services and outcomes, reducing conflict and streamlining/merging processes where appropriate.
- » Identify and establish suitable mechanisms for promoting community discussion in important societal issues.
- » Build awareness and understanding amongst the KI community of the importance and value of natural systems and the need to protect and conserve these, also building the capacity of the community to engage in NRM activities.
- » Promote ways in which individuals and households can reduce their own ecological footprint, saving energy and water, reducing waste, and contributing to the transition KI makes to becoming carbon neutral.
- » Identify and promote opportunities for supporting youth leadership and career development in science/conservation/NRM fields.
- » Identify and promote opportunities for increasing child and youth involvement in and exposure to NRM and nature based activities, including the establishment and promotion of suitable outdoor recreational spaces for youth, and recognising its value in countering emerging social problems.
- » Promote the importance of and provide opportunities for connecting with nature and undertaking nature based volunteering activities, matching volunteers with appropriate and engaging activities and ensuring the inclusion of socially marginalised community members.
- » Promote a healthy respect for animals and their welfare, including living harmoniously with wildlife.
- » Promote the connection between art and the environment, both as a source of artistic inspiration and physical materials, but also as a way of building awareness about the importance of nature and the important role it plays in culture.
- » Investigate the potential for establishing a community owned and run vegetable garden, aimed at involving and assisting socially marginalised community members, as well as promoting the importance of eating fresh and healthy foods to all members of the community.
- » Identify and implement strategies for building local social capital, adaptive capacity, social resilience and self-sufficiency.



Partners

- » Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources
- » Kangaroo Island Council
- » SA Health
- » Kangaroo Island Community Education
- » Industry
- » Community (including Progress Associations)
- » Workskil
- » Volunteer organisations
- » Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- » Friends of Parks and volunteer groups
- » Artists and arts organisations

What are your thoughts?

1. Have all the key issues relating to this **big issue** been adequately captured and understood?
2. Are there any gaps or misinterpretations?
3. What is the overall trend in relation to this issue — are matters improving or deteriorating, how fast and why?
4. In order to address this challenge, will the 'business as usual' approach work, or is adaptation (substantial change) or transformation (complete rethink of how we do business and how we tackle this issue) needed?
5. Do you agree with the strategies and priorities listed and/or do any need adding?
6. Who are the partners that need to collaborate to address this challenge?

Images: Kangaroo Island Community Education (KICE) Asian Market, KICE; Stephanie Alexander community garden, KICE.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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