

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 PROJECT BRIEF AND OUTCOMES

The Project Brief for the Coastal Viewscapes Project required the development and application of a methodology to measure and map scenic values of the South Australian coast. Specifically the project was required to:

- Develop and apply a methodology to measure the scenic value of the South Australia's coast;
- Map scenic value at a scale sufficient for planning and policy development;
- Provide recommendations for the incorporation of the methodology into the Policy, Planning and Development Assessment processes;
- Report on the findings of the project;

The Brief has been fulfilled by this report and the maps that accompany it. Recommendations covering planning policy and development assessment have been developed in Section 7.

The outcomes of the project were intended to:

- Provide a basis for strategic planning and policy within the coastal zone;
- Provide information on community aspirations both on a local, regional and statewide basis, in respect to landscape qualities, in order to include appropriate development controls in Council Development plans;
- Provide a basis for the assessment of development, particularly within the coastal zone in development plans where development should be classified as non-complying or prohibited;
- Provide support for decisions made on policy, planning and development applications including in appeals;
- Inform and enhance knowledge and understanding of the value of the coastal landscape among professionals, regions and the community.

It is considered that the findings of the project together with this report and maps will assist in the achievement of these outcomes.

The project has been extremely demanding and has taken over six months of continuous work to complete to specifications. Nevertheless it has been a very rewarding and challenging project to be awarded and complete.

8.2 SUBJECTIVITY AND SURROGATES

The view is often expressed that scenic quality is a subjective quality that cannot be measured and on which no two persons can agree. However the results of this project should help to dispel these misconceptions; scenic quality *is* subjective but it can be measured objectively, and there is strong agreement across a range of people about what constitutes high scenic quality.

The outcomes of the project proved that while there was variation among individuals in the scenic quality of a given scene, nevertheless the similarities were far greater than the differences. It was shown for example that the average ratings across all scenes varied only marginally when examined by reference to the age, gender, education and birthplace of participants. *"Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder"*, but actually everyone's eyes are similar and result in close agreement about what is beautiful.

As shown in the study, it was actually those areas which were less beautiful where a wider range of opinion became evident. People can agree on what they like, there is less agreement on what they do not like.

The scenic quality ratings provide surrogates or indicators of scenic quality; they do not comprise scenic quality. When viewing a scene, few individuals would rate a scene out of ten, rather they would express their opinion about the beauty of the scene. The rating scale forces them to compare the scene with a standard of beauty that is held in their mind. Every individual has this standard built up through their lifetime of experience. In carrying out the rating, this standard is further informed by the range of scenes presented, including scenes that the individual possibly had not previously encountered, such as scenes from northern South Australia and from the west coast of Eyre Peninsula and the Nullarbor.

The rating instrument applied the surrogate of a number to a given scene and the individual translated their opinion of its relative scenic quality into a number which most closely

matches their opinion. It is recognised that the number cannot fully capture the subtleties involved in framing an opinion of the scenic quality of a scene in which the individual may compare it with other scenes in their mind's eye and note variations and differences.

While the ten point scale thus provides only a relatively coarse measure of scenic quality, nonetheless it is one which is readily comprehended and which is easy to apply. A scale of say 1 to 100 would be far more difficult to apply as it would present a ten-fold increase in possible choices, while a smaller scale of say 1 – 5 would present a too coarse differentiation across the range of scenic quality.

The photographs are surrogates also of the actual scene. Clearly it would have been impractical to take hundreds of participants around the coast to rate the scenes. As documented in the report (Sec 2.6), there is ample evidence from studies that providing the photographs meet certain criteria, that their ratings will be similar to field-based ratings.

As described in Sec. 3.1, care was taken in photographing scenes to avoid the transitory effects of lighting, clouds, seasonal differences, or photographic composition, all of which may enhance ratings. A conservative approach to measuring scenic quality is considered more appropriate than one which could inflate its level. However it is recognised that the scenic quality of scenes may seem higher at certain times than that which has been identified by this project because of the presence of these transitory effects.

8.3 SCENIC QUALITY AND THE COMMUNITY

It is hoped that this report will provide strong support and encouragement for the greater recognition of scenic quality as a key community resource. This may reinforce the importance of scenic quality as an environmental and community resource that should not be ignored as it has been up to now.

For too long, little more than lip service has been paid to scenic quality, acknowledging its importance for example in tourism literature and in regional and local planning but failing to do anything significantly to objectively identify, measure and map it.

Given that the tourism industry is dependent on attractive landscapes for much of its economic viability, scenic quality comprises an important economic resource and should be managed and protected accordingly. A century ago it was estimated that Switzerland gained between US\$10,000 - 40,000 per square mile from its scenery per year (Runte, 1979). South Australia's coast may similarly be valued in terms of its linear km and its contribution to the economy, particularly regional areas, through tourism.

It is also hoped that the methodology employed in the study, and the insights it has provided into the underlying factors which generate scenic quality, will inform and educate planning, environmental and land management professionals and the community generally. It has been shown possible to both measure and map scenic quality objectively and rigorously through a methodology that has produced replicable results.

8.4 SCENIC QUALITY POLICY

If the community and Government is serious about recognising the value of scenic quality and implementing a set of integrated measures that will ensure its protection, a whole-of-government policy approach will be required.

Such an approach will need to recognise:

- That scenic quality occurs regardless of land tenure and ownership, e.g. it is present on both public and private land; it is also present on land subject to mining legislation.
- That it is location specific to the boundary of the sea and the land, an area which marks the boundary of many Acts and policies. Scenic quality crosses over this boundary. Use and development of the sea immediately adjacent the land (e.g. marinas, aquaculture, infrastructure such as jetties) cannot be ignored.
- That it includes national parks and other State reserves, Council land and reserves, as well as Crown land.
- That much development of the coast has already occurred and that in many areas, degradation and loss of scenic quality has

resulted. The challenge is to minimise such losses in the future.

- That protection of scenic quality may limit individual freedom over one may do or develop in the coastal zone.

A whole of government policy approach could cover the following aspects:

1. Establish as policy the Government's commitment to recognise, protect and manage coastal scenic quality of significant landscapes.
2. Establish planning policy and development assessment requirements covering coastal scenic quality.
3. Establish as Government policy the protection of coastal scenic quality in all Government developments, as well as in land and marine management.
4. Ensure that National Parks legislation and management plans recognise, protect and manage coastal scenic quality.
5. Legislate to recognise and protect Landscapes of State Significance and declare those > 7.5 from this project as such Landscapes.
6. Based on advice of the Crown Solicitor that the Coast Protection Board is well within its authority to comment on how development may or may not affect the conservation of the coast, including its biodiversity and landscape, assign clear statutory responsibility for the protection and management of coastal scenic quality to the Coast Protection Board.
7. Require that in areas designated as significant landscapes, development proposals be called up under Sec 34 of the Development Act for a decision by the Development Assessment Commission.
8. Advocate to the Commonwealth Government the establishment of Landscapes of National Significance under Heritage legislation.
9. Seek the cooperation of the Commonwealth Government in the exercise of their responsibilities, particularly in the marine environment, to protect and manage coastal scenic quality.

10. Allocate adequate resources to the management, protection and access issues associated with areas of coastal scenic quality, including assistance to councils for appropriate management and development.

11. Promote community appreciation of coastal scenic quality and provide opportunities for their participation in its protection, restoration and management, e.g. through Friends of the Coast groups.

Finally, coastal scenic quality is an important community resource of immense social and economic value. South Australia can lead the nation in its recognition of this through its efforts to identify, protect and manage coastal scenic quality.

