



**Conservation Council
of South Australia Inc**

**Comments on the Hindmarsh Island —
Kumarangk Planning Amendment Report
2005**

Submission by

The Conservation Council
of South Australia Inc.

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Introduction

The Conservation Council of South Australia (CCSA) is the state's peak community environment organisation. Formed in 1971, it is an umbrella organisation for around 55 of the state's diverse environment groups, representing some 60,000 individuals. An object of the CCSA, as specified in its constitution, is to promote ecological, economic and social planning founded upon ethical principles of environment protection and conservation.

The CCSA has a longstanding interest in the Hindmarsh Island-Kumarangk region. In 1995-6, the CCSA was responsible, along with DEH, in having the Ramsar Community Reference Group established to write the first management plan for the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site. As you would be aware this management plan was implemented in late 2000.

The CCSA is keen to comment on what is a long overdue Development Plan Amendment Report (PAR) for this highly significant island Ramsar site.

Recommendations

1. That the Principles of Development Control for the Conservation Zone, and in particular Principle 17, be applied island-wide, irrespective of zoning.
2. That the proposal to expand the Conservation Zone, be adopted.
3. That the importance of revegetation/restoration using local plant species be emphasised as proposed.
4. That the proposal not to allow future residential marinas, be adopted.
5. That the PAR ensure future housing development can not take place on Hindmarsh Island.
6. That future housing development be limited to infill in those areas already subdivided for housing west of Monument Road.
7. That in areas presently not subdivided west of Monument Road, block sizes be no less than 4 hectares.
8. That future residential expansion occur on the mainland and away from sensitive wetland areas.
9. That any expansion of jetty facilities on Hindmarsh Island is not permitted.
10. That boardwalks in or adjacent to reed beds or other key bird habitat be banned.
11. That the Aleppo pines be removed and replaced with local indigenous vegetation, progressively over time, allowing for establishment of protective covering and minimising negative impacts.
12. That in areas without conventional infrastructure the Alexandrina Council support Environmentally Sustainable Living through subsidies and rate reductions.

General Comments

The CCSA notes with approval the process undertaken to develop this PAR and the particular consideration given to environmental concerns in what is a highly sensitive, key Ramsar site in Australia. The recent publication, *Coorong Health Check: A Summary of DEH program activities 2004-5* (DEH 2005), citing Gosbell and Christie (2005), recognises the site as

“the only top ‘ten site’ in Australia where the habitat suitability for waders is fundamentally affected by human activities. The conservation and wise use of the Coorong requires a full understanding of what environmental factors determines bird numbers’.

As the whole of Hindmarsh Island is included in the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site, the CCSA agrees that the “the key starting point was to map the Ramsar habitat areas and to automatically make these development exclusion areas” (draft PAR p.16).

The CCSA believes the PAR supports the objectives of the *Coorong, and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar Management Plan* (September 2000).

The CCSA can see that the PAR recognises the Ramsar principles of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (1999) and the objectives of the *Coorong, Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar Management Plan* (DEH, 2000).

Whilst the CCSA has concerns about some of the proposed island zoning, we support the Alexandrina Council-wide Ramsar Wetland Area provisions (p. 69), the Conservation Zone objectives, and the Principles of Development Control (p. 91ff).

Specific Comments

- Whilst the CCSA supports the Principles of Development Control for the Conservation Zone, and in particular Principle 17 (p. 95), we are concerned that this only appears to apply to the Conservation Zone. The CCSA believes this needs to be applied island-wide irrespective of zoning. Key Ramsar habitat is not only located in the Conservation Zone (see Core Ramsar Habitat Zone map p.94).
- The CCSA strongly supports the recognition of the original inhabitants of this land, the Ngarrindjeri people.
- The CCSA supports the recognition given to the important ecological restoration activities of the Hindmarsh Island Landcare Group (HILG), and in particular the work being undertaken in the Conservation Zone of the PAR in rehabilitating the many remnant wetland areas across that zone: “Due to this the revegetation corridors that are being established along the waterways are being included within the developmental exclusion areas thereby ensuring their protection” (draft PAR p. 23).
- The CCSA strongly supports the expansion of the Conservation Zone, which now includes most of the island, and in particular the southern and south-western parts.

- The CCSA agrees with the emphasis on the importance of revegetation/restoration using local plant species. These are clearly the most appropriate for this area. The PAR needs to establish a strong position with regard to standards for environmental restoration.

Ecological restoration will need the continued support of the Alexandrina Council. Unfortunately, we must draw to your attention the fact that no action was taken to implement the major environmental recommendations of the HIMP. All of these recommendations were identified as demanding immediate attention.

Unfortunately, no initiative to implement was taken by Alexandrina Council. The island is far too important for this to be allowed to happen again.

- The CCSA strongly supports the position of the PAR in opposing any future residential marinas. To quote from the PAR:

“With the increasing emphasis to protect and enhance the fragile environment of the Coorong and Lower Lakes the fact that they are identified as Ramsar habitat areas is sufficient to confirm the Management Plan’s recommendation that there should be no further residential marinas on the island and that those areas identified in the current Development Plan as having a development potential being deleted” (draft PAR p.23).

CCSA assumes that residential canal developments are part of this exclusion.

Additional Subdivision

- If there needs to be additional housing development in the region, the CCSA believes the island must be avoided. Hindmarsh Island must not be seen as providing extensive areas for housing subdivision because expanding population pressure inevitably impacts on sensitive wetland areas, particularly waterfront areas. The consequences of this will mean that bird species and numbers will continue to decline. There is an international obligation on us to maintain and, in fact, restore bird species and numbers on the island.
- The CCSA supports future housing development being limited to infill in those areas already subdivided for housing west of Monument Road. There is no justification for subdivision on the island beyond this.
- In those areas presently not subdivided west of Monument Road, block sizes no less than 4 hectares need to be the norm.
- Future residential expansion needs to occur on the mainland and away from sensitive wetland areas. The human impact on this island (see Coorong Health Check quotation above) and its waterways is obvious as bird species/numbers unfortunately continue to decline.

Jetties and boardwalks

- Whilst the CCSA appreciates the logic of trying to minimise the number of jetties while still providing facilities for the boating public on the northern shore of Hindmarsh Island, the Alexandrina Council needs to understand that jetties and boardwalks all inevitably cause disturbance to sensitive reed bed habitat in these locations. In this Ramsar site we should not be attempting to minimise disturbance but to remove it completely.

- Boardwalks in/adjacent to reed beds or other key bird habitat similarly need to be banned.

Feral pine removal

- Aleppo pines are probably the most serious feral plant threat on the island. They need to be removed and replaced with the indigenous vegetation that was here pre-European settlement.

The process of removal will need to be slow, because replacement vegetation will take some time to grow; careful, because there is indigenous vegetation in some of the pine forested areas, and actively supported with incentives/advice for individual landowners. Wholesale removal of the pines before complementary plantings of native vegetation are established will destroy wind breaks/buffer zones and may encourage soil instability. This has to be implemented over a long period, maybe more than a generation, if it is to be successful.

Revegetation of these areas should see the re-establishment of the she-oak woodland plant community that existed before the 1850s.

Environmentally sustainable living

- Environmentally sustainable living should be actively encouraged. This will be particularly appropriate in all of the areas of the island where conventional infrastructure is absent. This should be evidenced through:
 - appropriate environmental building design,
 - a reliance solely on local rains, not the river, for potable water through the use of water tanks and/or other water recapture technology,
 - photovoltaic and other alternative power systems to feed power into the grid,
 - solar hot water systems,
 - composting toilets/waste water systems etc.

Through subsidies and rate reduction the local council needs to support such developments. The need for expensive infrastructure will thus be minimised/avoided, and a closer reliance on natural systems encouraged/appreciated.

Please address further correspondence on this matter to:

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