

# William Creek

## Community Development Action Plan



October 2024

# Foreword



William Creek is a town with few permanent town residents yet it stands as the absolute heart of a community stretching hundreds of kilometres in all directions. Situated at the halfway point between Marree and Oodnadatta on the Oodnadatta Track in South Australia's far north, William Creek's exceptional surrounding natural landscapes, unrivalled sunsets, rich history and a quirky pub, makes it quintessentially unique.

From the original inhabitants, the Arabana people, to the first settlers, to its now current local community including surrounding cattle stations, William Creek has seen many people come and go over the years with different people and families adding their mark. In enhancing what the town already has, we want to ensure we maintain and strengthen the current heritage of the area while working with new demographics, technologies and opportunities.

This Community Development Action Plan has provided the William Creek community a fantastic foundation to work together to discover exactly what it is we care about as a group, a vital step to initiate change and growth.

As tourism in the area continues to grow rapidly, we want our town to be a highlight on the map and not merely a mark as people pass through on their way elsewhere. When tourists are stuck for a few days due to road closures with rain, or if locals have a meeting and the kids

get dragged along as they so often do, we want everyone to be excited about spending more time in the town because of the place we have made it. We hope to have facilities and infrastructure that grows our social connectedness and cohesiveness, and makes us a community that people talk about and are eager to return to.

Completing projects in such a remote location attracts numerous additional logistical hurdles. Getting tradespeople and supplies is costly. Currently, much of what the community achieves is through volunteering our own time, equipment and machinery and all things in between. Our community has shown we are very competently able to deliver and complete projects that many large communities would struggle to do, yet this often comes at a cost to a small group of volunteers and community members.

We are incredibly grateful to Rural Aid for supporting this Plan and to the inimitable Peter Kenyon for sharing his knowledge, enthusiasm and passion whilst guiding us through its formulation. We are a community that is poor in numbers yet rich in enthusiasm, optimism and achievement who have the tenacity and resourcefulness to make great things happen. We hope that others see our vision and the potential of what William Creek can become, and willingly contribute in making our visions a reality, rather than a wish.



# Our Story

William Creek is uniquely placed in the heart of South Australia's outback on the Oodnadatta Track. Situated 880 kilometres north of Adelaide, the town is one of Australia's most remote and least populated towns located midway between the communities of Marree and Oodnadatta, surrounded by Anna Creek Station.

William Creek leads to numerous iconic natural landmarks including Kati Thanda (Lake Eyre), Dalhousie and Coward Springs, the Painted Hills and Simpson Desert, and serves as a crossroad between Coober Pedy, Oodnadatta/Marla and Marree/Roxby Downs.

The town holds a rich history tied to both European settlers and the traditional Arabana people. Founded in the late 19th century as a stop on the Great Northern Railway (the Ghan), William Creek played a key role in connecting Australia's southern and northern regions.

The town continues to embody the spirit of the Outback, with its heritage buildings, notably the William Creek Hotel built in 1887, offering travellers an authentic Australian experience where you never know who you're going to meet or what stories you might hear. Despite its tiny population, the William Creek township provides a hub for the local and

surrounding community and outback tourism.

The William Creek community has a busy calendar each year hosting numerous events including: an Australia Day family fun celebration; a Gymkhana/Motokhana weekend in March; an Anzac Day dawn service; a weekend of Bronco Branding, Campdrafting and Cricket in August; and the "Outback Fly-in" in September, attracting many plane enthusiasts.

Community members of the area are proactive, enthusiastic and constantly looking for opportunities to build the liveability, economic sustainability and appeal of the community. Strong community drive and commitment is evident with the recent installation of Australia's first state-of-the-art Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Virtual Emergency Centre which was achieved by the community working together with numerous stakeholders.

Though pastoral operations, especially cattle grazing, remain crucial to the town's economy, William Creek's tourism sector offers significant potential for growth. The town's future lies in balancing its cultural and historic identity and rugged charm with modern, sustainable growth, making it a welcoming and unique destination for local residents, pastoral families, workers and tourists.



# Our Vision

A Vision Statement is a vivid description of what our community aspires to become, without its current barriers, but tied to what we value as a community.

The statement below is our intended outcome:

A welcoming, proactive and future-focused outback community that preserves our unique heritage and culture while building on strong community connections

# Our Goals

**Community goals are broad statements of intent that direct our efforts towards accomplishing our vision in line with our guiding principles.**

Below are the six community goals which guide our community aspirations, namely:

- To actively promote and showcase our community as a great place to stop, stay, experience, and reside.
- To be well-known as a tidy town.
- To support, promote and celebrate active community participation and volunteerism of our local people and organisations.
- To create an environment where our young people feel involved, supported, empowered, and will view our community as a livable place of choice.
- To preserve, maintain and strengthen our community assets and heritage.
- To provide facilities and infrastructure for children and youth.





# Our Guiding Values

**Guiding values are the fundamental, moral, and ethical beliefs that we share as a community. They represent core principles and capture what our community considers important. They help foster trust, respect, collaboration, and unity.**

The following five guiding values and attitudes provide the context for our community's identified actions and initiatives, namely:

- **Sense of community**

Ensuring all our community members experience a deep sense of connection, inclusion and contribution.

- **Outback lifestyle**

Retaining our unique sense of outback way of life, local connections and rural landscapes.

- **Respect for the environment**

Valuing and protecting our unique natural environment and landscape.

- **Valuing our heritage** Appreciating our unique heritage, stories and traditions and their importance in community and economic development.

- **Positive mindset**

Fostering community attitudes that embrace change, proactive 'can-do' behaviours, optimism, and hopefulness.

# Our Challenges

**Like many small inland rural communities, our community needs to respond creatively to a series of demographic, social, economic and environmental challenges. These issues include:**

- Condition of the roads and accessibility
- Financial cost to implement new ideas (high freight costs, high 'call-outs' for tradespeople)
- Small population
- Access to the services and tradespeople
- Limited children and youth facilities
- Native Title decisions
- Access to Kati Thanda (Lake Eyre)
- Delay between idea and delivery
- Being forgotten and not understood by city counterparts
- Red tape e.g. insurance costs to run events
- Seasonal limitations due to long summers and limited tourism season
- Limited visitor infrastructure and attraction
- Limited marketing of community assets and appeal
- Demand on local volunteers and businesses due to lack of services
- Limited volunteer numbers
- Volunteer fatigue
- Perception of town as a 'Drive Through' location, not a 'Destination'





# Our Assets

## People

- Community leaders
- Permanent community members
- Seasonal staff
- Local Pastoral families
- Pilots, mail man, road crews
- Tourists
- Arabana people
- RFDS
- Community inclusiveness
- Community pride

## Institutions

- Outback Communities Authority (OCA)
- Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS)
- Department of Infrastructure & Transport (DIT)
- School of the Air (SOTA)
- Tourism SA
- Regional Development Australia – Far North (RDAFN)
- Remote & Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE)
- Arabana Aboriginal Corporation

## Culture, Stories & Sources of Pride

- Heritage: Old Ghan Railway line, telegraph line, Pastoral industry including S. Kidman and Co, Arabana culture, old graves
- Environmental: Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre, Simpson Desert, Painted Hills, Mound Springs, biodiversity, dark skies
- Significant sites: Oodnadatta Track, William Creek Hotel, Old Peake Ruins, Algebuckina Bridge, Coward Springs
- Arabana People and culture
- Pastoral traditions
- Local humour signage
- Pink tourist signs

“

*You can't help but love the laid-back lifestyle away from the hustle and bustle of the cities.*

**Sam**  
(William Creek jack-of-all-trades)

”



# Our Assets

## Economic

- Pastoral industry: including Anna Creek and other surrounding cattle stations
- Tourism: William Creek Hotel, Wrights Air, caravan park, tour companies
- Mining activity
- Events: Gymkhana/Motokhana, Bronco Branding/Campdraft, cricket match, fly-in event, charitable rallies/bashes
- Support businesses: freight, roadside assistance, supplies

## Social Networks

- William Creek Hotel & Wrights Air
- William Creek Progress Association
- William Creek Sporting Club
- SA ICPA Branch – Marla Oodnadatta
- Annual events
- Involvement in other committees and community groups (SOTA, RICE, ICPA)
- Family, friends and others visiting

## Physical

- Oodnadatta Track
- Closest settlement to Lake Eyre
- Natural environment: Lake Eyre, Painted Hills, sunsets/sunrises, reservoir, Mound Springs, Great Artesian Basin (GAB), Simpson Desert, bird life, dark skies
- Tourist infrastructure: William Creek Hotel, camping ground/cabins, free camping area, historical interpretive signage, museum
- Key facilities: RFDS Emergency Centre, public toilets, public telephone, fuel, aviation fuel, houses, solar power supply, gymkhana/bronco branding/campdraft facilities
- Recreational facilities: cricket pitch, golf course
- Aviation facilities: Sealed airstrip, hangars
  - Connection to Coober Pedy

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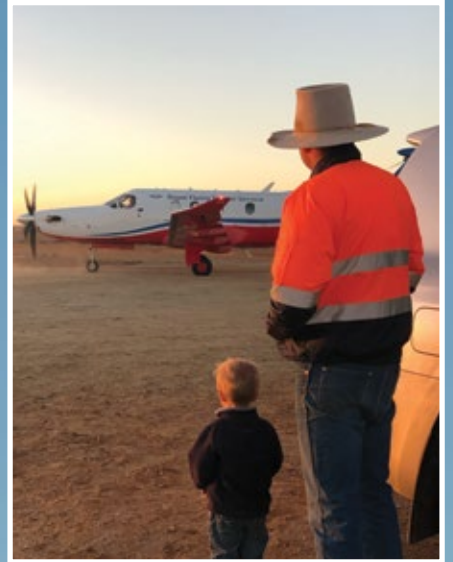
*William Creek (Bill River) is just one of those communities you're proud to be associated with; It's the people and how they pull together to not only help each other but the way they put on events to benefit the wider community.*

**Rowie**

(Retired Outback Mailman)

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# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme One

## Enhancing Key Infrastructure

### ACTIONS

1

1. Advocate to the Outback Communities Authority and relevant stakeholders to **improve access between the airstrip and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.**

**Timeframe: Immediate**

2. Advocate to the Outback Communities Authority on the potential for **an upgrade to the airstrip.**

**Timeframe: Immediate**

3. Advocate to Outback Communities Authority on the potential for **improved telecommunications access and performance in the township.**

**Timeframe: Ongoing**

4. Advocate to Outback Communities Authority and Tourism SA on the potential for upgraded **signage on the Oodnadatta Track** to educate tourists.

**Timeframe: Medium term**

5. Explore construction of a **BBQ and shaded seating area.**

**Timeframe: Medium term**

### LEAD GROUPS

**William Creek Progress Association (WCPA)  
Outback Communities Authority (OCA)**

### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**WCSC  
RFDS  
DIT  
Tourism SA  
RDAFN**

**SA Aviation  
Arabana  
Telstra  
Local businesses**





# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme Two

## Development of Local Tourism Potential

### ACTIONS



1. Develop a William Creek Tourism Strategy through the formation of a Tourism Strategy Task Team within the WCPA that:
  - a. Audits current tourism attractions, facilities, events, trails and initiatives.
  - b. Reviews regional tourism links, activities and trails.
  - c. Identifies opportunities to enhance existing products and branding, including promotion as a destination and not just a drive through.
  - d. Identifies opportunities to create new tourism products, especially cultural tourism, aviation tourism and building upon the strong local heritage assets such as the Old Ghan infrastructure and our dark skies.
  - e. Recommends ways to enhance marketing, customer service, community storytelling and operator networking.

**Timeframe: Immediate to Medium Term and Ongoing**

2. Undertake Town Beautification through a Town Beautification Task Team within the WCPA that:
  - a. Undertakes an audit of existing street and local areas to assess presentation including interpretative signage.
  - b. Seeks further ideas and suggestions from William Creek residents and businesses.
  - c. Creates prioritised beautification areas such as around the RFDS building, shaded areas, seating and increase number of trees and lawn.
  - d. Seeks support/implements opportunities.
  - e. Participates in the 'Sustainable Communities Program' of KESAB.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

3. Identify, design, construct and promote local 'William Creek selfie' locations including quirky signs and a sunset viewing platform.

**Timeframe: Short Term**

4. Instigate creation and installation of 'Up Ahead Signs' to promote relevant dates of regular activities, features, and points of interest for people approaching town to encourage them to stop.

**Timeframe: Short term**

5. Advocate for the installation of a local Information Bay, integrating interactive and technology activated links (QR codes) providing relevant information about the area.

**Timeframe: Short Term and Ongoing**

6. Design and implement an 'Interpretive Walking Trail' of the town with a mud map so visitors can learn about events (i.e. gymkhana) regardless of when they visit.

**Timeframe: Medium Term**

### LEAD GROUPS

**WCPA  
OCA**

### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**Local businesses**

**WCSC**

**RA**

**FRRR**

**RDAFN**

**Arabana**

**Tourism SA**

**Sustainable  
Communities Program  
of KESAB**

**TCP**

**CASA**

**Tour groups**



# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme Three

### Child & Sporting Facility Development Opportunities

#### ACTIONS

3

1. Develop a Task Team of WCPA to undertake an audit of existing child/youth facilities to determine the need and capacity to build, renew, upgrade and/or modify existing facilities such as a playground, tennis court and golf course.

**Timeframe: Short Term**

2. Explore and secure funding to build a Rage Cage multi-sport facility, Mini-Golf and multi-use play facility in William Creek.

**Timeframe: Short Term and Ongoing**

3. Explore and secure funding to improve current community and social facilities and infrastructure in William Creek.

**Timeframe: Short Term and Ongoing**

4. Continue to foster family-friendly community social occasions.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

5. Continue to organise and facilitate learning opportunities and workshops for local children.

**Timeframe - Ongoing**

#### LEAD GROUPS

**WCPA  
OCA  
SA ICPA Marla Oodnadatta**

#### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**ICPA  
WCSC  
RDAFN  
SA Government youth funding**

**Variety SA  
FRRR  
RA  
TCP**



# Abbreviations

<b>BOI</b>	Bank of I.D.E.A.S.
<b>CASA</b>	Country Arts SA
<b>DIT</b>	South Australian Department of Infrastructure and Transport
<b>FRRR</b>	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
<b>ICPA</b>	Isolated Children's Parents' Association
<b>KESAB</b>	Keep South Australia Beautiful
<b>OCA</b>	Outback Communities Authority
<b>PIRSA</b>	Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia
<b>RA</b>	Rural Aid
<b>RDAFN</b>	Regional Development Australia Far North
<b>RFDS</b>	Royal Doctor Flying Service
<b>RICE</b>	Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise
<b>SA ICPA</b>	South Australian Isolated Children's Parents' Association
<b>SATA</b>	South Australian Tourism Association
<b>SOTA</b>	School of the Air
<b>TCP</b>	Thriving Communities Program of PIRSA
<b>WCPA</b>	William Creek Progress Association
<b>WCSC</b>	William Creek Sporting Club

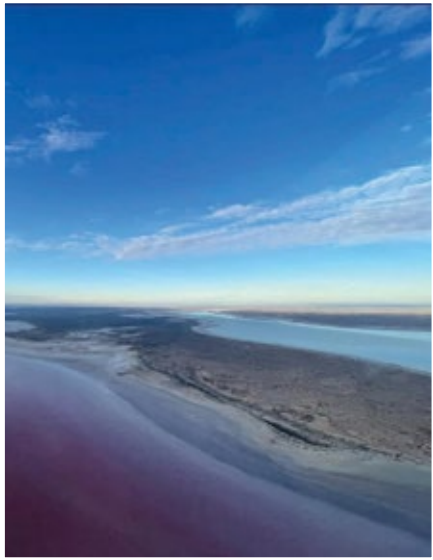
*I love the Bronco Branding 'mutton busters' event and drinking lots of lemonades at the pub!*

**Lenny**

(The Peake Station, 5 years old)







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*William Creek – what’s not to love? It’s unique and isolated location, its great history, its constant improvements but most importantly, its ability to gather so many exceptional people. It is a shining example for all of Australia of the true meaning of ‘community spirit!’*

**Burns’ Boys**

**(Long-Time/Regular William Creek Visitors)**

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# Acknowledgements

The formulation of this Community Development Action Plan was initiated at an SA ICPA function and coordinated by local community members Hollie Williams and Kirsty Williams. It was made possible by Rural Aid as part of their commitment to supporting Australia's small rural towns and the formulation of the Plan was undertaken by Peter Kenyon from the Bank of I.D.E.A.S. assisted by Steph Walsh and Dorothy Crosby from Rural Aid and Paul Gravett.

Special thanks to the local passionate community members who gave so generously of their time, wisdom and experiences.



WILLIAMS CATTLE COMPANY



Wrightsair "The spirit of the outback"





# William Creek

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

*It's pretty special that despite William Creek being such a small community, as a group we are one of the most productive.*

**Cam**  
(Local Pastoralist)



*One of the best things is seeing people's happy reactions when they arrive in town; and the memories they take with them after embracing the town and its remoteness.*

**Taylor**  
(William Creek bar/restaurant manager)