

Esperance Museum Strategic Plan 2017 - 2023





Introduction

The Esperance Museum is an attraction to both locals and visitors to Esperance. It offers a glimpse into the history of Esperance and how the region has grown over the years. It is a defining component for an Esperance cultural/heritage area and a focal point for heritage assets linked to Esperance's past.

The Esperance Municipal Museum was officially opened in the Bonded Store and Goods Shed in 1976 and in 2001 the name was officially changed to the Esperance Museum. In 2010 an extension was added to the building to house a maritime section.

Museums are no longer simply seen as places that collect, store and display historical objects. They are expected to play an increasing role in community building, education, entertainment and economic development. The role of the Museum is continuously evolving as a result of changing technology, demographics, regulations and social expectations.

The Esperance Bay Historical Society established the initial collection of objects in 1975 and the collection has developed over time to include archives. The Esperance Bay Historical Society formally handed over the collection ownership, management and care to the Shire of Esperance on 3 June 1975 and the archives on 22 March 2005. The Esperance Bay Historical Society continues to support the Esperance Museum.

Since its inception the Museum has been supported by a team of dedicated volunteers and is recognised as a valuable community asset in regional and local strategic documentation and is highly regarded within the community as a whole.

Where are we at today?

The Esperance Museum is owned and managed by the Shire of Esperance and operates within the External Services Division. This ensures that the collection is properly managed and that adequate resources (financial and otherwise) are allocated for its continued care and management. External Services Division staff manage the operation of the facility.

The Museum Collection has evolved over time and a range of factors has led to the shaping of the Collection as it is today. Over many decades museum volunteers have built an outstanding cultural resource relating to the people, places and history of the area. The core Collection contains over 4,000 objects and over 8,000 items in archives that includes significant objects, photographs, published media, oral histories, artworks, research files and documents.

The Museum is highly dependent on a volunteer workforce to undertake key activities including front of house operations, research, collection management and conservation. The volunteers act as advocates for the museum and programs associated with the facility. There are approximately 50 active volunteers currently, with a wide range of skills, who are managed by the Shire. The Museum is an interesting, supportive and rewarding place to be involved in, which is vital in ensuring volunteer retention and growth.

Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process has allowed the Shire of Esperance to reflect on the position of the Museum, establish a sense of purpose and set goals to achieve its full potential. This plan has been developed to provide guidance and a clear vision for the Museum that reflects the needs, constraints and ambitions over the next five years. A Strategic Planning Workshop held in May 2016 was attended by Museum volunteers, Esperance Bay Historical Society members, Esperance Museum Management Committee members and Shire of Esperance staff and councillors. To succeed we will need to work closely with our community members, businesses and stakeholders as partners, collaborators and visitors.

The Shire of Esperance Strategic Community Plan 2017-2027 outlines a number of goals that were developed by the Esperance community with regard to cultural development. This includes the value and importance of retaining our cultural heritage as outlined in the theme Community Connection: “an active community engaging in positive and rewarding lifestyles with a broad range of opportunities.” Strategy 1.7 defines this goal further by stating “Facilitate and promote events, arts, heritage and cultural activities for all ages and abilities”.

The strategic planning process analysed input from stakeholders, elected members and staff to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. These are summarised in Appendix 1.

The analysis concluded that the Museum has a solid foundation to build on with exceptional volunteers, central location, an interesting and important collection and unique attractions. The most important issues for the Esperance Museum to address in the future are:

- The lack of clear vision, specific goals, strategies, priorities and policies to guide decision making.
- There are challenges with the building maintenance, accessibility, attractiveness and compliance with regulations.
- There is a need to bring the Museum into the community through programs, special events and activities to engage more students, residents and visitors.
- Outdated displays with limited interpretation that do not tell the story in a compelling or interactive way.
- Marketing and promotional activities are not sufficient to reach target audiences.
- Formal partnerships and volunteer programs are needed to enable the delivery of higher quality displays, programs and services.
- There is an accession backlog with issues including database clean up, object identification and research, storage space, and access to the database.

Vision and Mission

An effective Vision Statement expresses a museum's desired impact and outcomes.

Vision

To reflect the rich, diverse and dynamic character of the region focussing on its land and marine environments, history and people through the objects and stories they have left which reflect the community's ability to thrive in the face of isolation.

By contrast, its Mission Statement expresses its purpose and how it works to achieve its vision.

Mission

The Esperance Museum seeks to collect, preserve, research, document, store, display and interpret items that pertain to the natural and human history of the Esperance region from the earliest times to the current date for the purpose of informing and educating future generations.



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Shared Goals and Strategies

Goal 1 Apply best practice in management, operations and customer service

Strategies

- 1.1 Improve and align governance, management systems, policies, plans and reporting.
- 1.2 Support and empower volunteers.
- 1.3 Explore potential revenue raising opportunities and develop a sustainable operating model.

Goal 2 Provide unique facilities, displays and interpretation

Strategies

- 2.1 Improve collection management and address backlog.
- 2.2 Develop a long term vision and plan for displays and interpretation.
- 2.3 Develop a long term plan for facility maintenance and improvements.

Goal 3 Connect, engage and inspire our community

Strategies

- 3.1 A marketing and communications plan to improve the museum brand.
- 3.2 Connect with the public through improved programs, events and special activities.
- 3.3 Improve access to the Collection for the community and visitors.

Goal 1: Apply best practice in management, operations and customer service

Strategy	Rationale	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
1.1 Improve and align governance, management systems, policies, plans and reporting	A clearer direction for the future will assist in succession planning and volunteer stability. Transparent work practices are needed to improve workflow and support volunteer work. Succession of capable volunteers to fill key roles must continue to be achieved to ensure that the Museum remains an active, dynamic and rewarding organisation that attracts experienced volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review and update Museum policies and governing documents. b) Review and update Museum management practices and workflow. c) Develop MOU's with partnering organisations. d) Develop a succession plan to maintain operational and key volunteer roles. e) Implement and coordinate a sustainable Museum volunteer program. f) Maintain memberships and subscriptions to relevant professional organisations. 	SMA	ST
1.2 Support and empower volunteers	Volunteers are the workforce behind the Museum and provide essential support for key activities such as accessioning, archives, research and front of house duties. A high priority is given to the volunteering program by providing an interesting, rewarding and friendly place for people of all ages to be actively involved and, in return, to share their time and skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Provide induction and training to ensure volunteers have the necessary skills, including an annual refresher course and professional development opportunities. b) Develop volunteer guides for the displays and collection items. 	SMA	ST
1.3 Explore potential revenue raising opportunities and develop a sustainable operating model.	The Museum is funded through the Shire of Esperance annual operational budget. However, a strategic imperative is that the Museum operations develop the capacity to support the future sustainability of the Museum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Explore opportunities for partnering with other Shire services and facilities. b) Explore grant funding opportunities to improve displays, enhance programs and boost overall visitor experience. c) Develop ways to boost visitor numbers. 	SMA, VA, VO	MT

Goal 2: Provide unique facilities, exhibits and interpretation

Strategy	Rationale	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
2.1 Improve collection management and address backlog	High priority must be placed on continuing to research, document, conserve and display the artefacts and stories of all aspects of the cultural heritage of our community. To complement this, the Museum must continue to develop professional capabilities in collection management, conservation, information technology, display design and interpretation.	<p>a) Review collection management practices and identify areas of improvement to streamline processes.</p> <p>b) Implement a backlog project to address outstanding items for accessioning and database clean-up.</p> <p>c) Develop and implement a digitisation standard for collection management.</p> <p>d) Review storage systems to identify future needs and short term solutions to ensure preservation of artefacts.</p> <p>e) Upskill volunteers into archive and accession roles to broaden the base available to undertake roles.</p>	SMA, VA, VO	ST
2.2 Develop a long term vision and plan for displays and interpretation	The development and display of a collection is the foundation of a successful museum. To remain relevant with cultural experiences it is important to look for new, meaningful and exciting ways to engage with audiences. Display designs that incorporate interactive and engaging elements will enhance the visitor experience.	<p>a) Review current displays and create specific display plans with a focus on permanent and temporary displays, interpretation, relevance and interest for all ages and social groups.</p> <p>b) Work with indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities to broaden displays and interpretation.</p> <p>c) Review the Significance Assessment within 3 years.</p> <p>d) Develop a Museum Interpretation Plan within 4 years.</p> <p>e) Develop and implement a Conservation Plan within 5 years.</p>	SMA, VA, VO	MT

2.3 Develop a long term plan for facility maintenance and improvements	Plan to ensure that there is depth and stability in moving forward contributing towards long term financial planning.	<p>a) Review the current facility and identify short and long term maintenance requirements.</p> <p>b) Explore future potential for growth/inclusion of the facility within the cultural precinct.</p>	SAM	ST
			SMA, SAM	MT

Goal 3: Connect, engage and inspire our community

Strategy	Rationale	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
3.1 A marketing and communications plan to improve the Museum brand	Developing a stronger identity and brand awareness of the Museum, highlighting its unique identity and ensuring a more visible and relevant role in the community to increase visitation.	<p>a) Develop and implement a marketing and communications plan.</p> <p>b) Review and update promotional material.</p>	SMA	ST
3.2 Connect with the public through improved programs, events and special activities	Most members of the community will visit the museum once to view the displays. By offering exciting, fun experiences we have the opportunity to attract a broader audience who may not typically identify as a museum visitor and potentially may return to participate in an interesting activity program. Public activity programs are also potential income generators and will contribute to the long-term financial sustainability of the museum.	<p>a) Develop a targeted program for community participation including a focus on young people.</p> <p>b) Develop and offer programs, seminars, workshops and assistance to the community on heritage, preservation and conservation topics.</p> <p>c) Utilise the Museum facilities to host community group activities and events.</p> <p>d) Develop partnerships with local stakeholders, including education providers and other collecting organisations.</p>	SMA, VA, VO	MT
3.3 Improve access to the Collection for the community and visitors	Providing better access to the Collection will increase the community's understanding of the Collection significance and therefore the community value. This will ultimately lead to the Collection's long term preservation and improved storage.	<p>a) Research and implement digital access to the Collection through an online platform.</p> <p>b) Research and develop the use of multi-media technology and other devices to interactively engage the audience in the displays.</p>	SMA	LT



Appendix 1

Outcomes from the Strategic Planning day, which influenced the creation of this strategic implementation plan to identify the priority actions for each goal, are listed below.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean place/space • Location - central • Well organised/good presentation • Valued volunteers/multi-skilled/dedicated • Passionate people/happy atmosphere • Depth of collection - variety of items, large range of timeframes & industries • Expertise/historical knowledge • Established processes • Good building/facility • Unique Museum /highly regarded • Council financial support • Good feedback from visitors • Different from other museums • Continuing solid basis provided by the Historical Society (founders in 1976) • Unique national/international display items (e.g. Skylab) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping up with technology • Volunteers' lack of understanding of museum processes • Volunteers' lack of awareness of internal needs • Loss of autonomy • Lack of promotion • Not enough signage • Dwindling number of volunteers & aging volunteers • Limited number of visitors to Museum • Volunteer skill sets • Cost of maintaining facility • Backlog of accessioning • Lighting in old goods shed area • Not enough information for volunteers at the counter – need quick FAQs information • Volunteer reluctance to change
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital displays to interact with visitors • Attract younger people in – more activities for them • Free Wi-Fi • Transport for visitation (locals - minibus) • Adopt technology to increase potential visitors • Advertise in other museums – Heritage trail • Marketing – make the Museum a “Destination” • Raise awareness of what we have here • Engage “tech savvy” volunteers • Involve community in public programmes – more networking • Need a mix of tech and non tech displays as digital accessibility fluctuates • Highlight Skylab display to capitalise on uniqueness • Promote to Cruise ship passengers to increase visitation • Improve online interaction / information provision • Use external walls to advertise & highlight Museum displays • Find new Curator also an Assistant Curator - need for a succession plan. • Co-location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology could turn current volunteers away • Lack of space • Landscaping improvement needed • Lack of locals visiting • Lack of Funding • Technology – keeping up with the need • Bureaucracy overtaking volunteers • Loss of volunteer expertise • Opening hours under threat/volunteer numbers • Succession planning needs to be addressed • Changing surrounds outside Museum • Loss of confidence in Museum remaining as Museum

What we are best at

- Positioned in a central location, the Museum offers a well-priced tourist attraction and information source that tells the history/story of Esperance while providing a great indoor experience (especially during inclement weather periods)
- The Museum is the main tourist attraction within the town centre, well priced and offers a “coffee” experience (encouraging visitors to linger)
- The train and Skylab are unique attractions which act as drawcards for tourists and locals – Skylab attracts national and international visitors
- The Museum sells souvenirs and second hand books to visiting tourists and locals – few other places in town sell souvenirs and the provision to freely exchange books is a simple and positive service
- The Museum’s team of dedicated and passionate volunteers are a valuable asset but 60 people monthly are required to maintain the 1:30-4:30pm openings (minimum of two volunteers needed on duty between 1:30-4:30pm when Museum is open to visitors)
- Volunteers very knowledgeable about Esperance history and are a good source of local tourist information
- Esperance Bay Historical Society members research local history and produce displays, booklets and brochures to inform and educate locals and visitors
- Local organisation records can be archived in the Museum and the organisation’s volunteers are encouraged to assist with this
- The Museum has a website and social media presence, allowing visitors to find basic Museum information online; an online contact form is available for further information enquiries

What we could do

Information Technology Improvements

- There is an opportunity to increase the public's access to the collection and archive information currently available on the Mosaic database. The database could be accessed by the public locally at the Museum and remotely, online. However, the database needs some work to make it more accessible and informative.
- EFTPOS facilities will allow the Museum to capture a greater market segment of customers. Cruise ship visitors who may not possess Australian cash currency are currently disadvantaged and would be able to purchase items using credit/debit cards through EFTPOS.
- The website needs to be upgraded and populated with more content. Volunteers can also work on developing a Wikipedia presence – could be a “Virtual Volunteering” opportunity. A virtual tour of the Museum can be embedded in the website making use of 360°/virtual reality videos. This may be a project for a community group, high school students or interested individuals.
- Technology can be utilised to provide an augmented reality experience for visitors that will enrich their Museum experience. A Museum mobile application could be developed and made available for free download. Interactive displays could be designed and integrated with the mobile app, utilising various technologies including beacon technology.
- By tailoring programmes and displays to specific socio-economic demographic groups instead of promoting to a generalised audience, it is predicted that the Museum will see an increase in visitors

Marketing and Promotion

- Better utilisation of marketing tactics will allow the Museum to attract local visitors in the colder months as well as attracting more volunteers to prevent volunteer fatigue
- Need to investigate establishing a regional historic/heritage trail from Ravensthorpe/ Hopetoun through to Kalgoorlie and out to Eucla – this could be done by networking with other Heritage and Culture organisations in the region

Community Engagement

- Partnering with local organisations and individuals will increase community engagement and awareness of the Museum. Local private collections could be displayed in the Museum for a predetermined length of time to provide diverse, short-term displays. This would create ongoing new attractions to encourage visitors to attend the Museum more frequently (with the aim of increasing local visitations), resulting in return customers and increased income for the Museum

Multiple “experiences”/sales touchpoints

- The Museum is in a unique position to offer multiple attractions in addition to the Museum displays. This would enhance visitor experiences, attract new visitors and boost income for the Museum. During the usually quiet winter months this is expected to increase visitor numbers from locals.
- Multiple experiences could include:
 - Coffee
 - Food – cakes, sandwiches
 - Wi-Fi
 - History talks/events/presentations
 - Digital and interactive displays
 - Local artworks (on a theme or from a community group)

Competitors

When planning for the future it is critical to identify who our competitors are and at what level we compete for both local and travelling visitors. The Museum is in a unique position to offer a cultural experience in a pleasant environment that is not affected by adverse weather conditions. This provides a competitive advantage over some Esperance attractions. Additionally, through the number of diverse collections, we offer something for a diverse set of interests. When marketing Museum services, we need to recognise our competitors first, to then promote and highlight the benefits of heading to the Museum.

Competitors of the Museum include, but are not limited to:

- Fenwick Cinemas
- Tourist attractions such as Stonehenge
- Coffee shops
- Cannery/Esperance Community Arts
- Free Wi-Fi hotspots in the Esperance CBD
- Bay of Isles Leisure Centre

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