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Australian Coastal Society
South Australia Branch
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Dear Mrs Packer,

RE: Heritage Significance of the Tennyson Dunes

The Australian Coastal Society is 'a voice for the Australian coast – *dedicated to healthy ecosystems, vibrant communities, and sustainable use of coastal resources*'. The Society promotes knowledge and understanding of the environmental, social and economic value of the Australian coast, and encourages sustainable use of coastal resources and responsible stewardship of coastal assets.

The Society supports an application for the Tennyson dunes to be registered for heritage significance under the Heritage Places Act (1993).

The Tennyson dunes are one of the last remaining remnant dune systems on the Adelaide metropolitan coast. Prior to European settlement, sand dunes ran almost uninterrupted along thirty kilometres of Adelaide's coast between Seacliff and Outer Harbor. In 1932, John Burton Cleland (in Cordingley and Petherick, 2006) described the area containing the Tennyson dunes as follows:

'The tallest of the sandhills are near Estcourt House between the Semaphore and the Grange, the height probably reaching to about 50 feet. The breadth of the sandhills is only a few hundred yards. On the sea-front is a sharp rise immediately eastward of the highest tidal limits. This is followed by a shallow depression (swale) and then usually by the highest part of the dunes, with a fairly sharp descent on the landward sides, or there may be three rises altogether and two swales. In places the sandhills are bare and of shifting dazzling white sand, but for the most part, except on the actual seafront, they are covered with a vegetation of their own.'

Today, only three percent of the original Adelaide coastal dune system remains and is restricted to isolated pockets at Tennyson (16.5ha), North Brighton (3.5 ha) and Semahore Park (3.5 ha).

The Tennyson dunes highlight the historical pattern of development and urbanisation of Adelaide's coastline, from pre and early European settlement, through the long-boom years and present day. As the most significant remnant dune system remaining on the Adelaide metropolitan coast, the Tennyson dunes provide an example of the former expansive coastal dune system and remnant vegetation communities, along a now highly modified and urbanised coastline.

Cordingley and Petherick (2006) note further historical values in the Vegetation Management Plan for Tennyson Dune Reserve:

'Adding to the European cultural value of the dunes is the locally historic building, Estcourt House. Constructed by Frederick Estcourt Bucknall between 1881 and 1883, the residence was to be a gateway to a harbour and canal linking the sea and Port River. However, the Bucknall 'dream' was never completed due to the Colony's early lack of prosperity (Dyer, 2003). Eventually the house was purchased by the State Government to house incapacitated children. The building served this function between the early 1890s and 1995, after which it fell into disrepair. Recently, the property has been privately purchased and restored. It is believed that Governor Tennyson (after whom the dunes are named) once owned a holiday residence nearby north of the dunes. This dwelling was subsequently bought and converted into a dairy, the cattle of which grazed throughout the samphire flats and dunes (Naylor, pers. comm., 2006).'

The Tennyson dunes feature rare, uncommon and threatened qualities that are now of cultural significance as examples of the pre-European coastal landscape existing in a highly urbanised environment.

The dunes are uncommon on the Adelaide coast as 'the most significant remnant representative of the original white sand dune system that existed along the metropolitan coast prior to European colonisation' (Cordingley and Petherick, 2006). As mentioned previously, just three percent of the original metropolitan dune system remains in isolated pockets. Presently the remnant Minda dunes at North Brighton are at risk of development by landowner Minda Incorporated, who are seeking development approval to build a series of high rise apartment blocks directly upon the dunes. Should development plans proceed, Tennyson dunes will be the last significant stand of remnant dune on the Adelaide metropolitan coast.

The Tennyson dunes contain fifty-two indigenous plant species, sixteen of which are of conservation significance for South Australia and/or the Southern Lofty (SLR) floristic region. Of these sixteen species:

- Four are Rare in the SLR floristic region;
- One is Rare at the state level and Endangered within the SLR floristic region
- Nine are Uncommon in the SLR floristic region;
- Two are of Uncertain status (likely to be threatened or rare in the SLR floristic region); and
- One is classified as "not yet assessed but of possible significance" in the SLR region.

Conservation and threat analysis undertaken for the Metropolitan and Northern Coastal Action Plan (Caton *et al*, 2009), assessed the Tennyson dunes as having a high to medium conservation score, noting records show the dunes 'contain plant communities that have threatened status and endemic value'. The dunes supports the most significant stands of remnant coastal vegetation remaining on the Adelaide metropolitan coast and feature five vegetation communities (Cordingley and Petherick, 2006):

- *Spinifex hirsutus* with emergent *Olearia axillaris* and *Atriplex cinerea* Open Grassland
- *Olearia axillaris*/*Rhagodia candolleana* ssp. *candolleana* Low Open Shrubland
- *Olearia axillaris*/*Leucopogon parviflorus* +/- *Nitraria billardierei* Low Shrubland
- *Leucopogon parviflorus*/*Melaleuca lanceolata* +/- *Olearia axillaris* Open Shrubland
- *Melaleuca lanceolata*/*Tetragonia implexicoma* Tall Shrubland.

The dunes and vegetation communities present provide critical habitat for native fauna and invertebrates. Numerous native bird and reptile species has been observed by Tennyson Dunecare volunteers, including five species with conservation ratings at the state and regional levels (refer Cordingley and Petherick, 2006).

The Australian Coastal Society believes the natural heritage values the dunes are now of cultural significance, providing a connection with pre-European coastal landscapes and the state's development. The Tennyson dunes are an important educational resource for the community, including being a study source for secondary and tertiary students, and coastal management professionals. According to the Tennyson Dunes management plan, 'formal acknowledgement of the ecological and historical importance of the Reserve will contribute greatly to its long-term conservation' (Cordingley and Petherick, 2006).

The Tennyson dunes hold strong cultural associations for the community and several local volunteer groups involved in its management and advocacy. Cordingley and Petherick (2006) detail the community's cultural association to the dunes:

'During the mid 1970s a concerted public campaign was staged to save the last significant section of remnant coastal dunes along the metropolitan coast from development. In response, the State Government's Coast Protection Board purchased a considerable portion of the dunes. Now known as the Tennyson Dunes, they are managed by volunteers with State and Local Government assistance (Sandercock, 2006, pers. comm.)...

[In] 1995 ... the Tennyson Dunes Group was established. In conjunction with other dedicated community groups (such as the West Lakes Kiwanis) and State and Local Government assistance, the Tennyson Dunes Group has been actively involved in various projects and management of the local dunes. Funded initially through Coastcare, the group has undertaken activities including pest weed and animal control, fencing, carpark and access way maintenance and rationalisation, nursery construction, propagation of local native plants, revegetation projects, rare plant recovery, fire prevention, education, monitoring and interpretive signage.'

The broader community's connection with Adelaide's remnant sand dunes can be gauged by the recent public backlash concerning the proposed development on the remnant Minda dunes at North Brighton. Strong concern was expressed by the public (as evidenced through talk back radio, on-line forums and letters to the editor) and consistent calls for were made for protection of Adelaide's remaining remnant dunes for the benefit of future generations.

The Australian Coastal Society believes the Tennyson dunes are of ecological and historical importance to South Australia and supports an application for heritage listing.

The Society is available to clarify or further discuss points made in this letter, please let us know if we can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Nick Harvey
Vice President, Australian Coastal Society Ltd
University of Adelaide and author 'Coastal Management in Australia'

References :

Caton, B., Fotheringham D., Krahnert J., Pearson J., Royal M. and Sandercock, R. (2009) Metropolitan Adelaide and Northern Coastal Action Plan. Prepared for the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board and Department for Environment and Heritage, Adelaide.

Cordingley S., and Petherick C. (2006) Vegetation Management Plan Tennyson Dune Reserve Yaitya Worra (True Indigenous Sand), SA Urban Forest Biodiversity Program, Adelaide.