

PROTECTING THE LESCHENAULT ESTUARY



Leschenault Catchment Council

Introducing Leschenault Estuary Connect



In the heart of the south-west of Western Australia lies the Leschenault Estuary. This ecological gem is not only a haven for an array of wildlife but also a treasured resource for the Greater Bunbury community, providing recreational opportunities and enriching our lives in countless ways. However, the estuary faces challenges that we cannot ignore, challenges that demand our collective action to safeguard its future.

Understanding the Issues

Over the years, concerns have grown about the health and well-being of the Leschenault Estuary. The impact of various land uses in the surrounding catchment area on water quality, ecological health, and its suitability for recreational activities cannot be ignored. In 2012, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) highlighted the environmental concerns, emphasising the need to address nutrient pollution and degradation in the Leschenault Estuary.

Despite significant efforts to address water quality issues, the lack of coordination among stakeholders and limited community engagement remain significant hurdles. The time has come for a strategic, collaborative initiative that unites all of us in protecting and enhancing this invaluable estuary.

Introducing the Leschenault Estuary Connect Program

We are excited to introduce the Leschenault Estuary Connect program, a ground-breaking initiative aimed at connecting and engaging our community to ensure the future of the Leschenault Estuary for generations to come.

This innovative program brings together Traditional Owners, community members, key business partners, and both state and local government stakeholders. It is designed to raise awareness about the estuary's natural and cultural significance, encourage community engagement in restoration efforts, and promote collaboration among stakeholders to address water quality issues and protect biodiversity values.

Program Highlights

Leschenault Estuary Connect focuses on three major areas:

1. **Raising Awareness:** We aim to educate the community about the estuary's natural and cultural values and show how simple everyday actions can contribute to its preservation.
2. **Community Engagement:** We encourage volunteers to get involved in on-ground restoration projects around the estuary and participate in citizen science programs. Your contributions, no matter how big or small, make a real difference.
3. **Collaborative Action:** By uniting state and local government stakeholders with the community, we aim to work together to address water quality issues, protect the estuary's biodiversity, and better understand its health.

Thanks to the initial funding from Lotterywest and Water Corporation, we have the opportunity to establish Leschenault Estuary Connect and increase community engagement over the next three years. However, we need more support to ensure the program's long-term success. We intend to collaborate with state agencies, local governments, and key business partners to secure the necessary funding.

Program Activities

Leschenault Estuary Connect will comprise several activities, including:

- **Aboriginal Cultural Connections:** Recording and communicating the cultural connections of local Aboriginal people to the estuary, including an Aboriginal Story/Language Book and video production.
- **Help the Estuary at Home:** Community awareness-raising forums, presentations, and workshops to increase knowledge and skills on how residents can contribute to estuary conservation.
- **Friends of the Estuary:** Engaging the local community in on-ground foreshore restoration actions, planting and clean-up days, and citizen science opportunities.
- **Shorebirds Monitoring Program:** Continuation of the monitoring program to determine food availability in the estuary for migratory and non-migratory shorebirds.
- **Seagrass Restoration Trials:** Trialling innovative restoration techniques for the conservation of seagrass in the estuary and engaging the community in the effort.

A Collaborative Management Group has also been established to bring key stakeholders together to communicate, share information, prioritize projects, and identify research opportunities to protect and restore estuary health.

Our Leschenault Estuary Connect program is a commitment to creating a better, more sustainable future for the estuary, and this is an invitation for you to be part of it.

Make sure you are signed up to the Leschenault Catchment Council's mailing list so you hear about upcoming opportunities to get involved and together we can protect and enhance the Leschenault Estuary for generations to come. Sign up via our website at www.leschenaultcc.org.au

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