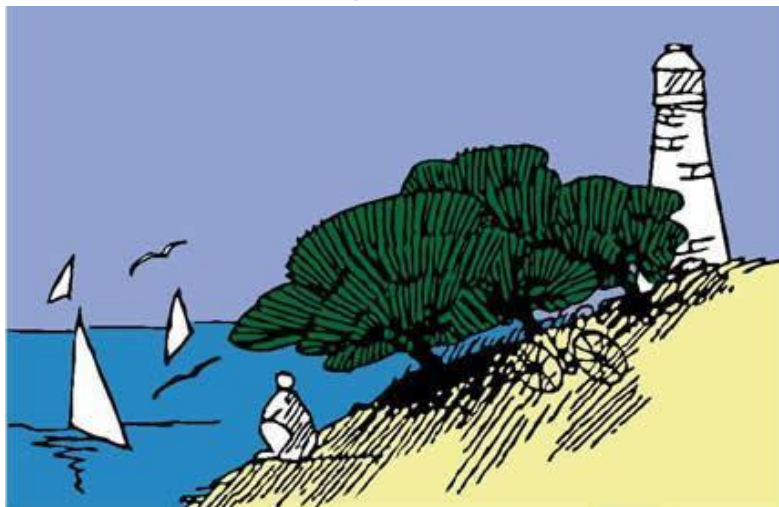


# The Rottnest Society Newsletter

## May 2025



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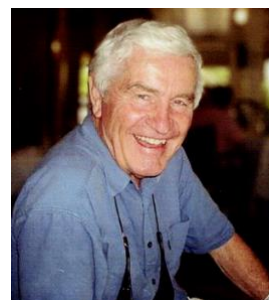
The Rottnest Society is an incorporated not-for-profit 'friends' group with a focus on environmental and social aspects of the management of Rottnest Island. In addition to lobbying government and management the Society also coordinates groups of volunteers for various activities on Rottnest Island in conjunction with island management.

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### **Eric Moxham**

For those members who have not already heard, you will be saddened by the news that Eric Moxham passed away late last year. Eric was Convenor of the Rottnest Society for 15 years and had been associated with Rottnest for much of his 91 years. Everyone knew Eric as good humoured, energetic and passionate in his love of Rottnest. He will be much missed.



## Chairperson’s Report

### New Developments on Rottnest Island

#### Overview by Ian MacRae

If you go to the Rottnest Island Authority website you will see that there are rather a lot of projects and developments proposed or underway. The Society is aware of these but has only made submissions or objected to proposals deemed to have a high social or environmental impact.

The following projects are planned:

- Wastewater infrastructure - \$15.8 million.
- Airport upgrades - \$4.3 million.

The following projects are underway:

- Ablutions upgrade.
- Island Gateway - \$17.2 million.
- Water infrastructure - \$34.1 million.
- Renewable energy/electrical - \$54.8 million.
- Stay Rottnest accommodation refurbishment (South Thomson and Geordie Bay completed – Fays Bay and Longreach Bay scheduled).

The developments summarised below have been commented upon formally to the Rottnest Island Authority by the Rottnest Society. (A full copy of our submissions can be accessed on the Society’s website – [www.rottnestsociety.org.au](http://www.rottnestsociety.org.au)).

#### The Lodge Wadjemup

The Lodge redevelopment will include 109 rooms plus dining, bar and cultural spaces, and pool when completed in mid 2025.

The development proposal was advertised in 2021 and the Society made a submission raising some concerns (particularly on Aboriginal consultation and height) but generally not objecting to the proposal in view of it being a redevelopment of an existing development without a significant expansion. 23 submissions were made on the proposal, mostly in support of the development. The development was approved in November 2021 subject to 38 conditions.

The Lodge partially reopened with 63 rooms in December 2024. A further 46 rooms are due to open mid 2025. The hotel featured in a March 15, 2025

article in the West Australian titled “Rotto Hotel on top of the World”. It was reported that the hotel had made it onto the Time magazine’s 2025 World’s Greatest Places list. According to the article, it was the only Australian hotel to make it into the World’s top 100.



From The West Australian, March 15, 2025

#### Proposed Worker Accommodation

Three sites for worker accommodation are proposed for the Samphire, The Lodge and the RIA as shown on the location plan below:



Location of workers accommodation developments.

The Rottnest Society made a comprehensive submission on the two private proposals in 2022 and on the RIA proposal in 2024. The Society strongly opposes the extent of workers accommodation proposed as it is considered undesirable to nurture a large permanent population on Rottnest.

The proposal to develop workers accommodation to house 211 staff for Samphire Rottnest was submitted for approval in 2022. The Rottnest Society made a

strong submission objecting to the proposal in August 2022.

The latest advice is that this proposal is not proceeding, however, the Society has not been formally advised of the reasons for this.

### 1. The Prendiville Group proposal

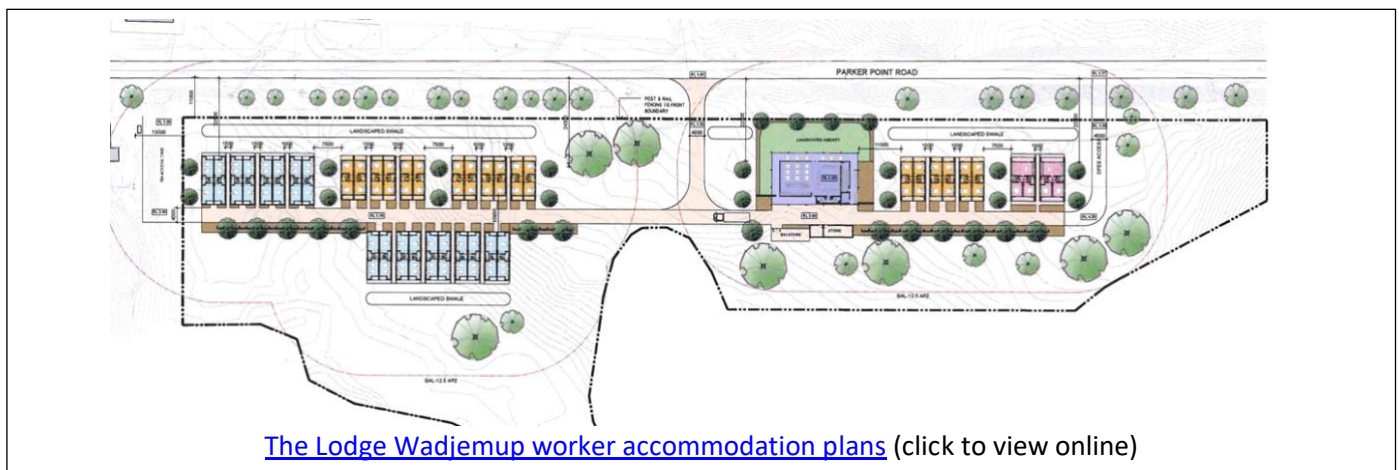
The 2022 proposal has been replaced by a development proposal (described as the Prendiville Group's proposal) for the extension of the Sapphire hotel, expansion of the Isola Bar e Cibo and the development of workers accommodation. This proposal was advertised for public submissions during the Christmas break in 2024. The Society made a late submission in February 2025 which is summarised below:

The proposed hotel and restaurant expansion were commented on but the main concerns of the Society related to the proposal to build workers accommodation on Parker Point Road. The concerns were identified as:

- The elimination of 1.35 hectares of vegetated bushland.
- Additional pressure on infrastructure (power, water and other community facilities).
- Greater conflict between permanent residents and holiday makers.
- A precedent for all other Island operators to apply for massive privately operated settlements.
- The application lacks any serious analysis and rationale to justify such a major departure from the accepted arrangements for staffing on Rottnest.
- It is difficult to comment on the proposal as the key element (its potential population) is not disclosed. It is unclear whether the 72 units will be the first stage or is the requested total, noting that the 2022 proposal was for 108 units.

- Nowhere is it acknowledged that during summer months a late ferry departs at 9pm. There is little point in the RIA encouraging, and subsidising at public cost, the ferry companies to run a late ferry if the main business on the Island ignores it.
- It is unacceptable that the developer puts forward a proposal clearly aimed to satisfy their every whim without any attempt at justification or impact analysis. At a minimum they should explain which staff could not be managed via the last ferry.
- It is of concern that it is the intention to provide for partners and their children. This will inevitably have ramifications for schooling and medical facilities on the Island. There is no justification or analysis of this.
- While some workers may welcome the opportunity to permanently live on the Island, many of the workers on the Island spoken to by our members voice a preference to not live on the Island.
- The RIA should not be persuaded by the commercial operators that providing workers accommodation would benefit most workers. A survey of workers should be undertaken to establish this.
- The Society has repeatedly requested detailed analysis of the case being made by commercial interests on the Island. Moreover, no evidence is provided regarding the actual staff activities that need to be covered during the night. The developers want all their staff to have the fringe benefit of living on the Island, yet when the average West Australian seeks holiday accommodation on the Rottnest they have to book up months in advance for a product that is scarce and annually escalating in cost.

### 2. The Lodge Wadjemup worker accommodation on Parker Point Road.







*Marine logistic hub development proposal*

## Conclusion

As Rottnest heads towards receiving a million visitors a year (823,441 visitors arrived by ferry last year) pressures are inevitably being felt. Ferries are getting bigger and more frequent, hotels are expanding, accommodation is being upgraded and additional commercial opportunities are being offered (six new businesses commenced last year).

Certainly this is bringing with it improvements that can be welcomed, such as improved ablution facilities, better pathways and more secure and sustainable water and power infrastructure. However, the hustle and bustle is more reminiscent of Perth than what we expect on Rottnest. The Rottnest Society has had to take the RIA to task for promoting development outside of the settlement, within the “A” Class reserve. We won that battle but we are now faced with an intensification of development and a new wave of workers accommodation.



*Too frequent Rottnest visitors*

The Government, through its Tourism portfolio, is over-promoting Rottnest Island as a must-see destination for all visitors to the State. The quokka has become a symbol and destination for all selfies. New activities are being promoted to ensure visitors don't get bored by having to rely on enjoying the natural environment. The Island is beset with building contractors, more vehicles, more noise and more waste.

The impacts of this increasing patronage and development are being felt on the environment. If development is to be promoted so too must programs aimed to manage the impacts of development. Most obviously coastal management is a priority. There is a need to address the growing number of dune blow-outs and damage to fragile coastal vegetation. While \$150 million of public money has been committed by the State Government for Island infrastructure, where are the equivalent funds to address coastal erosion brought about by people pressure? Even your children know the ending to the story of the Killing of the Goose that laid the golden eggs!

**Ian MacRae,**  
**Chairperson**

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## ROTTNEST ISLAND PLANT NURSERY

By Paul Reiffer

By the time planting volunteers arrive on the island during June to September, much hard work has already occurred by volunteers at the Rottnest Plant Nursery to prepare the plants and equipment for the planting season.

Nursery volunteers travel to the island usually every second Thursday throughout the year. After arriving on the island, the volunteers make their way the 1.44 kms to the nursery.

Then it is into the serious business of evaluating the cakes which have been prepared by the master chefs in the group and catching up on news. The Conservation staff who supervise us, Erin and Matt, advise what tasks need to be completed that day and we break up into subgroups to attend to the tasks.

One group work on propagating or potting up the 20,000 to 30,000 plants required for the forthcoming

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planting season, while others carry out a host of tasks such as washing and sterilizing old pots and trays; making mesh guards to protect the plants from herbivores; loading the trailers with plants and equipment for planting days; carrying out repairs to equipment; mixing soil mixes in the cement mixer; looking after the mature trees prior to their planting around the settlement; keeping the floors and equipment clean and sterilized; and a multitude of other roles.

Since we recommenced work in February, the potting group have been transferring the seedlings or cuttings from their propagation trays into tubes into which a blended potting mix containing fertilizer has been added. The plants are then given a good drink of seasoil and placed on raised tables where they will be watered by an automatic spray system. These plants must grow to a suitable size by the first planting sessions at the beginning of June. Plants are carefully monitored throughout this period.

This year the plants prepared include species in the genera *Acacia*, *Acanthocarpus*, *Atriplex*, *Austrostipa*, *Callitris*, *Carpobrotus*, *Clematis*, *Conostylis*, *Diplolaena*, *Enchylaena*, *Ficinia*, *Frankenia*, *Gahnia*, *Guichenotia*, *Lepidosperma*, *Leucopogon*, *Malva*, *Melaleuca*, *Myoporum*, *Nitraria*, *Olearia*, *Lysiandra*, *Pittosporum*, *Poa*, *Podotheca*, *Rhagodia*, *Salicornia*, *Scaevola*, *Senecio*, *Solanum*, *Spinifex*, *Spyridium*, *Tecticornia*, *Templetonia*, *Tetragonia*, *Thomasia*, *Thelkeldia*, *Trachymene*, *Westringia*. A much wider range of plants and more akin to the natural species distribution for Rottnest.



To provide adequate sunshine for the plants at this time of the year, the shade cloth netting over the nursery which has been protecting the plants from heat, wind and ravens has been drawn back. Prior to a planting day, the nursery volunteers load the trailers with the required plants for that planting zone, along with stakes, tools, mesh guards, fertilizer

pellets, first aid kit, groundsheets, etc so that everything can be in readiness for the arrival of the planters, which hopefully will number 50 for each session. This year the nursery volunteers will supplement the number of planters so that we can achieve the planting of 2,000 plants per day (a substantial increase on previous years).

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## ROTTNEST SOCIETY HATS FOR SALE

By Rebecca Scriven

We have a limited number of Rottnest Society caps and legionnaires hats for sale. The caps are embroidered in blue thread with the words ROTTNEST SOCIETY. The hats are printed with the Rottnest Society logo. These will be available at our volunteer weekends from June 21 onwards. Please bring cash if you would like to purchase one.

Caps (one size fits all) \$10ea

Legionnaires hats (medium and large) \$20ea.

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## ANZAC DAY DAWN SERVICE 2025

By Rebecca Scriven

An Anzac Day Dawn service is held on Rottnest Island each year, and is a tradition dating back to the 1930s. This year the Rottnest Society were invited to attend along with other Rottnest volunteer groups such as the Winnit Club and the Volunteer Guides Association. A large crowd gathered on the grassed area in Thompson Bay to reflect and mark the important day of remembrance. The service began with a welcome to country from elder Walter McGuire, and blessings from the Catholic and Anglican churches.



A range of free activities were available after the service including free tours of the Olivers Hill guns and tunnels, and Kingston Barracks and Bickley Point tours.



A restored Bofors Gun was displayed during the Dawn Anzac Service as a Memorial. It was presented to the Rottnest Island Authority in 1989 by the 116 Light Anti Aircraft Regiment Association to commemorate their service on Rottnest Island.

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## VOLUNTEER WEEKENDS 2025

By Rebecca Scriven

Our five volunteer weekends are open for bookings and are filling up fast. The dates for 2025 are:

- 7th June
- 21st June
- 19th July
- 9th August
- 6th September

Please complete our [online booking form](#). If you have any problems with the online form, please email us at: [therottnestsociety@gmail.com](mailto:therottnestsociety@gmail.com), and we will send a PDF version for you to complete and scan.

We require your payment to us within 10 days of your booking being received and confirmed, for your place to be secured. Thanks, and we look forward to seeing you on the island!

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Sue Eslick, Treasurer

### It's time to renew your membership of The Rottnest Society.

Annual membership runs from 1 July to 30 June (if you join after 1 April 2025 your membership will be extended to 30 June 2026).

A strong membership base is essential for the Society to have a voice in the protection of the island's fragile environment, so if you care about the future of Rottnest and protecting it from overdevelopment, please consider joining the Rottnest Society.

Please also consider putting your hand up to join our Committee which you can do by approaching a Committee member, possibly during a weekend planting. Our AGM is held in October.

The cost of membership is very affordable at \$35 per annum for an individual or family, or \$25 for a student or pensioner.

Apart from providing important support for the work of the Society, there are great benefits to becoming a member, including:

- Receiving advance notice of the calendar of volunteer planting days on the island (5 per annum)
- Reduced cost of visiting the island to attend planting days. (Non-members pay \$20 for a day trip, or \$60 for a weekend stay, members pay \$0 for a day trip or \$45 for the weekend).

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A list of our Objectives, membership application form and bank account details are on the back page, or you can [visit our website to download a membership form](#).

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*If you would like to contribute or have any suggestions for our newsletter, we would be happy to receive them. Any articles of interesting Rottnest history or your experience of our volunteer weekends would be very welcome. Please email [therottnestsociety@gmail.com](mailto:therottnestsociety@gmail.com).*

## Rottnest Society – All Members

Please note MEMBERSHIP is due for renewal for  
YEAR ENDED 30-6-2025

### Internet payment:

Include your Surname as the reference in the transfer details with the additional text "MEMB" to allow us to note the payment is for your membership.

Transfer funds to:

BSB: 036-035

Account No: 42-0739

Please also email [therottnestsociety@gmail.com](mailto:therottnestsociety@gmail.com) once you have transferred the funds with "membership renewal" in the subject field.

### By POST:

Please cut out this form and post with your cheque or postal order made out to;

"The Rottnest Society"

P.O. Box 418

CLAREMONT WA 6010

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Please tick:

I wish to become a member

I wish to renew my membership

I enclose/will transfer funds for my annual subscription as follows

Student/Pensioner: \$25.00

Regular/Family: \$35.00

I do not wish to be a member but I enclose a donation of \$.....

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ROTTNEST SOCIETY ARE:

- to encourage and promote the preservation of the environment and character of Rottnest Island,
- to encourage and as far as possible to maintain the use of Rottnest Island as a low cost holiday destination for West Australians,
- to establish close communications with all other associations, institutions or groups that may have related interests,
- to create in Western Australia a continuing public awareness of the environment and character of Rottnest Island,
- to promote effective and responsible management of Rottnest Island and its facilities and environment,
- to oppose any use or development of Rottnest Island which may alter the character of the island or cause unnecessary harm to its environment or character,
- to promote the preservation of Rottnest as an "A" Class Reserve,
- to keep the West Australian Government, the Rottnest Island Authority, and other organizations informed of the Society's concern and interest in Rottnest Island.

### \*Membership

If your membership has not been renewed for more than 12 months and continues to remain unpaid it will be assumed that you no longer wish to remain a member of the Society and, sadly, your name will be removed from the membership list. We do thank you for your past loyalty.