



Granite Island Causeway Project

History

The South Australian Government has committed \$31.1 million in funding towards the Granite Island Causeway Project to be delivered by The Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT).

The Granite Island Causeway (the Causeway) is an iconic landmark with considerable heritage value. The Causeway, located 83 km south of Adelaide on the Fleurieu Peninsula, is the only link between Granite Island and the mainland at Victor Harbor and is a site of cultural significance to the traditional owners of the area. The Causeway is also a popular tourist attraction, important to the local, regional and state economies.



Port Victor/Victoria Harbor, c. 1911. Photography source: www.adelaideyesterdayandtoday.wordpress.com

History of the Causeway

In the late 19th century, South Australian trade activities were focused on the River Murray, with the Port of Goolwa a major hub for wheat and wool. The construction of the railway to Victor Harbor provided an export outlet to the sea, with the establishment of a reasonably sheltered port near Granite Island. The construction of the Causeway, breakwater and cutting at Granite Island was required once Victor Harbor was established as the main seaport for River Murray trade. A jetty, including the Victoria Pier spur and its structures, was constructed and officially opened in 1864 where cranes loaded cargo onto ships.

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As trade intensified and larger ships required anchorage, there was an increasing demand for the Victoria Pier to be extended to Granite Island and a new wharf built in deeper water. The pier was extended to Granite Island in 1875 and became known as the “Causeway” and a railway was laid on it, providing access to the newly constructed wharf or “Working Jetty”.

By the time of its completion, ships were even larger and the Working Jetty and wharf proved to be in water too shallow. Plans for the deep-water Screwpile Jetty commenced in 1878 along with the breakwater. The Cutting through the granite along the north-east coast of Granite Island was completed in 1879 in order to extend the road/tramway to the new Screwpile jetty which opened in 1881, followed by the completion of the breakwater in 1882.

Granite Island Causeway and Victoria Pier

By the 1880s, thousands of bales of wool from western NSW and Queensland were being shipped down the Murray, freighted by train to Victor Harbor and then exported to the world. The Causeway continued to carry cargo until at least the 1920s.

From the 1920s until the present day, the Granite Island Causeway has served primarily as a pathway for tourists and holiday makers travelling to and from Granite Island. It is often used for general fishing and as a bridge for commercial fishers, kiosk staff and island maintenance, it was also used as a platform for bathers until the baths closed.

The spur to Victoria Pier was used for a time, with lifeboat sheds and swimming baths introduced to the structure, but in the years following it fell into disrepair and was demolished in the mid 1950's along with the working jetty.

The Causeway has undergone numerous repairs and alterations over the years, and much of the original timber has been replaced to stabilise the structure and provide some short term safety in the interest of maintaining the connection with Granite Island, a connection that sustains the economic activity of tourism related businesses on and associated with the island.

At present, approximately 12.5% of the original structure below deck remains. The fabric above deck, including all handrails, is non-original.

Heritage Status

The Causeway is one part of a State Heritage listed item described as, *Granite Island Causeway, Screw-pile Jetty, Breakwater & Cutting, partly located within Granite Island Recreation Park.*

The listing recognises the historical significance of the elements as port facilities that were built to serve as the ocean port for the River Murray trade. The Causeway is a State Heritage Place in the SA Heritage Register.

Project timelines

The main construction works is expected to commence in March 2021 and is anticipated to be open for public access in late 2021, weather permitting. All works (including decommissioning of the existing Causeway) are expected to be complete in late 2022, weather permitting.

Chronology of development

The development of the Causeway, Screw Pile Jetty, Breakwater and Cutting is summarised in the following chronology.

- 1857 – Victor Harbor is surveyed and declared safe all-weather anchorage
- 1862 – Work begins on building Victoria Pier
- 1864 – Victoria Pier is officially opened on 4 August
- 1872 – Work begins on extending the Victoria Pier to Granite Island in July
- 1875 – Work on the extension to Granite Island (Causeway) and Working Jetty is completed
- 1878 – Contracts are let for construction of Screwpile Jetty and breakwater on Granite Island on 13 August
- 1881 – Screwpile jetty is used for the first time on 3 November
- 1882 – Breakwater is completed on Granite Island
- 1895 – Horse drawn tramway is introduced on the Causeway to Granite Island
- Early 1950s – Repairs are undertaken to Causeway
- Mid 1950s – Victoria Pier spur and its structures are demolished
- 1956 – Working Jetty and wharf are demolished
- 1957 – Causeway is rebuilt and Screwpile Jetty reconditioned
- 1994 – Steel piles installed to Causeway in place of several deteriorated timbers
- 1997 – Repairs to Causeway decking take place
- 2002 – Repairs to 93 timber piles to the Causeway take place
- 2019 – Partial collapse of the Causeway triggers emergency repair works and temporary propping

Members of the public are encouraged to register their details with the project mailing list to receive project updates and information as it becomes available.

To find out more about the project, provide feedback or register to receive project updates, please:

Visit: www.dit.sa.gov.au/gicauseway
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