

THE MURRAY VALLEY

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Trail wins Excellence Award

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The Murray Coorong Trail has won an Award of Excellence at the Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture SA Awards. (Oxigen)

Jason Irvine

The Murray Coorong Trail has been honoured with an Award of Excellence in the Landscape Planning category at the Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture (AILA) SA Awards on Friday, June 20.

Designed by landscape architects Oxigen, the 450km walking and riding trail sits on the edge of the Murray River, Lower Lakes, and Coorong waterways and connects 18 regional towns from the Riverland to the Coorong.

Delivered in stages following initial project planning in 2012, the trail allows visitors from all over the world to immerse themselves in its natural environment which navigates through four national and conservation parks, linking more than 30 existing trails and offering miraculous views at every stop along the way.

AILA SA jury chair Warwick Keates said the Murray Coorong Trail was unlike anything else and the judges were captivated by its unique design and future potential.



“The Murray Coorong Trail is one of those unique projects that you don’t see very often where a combination of involvement from councils, stakeholders, landholders, the community, and importantly, landscape architects has come together to deliver quite an amazing 450km trail, a vision for this trail that will hopefully be delivered over the next few decades,” he said.

“I think when we were looking at the awarding of this project, it was just the innovation that had been associated with it, that there had been quite an amazing strategic vision if you can imagine, trying to thread a footpath through 450km, the time that the landscape architects had taken to ground-truss all these areas.

“Then, it’s also coupled with really detailed thinking; designs for the path and the trail networks, designs for seating areas, and it’s something the landscape architects do very well – it’s the big picture thinking, getting everybody together in the same place, looking at the vision, and then providing a roadmap for that delivery.”

Mr Keates said it was an overwhelming task for Oxigen to successfully deliver upon the aspirational vision, adding that great care was taken in determining the trail.

“It wasn’t a case of ‘this is an idea’ and then walking away, it was a very considered delivery from the vision right through to detailed designs for the footpaths as well, which we were very impressed with,” he said.

“It was that they took the time and care to work within the community, to walk the land and understand the restraints and constraints of the land but then they also brought in allied professionals in terms of engineers, even lawyers to help with legal agreements to allow the general public to access private land.

“The judges were very impressed with how that complex thinking had been brought together in one project and then how Oxigen had provided a master plan, a physical document as a reference document to allow councils to be able to deliver this project over time.”

Mr Keates said one of the greatest benefits of the Murray Coorong Trail was the development of the master plan that worked on many different levels

“It’s about showcasing both the natural landscape and the productive landscape, it’s farmland, but it has these beautiful areas of wetland at different slopes and hills and woodlands that you travel through – it offers a short walk for somebody in the local community, but also that amazing opportunity for tourism and visitors to go on a multi-day walk,” he said.

“We as landscape architects often use the phrase ‘linger longer’ and I think this trail takes it to the next level in terms of encouraging people to spend not just an afternoon within their region, but days within the region, really appreciating the qualities of both the Murraylands and the Coorong as well.”

The Murray Coorong Trail is expected to be completed sometime in the 2030s.

