

## Media Release

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### Swimming with the seals

Marine tourism on Kangaroo Island has been given a great boost, with the granting of the first South Australian Commercial Marine Mammal Interaction Permit to Kangaroo Island Ocean Safari, to swim with long nosed seals.

This licence allows Tony Coppins of KI Ocean Safari and his team to visit areas around Penneshaw to do targeted swim tours with long-nosed fur seals, along with local pods of dolphins.

Speaking about this new licence, Damian Miley, Regional Director for Natural Resources Kangaroo Island said, “this permit was issued by the Director of National Parks on behalf of the Minister of Sustainability, Environment and Conservation, and is approved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 and section 19 of the Marine Parks Act 2007, in relation to marine park sanctuary zones”.

Tony Coppins is delighted to receive this licence, as it will add to his already successful and award-winning business, providing tourism opportunities on Kangaroo Island unavailable in other parts of the state.

“We take out 12 people at a time, on 75 minute coastal safaris, where we see dolphins, seals and whales, plus sea eagles and other sea birds ... and this new permit will allow us to provide the opportunity for guests to swim with the long nose seals, on a regular basis,” Mr Coppins said.

The permit sets boundaries for the interactions, such as proximity distances and periods of time people are able to spend with the animals, as it is important the animals are not exposed to repetitive disturbance. “For this reason, limits on the frequency of tours have also been put in place,” Mr Miley said.

“We are great supporters of this activity and it demonstrates clear opportunities coming from the SA Government’s Nature Like Nowhere Else strategy,” he said.

Commissioner for Kangaroo Island Ms Wendy Campana agreed, saying “it is wonderful that we are developing these marine wildlife experiences that are without equal in nature and are unlikely to be found in many other locations”.

“Kangaroo Island already provides visitors with exceptional wildlife interactions and this new licence for KI Ocean Safari will add another dimension to our already considerable offerings,” Ms Campana said.

Kangaroo Island Ocean Safari is a local business that has built up over the past four years, and employs eight local people. It operates 365 days per year (weather permitting), and for the swimming with seals activity, wetsuits and snorkels will be provided. The business has received many awards, including recently being listed as number one island activity on Trip Advisor.

The business also operates a fleet of buses, servicing the cruise ship market, and takes visitors on wildlife safaris and wine tours.

“This new permit allows us to involve more visitors in the delights of Kangaroo Island,” Mr Coppins said.

“Everything we do will create low impacts and the extent of the encounters will be purely at the discretion of the animals on the day.”



Office of the Commissioner for Kangaroo Island

