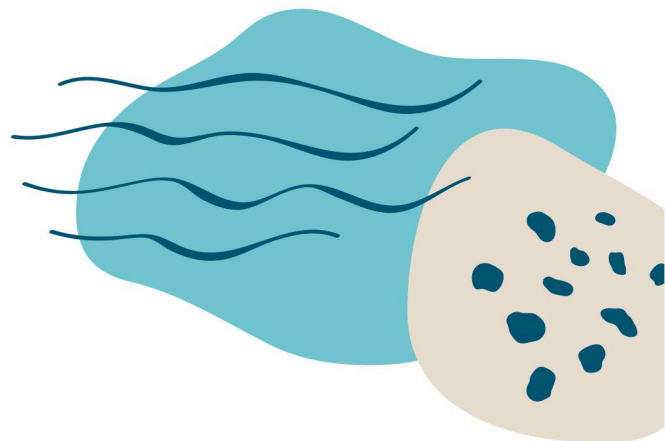


Media Release



May 26 2023

Access for all to the Merri River

Warrnambool's Merri River is now accessible to people of all abilities with the opening of the kayak pontoon on Woodend Road.

The floating pontoon has all ability access which provides for people of limited mobility and wheelchairs to access the waterway for kayaking, canoeing, fishing and other recreational activities.

The pontoon has been installed by Warrnambool City Council through the Glenelg Hopkins CMA's Merri Connections Projects, which has been funded by the Victorian Government through the Recreational Water Values Program.

The \$400,000 funding also support enhanced pedestrian access to the Merri River through the construction of all-weather walking track paths and seating on top of the floating pontoon.

Glenelg Hopkins CMA CEO Adam Bester said being able to work in partnership with Warrnambool City Council to deliver a public facility like the pontoon was a very positive thing.

"Being able to help people connect with the Merri River through projects such as this is very exciting," CMA CEO Adam Bester said.

"Projects like this have so many benefits – it improves the waterway, but also improves access to it for so many members of the community."

Warrnambool City Council CEO, Andrew Mason, said the new kayak launch facility was a recommendation from the South of Merri Precinct Plan, which aims to create a more connected neighbourhood where the local environment can be both enjoyed and protected.

"Kayaking is an excellent example of an activity that is a lot of fun, is great exercise and also fosters an appreciation for the river and the natural environment," Mr Mason said.

"Sometimes the hardest part about kayaking is getting in and out of the water, especially if you have mobility challenges. The sit and launch kayak facility is a big part of improving this, but it goes hand in hand with the ramp, the footpaths and the car parking to make an activity like kayaking accessible for more people."

The support for the project came not only through the Victorian Government funding, but also the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, which collaborated on the project.

Now the kayak launch facility is open, Mr Bester and Mr Mason said work on a new fishing pontoon about 150m upstream will begin, while connected concrete paths along the walking track of the Merri should be soon completed.

ENDS



CAPTION: Warrnambool City Council CEO Andrew Mason (left) and Glenelg Hopkins CMA CEO Adam Bester tested out the Merri River all abilities kayak launch prior to its opening.

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