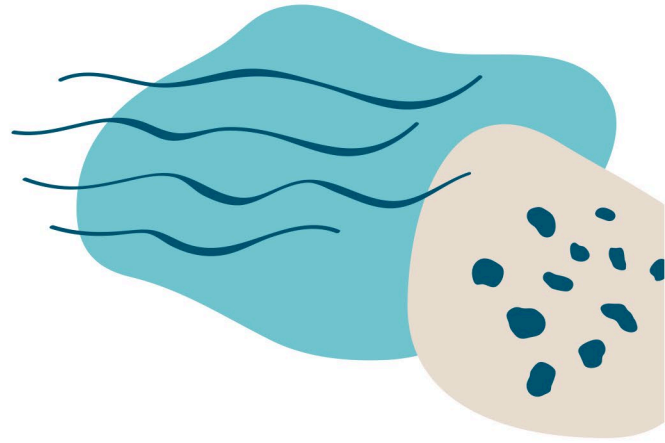


Media Release



2 March 2022

BROMFIELD STREET WEIR REMOVAL TO IMPROVE MERRI

Warrnambool's Bromfield Street weir on the Merri River will be removed in a new project that aims to open up the waterway to improve community safety and return it a more natural condition.

The \$772,000 project will be undertaken by Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (CMA) as part of the Victorian Government's \$248 million investment in improving the health of Victoria's regional waterways and catchments.

"Removing the weir will benefit native fish, which will be a boon for recreational anglers and the environment," Glenelg Hopkins CMA CEO Adam Bester said.

Removing the weir will allow the community of Warrnambool to utilise the river more easily for kayaking and canoeing. The works will support the goals of the Warrnambool City Council's *South of the Merri precinct plan*, the *Merri River Parklands Framework*, and the *Warrnambool 2040* community development strategy.

"The weir was originally constructed for Warrnambool's water supply in 1907 and was used until the Otways supply was constructed. It's quite an unsafe structure to have in town and we know that several people have unfortunately drowned there. This is an opportunity make the river safer for the community."

Removing the weir may also benefit local platypus populations according to platypus ecologist, Josh Griffiths, from EnviroDNA.

"I don't anticipate removal of this weir to have any detrimental impacts on resident platypus and may result in improved conditions for platypus due to more natural flows, and habitat improvement following additional works," Mr Griffiths said.

Warrnambool-based fishing journalist and researcher, Scott Gray, said the removal of the weir is an opportunity to greatly improve the ecology of the Merri River and create better recreational fishing opportunities.

"This will complement the extensive work done by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, other local management agencies and local community groups over many years to improve environmental conditions, water quality and riparian and instream habitat within the catchment," Mr Gray said.

Water modelling completed as part of pre-project work indicates minimal impact on water height - about 1m most of the waterway. Glenelg Hopkins CMA has already begun engaging with waterfront landholders who are directly impacted.

“We will also be setting up an opportunity for the community to come down, ask us questions and give feedback on the project and what they’d like to see for the river,” Mr Bester said.

ENDS



CAPTION: An artistic impression of how the removal of the weir will improve the Merri River