

MEDIA RELEASE

\$500,000 TOURISM VOUCHER BOOST TO GET VISITORS TO 'RISE UP FOR THE RIVER' IN MID MURRAY

A \$500,000 special round of tourism vouchers will ensure that South Australians can support flood-hit Mid Murray operators and businesses when they're ready to open later this year.

The incentive is part of the State Government's 'Rise up for our River' marketing campaign aimed at bringing people back to the Riverland and Murray River, Lakes and Coorong regions following the devastation of the River Murray floods.

Mid Murray Council has welcomed the program – which will offer \$50, \$100 and \$200 vouchers for experiences and accommodation over three rounds, with the first to open for registrations on 27 March 2023.

Council especially welcomes the news that a further \$500,000 will be set aside for another round later in the year and be targeted towards businesses in the Mid Murray district that will take longer to recover and reopen.

Mid Murray Council Mayor Simone Bailey said the addition of the later round followed strong lobbying from Council and Mid Murray tourism operators.

"We're very grateful to the State Government and the SA Tourism Commission for committing to this additional round specifically targeted at our operators who are only just beginning the recovery process – and who have a long road ahead before they're able to reopen," Mayor Bailey said.

"The early rounds of the River Revival Voucher program will be a great benefit to operators across the Riverland and Murray River, Lakes and Coorong who are trading now, or who will reopen very soon. However, our concern was that in many areas of the Mid Murray, we have holiday accommodation, attractions and other experiences that are still inundated, are waiting for power reconnection, or that are only just beginning what will be a very long repair and recovery process before they can trade again.

"Council, and our local operators, took our concerns to the SA Tourism Commission and the State Government during their recent visit, and we're thrilled that they've listened to the needs of our area.

"Those operators have been significantly affected by the floods, and really need this stimulus as well. With this extra round of vouchers they'll be able to focus on the immediate clean-up and return to business, with the peace of mind from knowing they won't miss out on the support this campaign will deliver."

The Mid Murray Council district was one of the hardest hit by the second-largest flood in living SA's history. While the clean-up is underway, it has significantly impacted the local community, accommodation, tour, restaurant, entertainment and experience providers, as well as other businesses up and down the river.

"Many of the caravan parks in our area, for example, have been inundated and won't be able to open for months yet," Mayor Bailey said.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Mid Murray Council Chief Executive Officer Ben Scales
P: (08) 8569 0100 | E: postbox@mid-murray.sa.gov.au

"It's fantastic to see that caravan park sites will be included in the new voucher program, so that when these parks are operating again they'll be able to welcome back caravaners and campers, who are a key tourism group for our region.

"We also have many holiday homes and shacks in flood-affected areas that will take longer to repair and rebuild, as well as Council's own tourism facilities including our Mannum Dock Discovery Centre.

"Tourism is an important driver of economic activity in the Mid Murray and the voucher program will create an incentive for more South Australians to discover the natural beauty, relaxed lifestyle and engaging experiences our region has to offer.

"We really encourage everyone to take advantage of this scheme – come and enjoy a holiday by the river while also helping our businesses and operators recover from this disaster.

"Pack the fishing rod, hire a canoe and explore the river now that it's teeming with new life, sit back and relax on the deck of a heritage paddle steamer on a cruise, or stay up late and see the stars as you've never seen them before in our River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve. There's so much to do here, and we can't wait to welcome visitors back to discover it all."

The 'Rise up for our River' campaign is part of a \$4.6m river recovery program and includes a wide-ranging marketing campaign that will also put the Riverland and Murray River, Lakes and Coorong region in front of audiences in TV, print, outdoor, digital and social media advertising.

For more information on the initiative, visit: <https://tourism.sa.gov.au/support/campaigns/rise-up-for-our-river>

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