

MEDIA RELEASE

ALL ABOARD FOR A RARE CHANCE TO TRAIN AS A STEAM ENGINEER ON HISTORIC PADDLE STEAMERS

The hunt is on for six volunteers to take up the rare opportunity to train as steam engineers to work on some of Australia's most precious historic paddle steamers – and they'll receive their training free of charge.

The Mid Murray Council has launched the search for the volunteers, whose work it is hoped will help secure the ongoing sustainable operation of the Council's heritage vessels, PS Marion and PS Canally.

Expressions of interest are open now for anyone with a previous engineering or mechanical background (either through a career or other significant experience) who is passionate about working to maintain and restore heritage steam vessels.

Mid Murray Council Mayor Simone Bailey said the new steam engineers were urgently needed to support the existing team of volunteers, so the paddle steamers could continue to operate well into the future.

"Paddle steamers are an iconic part of the Mid Murray's history, and indeed the history of Australia," Mayor Bailey said.

"Long before roads connected much of our country, the River Murray was the busy highway for Australia, and vessels like the PS Marion and the PS Canally helped build thriving communities by moving goods, passengers and keeping towns and cities connected and supplied.

"The PS Marion, based right here in Mannum, is the oldest surviving paddle steamer in the world with accommodation. Over at Morgan, our incredible team of volunteers has worked hard to restore the PS Canally, which will soon be ready to launch during 2024.

"These riverboats are such an important part of our heritage, and we want to see them out on the river keeping that history alive for generations to come. To remain viable, we need more trained steam engineers to step up and look after these incredible vessels.

"Council is taking a proactive step by offering to pay for training for anyone with an engineering or mechanical background so they can achieve their steam engineer's qualification, and commit to working on the paddle steamers for three years afterward."

Interested volunteers should have a previous engineering or mechanical background, be aged over 18, and be prepared to volunteer with Council's maritime operations team for three years after gaining their qualification.

The role will see volunteers join the Council's Maritime Operations Team for training towards qualifying as steam engineers under Exemption 36 – Marine Safety (Steam-powered vessels). They'll earn their licences to operate a standard boiler and a reciprocating steam engine, learn about shipboard safety, first aid and complete 100 hours of service on steam vessels.

The opportunity is also open to anyone who already has the above qualifications, or who holds engineer class 1 (steam) or engineer class 2 (steam) qualifications.

"There may be people out there who already have some of the qualifications we're looking for," Mayor Bailey said.

“Through this program, Council can support them to tick off any remaining things they need to gain their steam engineer qualification for steam-powered vessels, including the 100 hours of service aboard a vessel.

“This is a unique opportunity for people with a passion for historic machines and preserving our heritage to gain some new skills and take on a role that will be immensely rewarding, as well as so important in safeguarding the future of these paddle steamers.”

People looking to apply can submit a short letter of introduction, including a brief mechanical or engineering history to postbox@mid-murray.sa.gov.au by **5pm Wednesday, February 7, 2024**. Written submissions may be sent to Mid Murray Council, Steam Engineer, PO Box 28, Mannum, SA, 5238. A selection process will be undertaken following the consideration of all applications.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Andy Glen, Tourism Manager aglen@mid-murray.sa.gov.au or 0472 559 967.

For more information about the Steam Engineer qualification exemption 36—Marine Safety (Steam-powered vessels) is available [here](#).

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ABOUT THE PADDLE STEAMERS

The Mid Murray Council owns and operates the PS Marion and the PS Canally, as well as the Paddle Wheeler (PW) Mayflower.

The **PS Marion**, based at Mannum, is a fully-restored, heritage vessel built in 1897. It is one of the last operational, heritage, steam-driven, wood-fired, overnight passenger carrying side paddle steamers in the world. It operates regular overnight, day and short cruises.

The **PS Canally**, based at Morgan, is a side wheel paddle steamer that was originally launched in 1907. The flat bottom, wooden hull vessel is just over 20m long and was built to take cargo, passengers and work as a trading boat. It is currently being restored by a dedicated team of volunteers, with plans to relaunch in 2024.