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MEDIA RELEASE

MID MURRAY WINS \$568,000 FOR SWAN REACH, NILDOTTIE TRAIL PROJECTS

Business confidence and employment opportunities will open up for the communities of Swan Reach and Nildottie over the next few years, as more than half-a-million dollars is be invested into a major recreational trail and marine-based infrastructure.

This comes after the Mid Murray Council was awarded \$568,791 for the two key tourism projects, part of the Federal Government's *Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program* (MDBEDP).

The program aims to diversify the economies of communities along the Murray River hardest hit by MDB Plan's water recovery activities, with the goal to create sustainable and growth opportunities for new and existing businesses. For the Mid Murray district, based mostly along the iconic Murray River, this is a chance to tap in to the emerging nature-based tourism industry, and decrease reliance on agriculture and irrigation-based enterprise.

Mid Murray Council Mayor Dave Burgess said the funding announcement was welcomed and much-needed for the drought-stricken Swan Reach and Nildottie communities, after recent years have shown a 30 per cent population decline and growing unemployment.

"While agriculture and horticulture remain our biggest and most vital industries in the district, the tourism sector is growing dramatically," Mayor Burgess says.

"Over the past decade, we've seen the Swan Reach population drop by more than 30 per cent, and unemployment has also had a sharp rise alongside this.

"Right now we have an opportunity to leverage the global popularity of nature-based tourism to help sustain and grow our local economy, and we're hoping that these two projects will provide jobs for local people and growth opportunities for local enterprises over the long term."

The two key projects to be delivered in the Mid Murray Council include:

- **Murray Coorong Trail** (Swan Reach to Nildottie): \$438,791
- **Mid Murray Maritime Heritage Trail** (Swan Reach and Nildottie): \$130,000

Most of the funding will go towards construction of 20 kilometres of the Murray Coorong Trail which will run along the edge of the magnificent Murray River between the townships of Swan Reach and Nildottie – in close proximity to tourism and cultural icons such as Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park and Big Bend.

Community Services Director Amy Loechel has been managing development of the 450km Murray Coorong Trail, alongside regional partners, for the past five years, and says this is the biggest investment in the project to date.

"The Swan Reach to Nildottie trail funding will cover construction activity, interpretative signage, destination infrastructure and a major marketing campaign to ensure we can attract interest from trail enthusiasts across the world," Ms Loechel says.

"What we want to create is a world-class nature-based trail that will bring people out from Adelaide for the weekend, people from across Australia for longer holidays, and people from across the world who want an immersive natural and cultural experience along our beautiful stretch of the Murray River.

“The trail will be constructed for use by both walking and cycling enthusiasts, ensuring we can capture interest from a broad range of visitors.

“Once complete, the trail will help bolster tourism opportunities to expand business opportunities in accommodation, hospitality, retail and experience packaging – and I’d encourage tourism operators out there to start considering how they can tap in to this.”

This will be the second section of the trail to be completed in the Mid Murray District, as work is already underway on the section between Mannum and Kia Marina – with a formal launch date set for later this year.

It also adds to the \$500,000 of funding won by the Coorong District Council, which will again go towards one of its sections of the Murray Coorong Trail, contributing to the long-term completion goal of 450km of trail stretching between Cadell in the north, and Salt Creek in the south.

A portion of the Mid Murray funding will also help construct marine facilities, including boat tie-up areas and upgrades to river frontage areas for both Swan Reach and Nildottie, each contributing to the overarching Mid Murray Maritime Heritage Trail project.

Mayor Burgess said the funding would allow more recreational boats to moor at one time and be strategically located within walking distance to the main streets and local businesses, encouraging visitors to spend money locally.

“This project will contribute to creating Australia’s first maritime trail, marking significant opportunities to grow the tourism economy in our region, and allowing Swan Reach and Nildottie to be part of this,” Mayor Burgess says.

“It complements more than \$5 million of boating infrastructure investment for Mannum and Morgan in recent years and will leverage the economic benefits of Swan Reach’s planned deep-river mooring and master plan (currently under development) for the main riverfront area at Len White Reserve.”

Mayor Burgess also noted that recent data from the South Australia Tourism Commission (SATC) shows overnight stays along SA’s Murray River were continuing to grow each year, and so building quality infrastructure for houseboats and smaller recreational boats locally was integral to ensuring the communities of Swan Reach and Nildottie could tap into this.

“Right now, wharves and mooring pontoons in Swan Reach and Nildottie can only accommodate up to two boats at a time. This often results in houseboats and recreational vessels bypassing the townships and continuing their journey to other river destinations.

“We expect this new infrastructure will not only make for a better experience for our regular visitors, encouraging them to stay longer - but also attract new visitors to the district who are likely to stay here, helping to revitalise our district’s tourism industry.”

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